Amulets in the Age of Evangelists: A Study of the Ritual Nature of Early Mediaeval Openwork Amulets in Merovingian Contexts through Material and Writing.

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Noah Melton, s2766914

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Dr. A. T. ten Harkel, Assistant Professor at the faculty of Archaeology; Co-supervisor F. E. Lippok M.A., PhD Candidate.

Leiden University, Faculty of Archaeology.

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1. Introduction

The world which emerged in Western and Central Europe in the aftermath of the collapse of central Roman authority was one defined by both continuity and change. The religious transformations which had begun during Late Antiquity would finally come to the forefront, with Christianity as the remaining force which transcended the rivalries of the small polities which arose in the Early Mediaeval Period. This dynamic made religion a factor inescapable in life, having both spiritual and political aspects. Naturally, in such a world, the cultural and religious tapestry that was Late Antique Europe came into strong confrontation with the new campaigns of the Church in Rome to enforce orthodoxy in the land.

Despite the fair amount of contemporary church literature on this topic, a nuanced and unbiased view of religion and belief in the Early Mediaeval Period is difficult to find when only addressing historical evidence. This is why, for the study of the period, archaeological evidence has become just as important in the attempt to gain an understanding of how life was for the average person. The religious side of these analyses have been conducted through the study of numerous archaeological remains ranging from grave goods to architecture. It is in this same vein that this paper looks to investigate openwork amulets, an object type found throughout Central and North-Western continental Europe, which has several interesting interpretations in existing literature.

1.1 Research Aims

In brief, though a more detailed overview will be conducted in subchapter 3.2, openwork amulets are discs suspended from a girdle, which have on them a type of geometric, anthropomorphic or geomorphic relief. While there have been two major studies on the nature of openwork amulets by Renner (1970) and Parmentier (2013), these investigations were primarily focused on giving an overview of their many aspects. This included their typology, symbology, distribution and their make, and touched largely on their use within a practical and aesthetic context. They focus less-so, however, on the ritual aspects of these amulets. To be sure, they do cover this topic, but not in the dynamic manner which is required to fully address the question of this aspect of the object type. These works focus primarily on material and symbological factors, and neglect speaking of greater contextual clues.

The lack of the contextual element is something that looks to be tackled in this paper's investigation. The combination of the existing knowledge of different aspects of openwork amulets with the historical, religious, and social context leading up to and during the period is paramount to reaching a conclusion on the extent of the ritual aspects of this material culture.

The primary research question shall thus be posed as: **To what extent can the role of Merovingian openwork amulets as cultic items be deduced?** Due to the intersectional nature of the question of the cultic aspects of openwork amulets, there will be multiple avenues by which this research shall be conducted, and this approach will outline the path of this thesis.

First and foremost, in chapter 2 the conditions of Gaul and Germania in the lead-up to the Early Mediaeval period are to be considered. This includes the path of the Franks to becoming the hegemons of the region, and the cultural diversity of the existing population and migratory tribes. Then, the religious transformations of the area are to be looked at as well as the way in which the Church viewed the religious tapestry that presented itself in the area. Then, the position of women in relation to religion and society shall be addressed, due to openwork amulets being found near-exclusively in their graves. Finally on this point, the burial traditions of Merovingian society will be covered, which also further touches on issues of gender, religion, and social status. All of this is important because it gives the context of the period and region in which these amulets existed. This will fall under the sub-question: **What might the spatial and temporal distribution of openwork amulets suggest?**

Chapter 3 will start with an analysis of other amulets and pendants of the period through contemporary texts as well as interpretations by modern scholars on the topic. This is important as knowledge of other items which have similarly been designated as amulets will show what kind of items were 'magical' to people of the period, and how the many ways in which their virtues could be interpreted. This will cover the sub-question: **What can contemporary objects similarly designated as 'amulets' or 'pendants' tell us about the purpose of openwork amulets?** This chapter will then segue into the introduction to openwork amulets themselves, covering their secular uses, interpretations of their diverse motifs which have spurred their interpretation as cultic items, as well as a look at current knowledge on their distribution through both time and space. This section will once again touch on the question of their distribution, but also cover the sub-question: **To what extent can the iconography present on openwork amulets suggest cultic significance?**

Chapter 4 will be a case study comparing and contrasting two research areas. As the most recent major publication on openwork amulets by Parmentier in 2013 covered primarily those found between the Loire and the Rhine (Parmentier, 2013, p.5), I decided that a focus on areas which include examples East of the Rhine would be ideal to add additional information to the study of these amulets. It is thus that the primary research area is that of Rheinhessen including sections of North-Western Baden-Wurttemberg and Bavaria along the Rhine valley, and the secondary one being in central-Western Bavaria due to several examples of large concentrations of openwork amulets there. This case study will look at other items of interest within the grave that have cultic or gender reference, as well as look at the occurrence rates of differing motifs. The secondary research area will be used mainly as a reference to the primary one for grave goods due to the number of undisturbed graves and will not contain as in-depth a geographical study as the primary research area.

Chapter 5 will be the discussion in which all the evidence is brought together to discuss the conclusions of the case study and prior contextual chapters in tandem. Finally, the research question and sub-questions will be addressed in chapter 6, the conclusion.

2. Merovingian Society

Before addressing the primary research question, one must first have in mind the context of the period, society, and religious landscape within which openwork amulets existed. This is because, if one were to entertain the concept of openwork amulets as ritual objects, there must be a focus on the analysis of religion, and religion exists within a cultural and historical framework which it both shapes and is shaped by. It is thus that this chapter shall cover the rise of the Merovingians, the ethnic and religious diversity of the Merovingian territories, the role of women in the religious and secular world, and finally the burial practices of Merovingian society.

2.1 Establishment of the Merovingian Dynasty

The 'Merovingians', or rather Merovingian Franks, were a group of Germanic peoples who carved out a polity in Northern Gaul during the Migration Period of the 4th to 6th centuries A.D. The origins of the Frankish peoples however lay in the creation of a tribal confederacy in North-Western Germania during the 3rd century AD (Fletcher, 1997, p. 18). In the traditional historical record, after several periods of conflict with the empire, one group within the confederacy called the 'Salian' Franks were invited by Emperor Julian the Apostate to settle in Texandria (now the region of Kempen) during the mid-fourth century. Meanwhile, another group known as the 'Ripuarian' Franks settled around Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensium (present-day Cologne) (Fletcher, 1997, p. 101). However, historical evidence shows that unofficial settlement of Germanic peoples within the Empire, including the Frankish groups, was not uncommon prior to the 4th century (Wolfram, 1990, pp. 43-49). An additional point of interest is that by the late 4th century, unlike many other Germanic tribes who had established relations with and settled within the Roman Empire, the Frankish leadership had not officially converted to Christianity (Wolfram, 1990, pp. 33-34).

The Salian Franks would soon come to hold an important role in the administration of Roman lands near the frontier. The Frankish leader Childeric I, son of Merovech (a semi-mythical leader for whom the Merovingian dynasty is named), at some point during the early 5th century gained the responsibility of being the administrator of the province of Belgica Secunda (Fletcher, 1997, p. 101). After Childeric then came his son, Clovis I, last leader of the Salian Franks and first king of all Franks (Gregory 2, 27). Through a combination of politicking and conquest, Clovis came to own large swathes of Gaul. The most

prominent of his victories included the conquest of the Roman rump-state of Soissons, the acquisition of the territory of the Ripuarian Franks through the assassination of their kings, and the defeat of the Visigoths at Vouillé leading to the conquest of Gallia Aquitania (Gregory 2, 27-28 37-42). Apart from this, however, one of the most lasting impacts of Clovis' reign was the beginning of the process of officially converting the Frankish nobility and populace.

Figure 2.1 *Bataille de Tolbiac 496*. Clovis looks up to the heavens after having vanquished his foes in the name of God. Not unlike Constantine who had done the same not even two centuries prior. (Scheffer, 1836).

In his Historia Francorum, the Gallo-Roman historian Gregory of Tours (later sainted) stated that it was at the battle of Tolbiac where Clovis faced off against an army of Alemanni that the king called to Jesus Christ for aid in the battle in return for the conversion of himself and his retinue (see figure 2.1). This choice was not made in a vacuum however, as it came after a long period of his Catholic Gothic wife Clothilde attempting to persuade him to convert. While this is a seemingly innocuous anecdote added by Saint Gregory, the role of women in Christianity and conversion is a theme seen time and again from the very beginnings of the faith. Nevertheless, after victory was achieved, Clovis kept true to his promise, and

he along with his host of three thousand were baptised into the Nicene Christian faith soon after the battle (Gregory 3, 31-32).

At the time of his death in 511 A.D., Clovis had established the 'united' Frankish polity as a major power in the post-Roman landscape of Europe. The Merovingian dynasty would continue to rule for over two more centuries before being slowly displaced by the Pippinid mayors of the palace, who then became the Carolingian dynasty (Wolfram, 1990, p. 48). However, the path from Clovis' successor kingdom to the later Carolingian empire was not one carved by Franks alone, nor did they inherit empty lands during their conquests of Gaul and Germania.

2.2 Ethnic and Cultural Diversity within the Frankish Realm

To mention only Franks when covering the Merovingian polities of the Early Mediaeval period betrays the intricate pattern of ethnicities and identities which existed under the rule of Clovis and his successors.

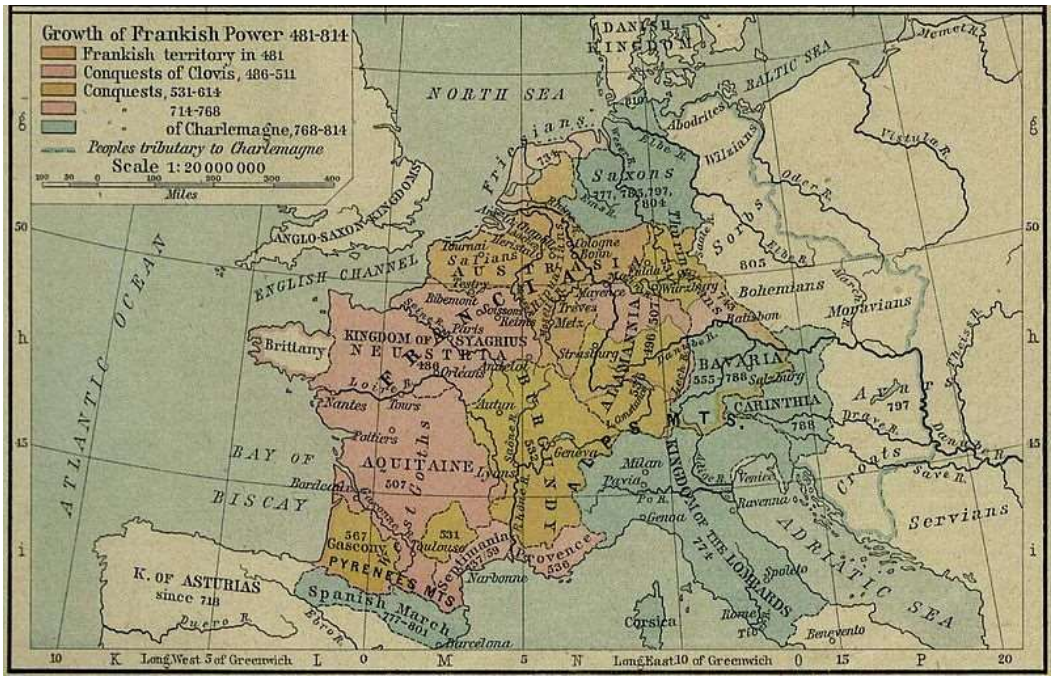


Figure 2.2 *Growth of Frankish Power 481-814*. While attempting to demonstrate the expansion of the Frankish polities, this older map leaves something to be desired with its concrete ethnic blocs. Nonetheless, it does show to an extent how many different groups there were in these areas. (Shepherd, 1926).

Given that the Franks, among other Germanic groups, settled and acquired lands which had previously been ruled by the Roman Empire, they came into possession of some large settlements filled with Romans, Gallo-Romans, and even other Germans who had previously settled in these border regions. (see figure 2.2) The continuity of the native

population's cultural practices, as well as their adoption by their new rulers can be observed in both the archaeological record as well as in historical accounts (Raynaud, 2018, p. 45) (Goffart, 2006, pp. 192-193). The proximity of the old Gallo-Roman ruling class and the Franks is not to be understated, with influential figures within Merovingian history such as Saint Gregory of Tours and many of the bishops belonging to the former category, doubtlessly leaving a mark on the politics of the early Merovingian polities (Rotman, 2022, p. 90).

While the above by itself suggests the large amount of ethno-cultural diversity present in the new Merovingian polities, even the Franks themselves were not made up of a single people. The majority, if not all of the larger Germanic tribes which would emerge during the Migration Period, were amalgamations of numerous smaller groups, who in some cases were not even fully Germans (Wolfram, 1990, pp. 86-87). This fact is even reflected in the names of some of these tribes, such as the Alamanni, their name literally meaning 'all-men'. By the time of the Migration Period, many tribes of classical antiquity such as the Suebi had become subsumed into these larger tribal confederations (Wolfram, 1990, pp. 39-41). Thus, when these confederated tribes began to establish their own kingdoms in the vacuum left by the collapse of Roman authority, they did not only bring a single new culture into some of these areas, but rather acted as a catalyst by which numerous Germanic cultures could be splattered throughout the former frontier and beyond.

Along with the diversity of the Germanic tribes which first established themselves in the 5th century, it should be recalled that tribal mobility did not simply end there. In the ensuing wars between the Germanic successor states, the polities of the Merovingian realm began to expand into other Germanic territory and launched punitive expeditions, in a similar fashion to the Roman Emperors of old, to install friendlier rulers on their thrones (Gregory 3, 1-14). The consequence, or perhaps intention, of these actions may have included the resettlement of some of these tribes on the fringes of the Merovingian world into unoccupied areas, again mirroring the actions of Rome. This idea is corroborated by some of the archaeological evidence found in cemeteries within the Merovingian realm, with some of these being dominated by non-domestic and non-Frankish material culture in the graves (Koch, 1977, pp. 189-190).

The diversity in culture between these tribes, sub-tribal groups and pre-existing populations did not limit itself to their material culture and everyday life. A major factor which from Late Antiquity onwards

would begin to dominate political discourse is that of religious struggle, namely the struggle between orthodox Nicene Christianity and 'pagans' or 'heretical' sects of Christianity.

2.3 Religious transformations of Gaul and the Germanic Imperial Frontier from Late Antiquity to the Merovingian period

Despite Saint Gregory's recording of the conversion of Clovis and his host after the battle of Tolbiac, it is clear from the *vitae* (recordings of the lives) of other saints such as that of Eligius that the process of converting, or rather ensuring catholic orthodoxy among the Frankish people was far from complete. However, to understand the religious landscape in which the newly re-empowered Catholic church was to proselytise, first a brief explanation of the state of Christianity in Gaul and Germania prior to the collapse of Roman authority must come.

By the time of the collapse of the Western Roman Empire in 476 A.D., Rome had held a near-unbroken line of Christian emperors for just under a century and a half, excluding the three-year rule of Julian the Apostate. This fact presents a radical change from the concretely 'pagan' empire from which the Christian faith arose during the 1st century AD. Christianity, as a faith radical in its proselytisation, managed to continue to spread despite centuries of persecution by the Roman state (Fletcher, 1997, p. 14). This of course all came to a head when Emperor Constantine the Great at the battle of the Milvian bridge in 312 A.D. supposedly had his vision that should his soldiers paint the initials of Christ (Chi and Rho in Greek) on their shields, he would claim victory on the battlefield. The victory of Constantine and the consolidation of his rule then led not only to the tolerance of Christianity as a faith, but one actively promoted by the Roman state apparatus, and much later even tied inseparably to the empire (Fletcher, 1997, p. 19).

Despite the slow and steady encroachment of Christianity on the Roman state and populace, the idea that the Christian faith was equally present and well-set in the many regions of the empire is far from the reality of the situation. Standing in contrast to the modern idea of Christianity as a faith with deep ties to the countryside and rural life, Christianity in the Roman world was a truly urban faith (Fletcher, 1997, p. 16). The difficulty of the effort to convert the countryside is widely attested to in saintly *vitae* in the 4th and 5th centuries AD, and in-fact this effort did not seem to be a major priority for the Christian

community until the 4th century (Fletcher, 1997, pp. 38-39). This reality then of course entails the fact that generally, less-urbanised regions of the empire tended to be less Christianised, which was the case in much of Northern Gaul and especially towards the Rhenish border with Germanic tribes.

On the topic of the Germanic tribes, as mentioned before, the Frankish leadership held a unique position religiously speaking in comparison to the others. Most tribal confederations (e.g. the Burgundii and Ostrogoths) had converted to Arianism (a sect which considered the Son subservient to the Father and would later be declared heretical) soon after their settlement in the Empire (Fletcher, 1997, p. 99). Meanwhile, not only did the Frankish leadership not officially renounce their Germanic pagan beliefs upon settling, but they seemingly held onto them until well-after the collapse of West Roman authority after the aforementioned battle of Tolbiac (Gregory 3, 31-32). Then finally when they did end up converting to Christianity, they were baptised into the Catholic faith, reinforcing the authority of the Pope in Rome to whom the Arians held no allegiance. Within the context of the conflict between Arianism and the Nicene Creed in the post-Roman West, there appears a different evaluation of the reasoning for Clovis' conversion than that put forward by Saint Gregory.

By the time of the conversion of Clovis I in 496 A.D. (see figure 2.3), the situation which presented itself in much of Gaul was one of a pre-existing urban Christian populace, now reinforced by the conversion of its new master and his entourage. However, there is no evidence that all newly settled Frank welcomed this change with open-arms, and this combined with the ever-present issue of the more traditional countryside seemingly acted as a large thorn in the side of this new Christian polity.

Figure 2.3 *The Baptism of Clovis at Rheims*. Here, Clovis as the archetypical barbarian-king emerges from the waters of baptism. As suggested by the framing, he strikes a balance between the 'civilised' Gallo-Roman Christians, and his Germanic warrior-host clad in furs and armour. (Dejuinne, 1786–1844).

The following centuries were defined by a whirlwind of evangelism carried out primarily on three fronts. Firstly, in many areas the seats of bishoprics were left vacant for as long as decades, and a key action in the re-establishment of authority was the ascension of new Gallo-Roman bishops who would build or renovate churches in the largely Gallo-Roman urban areas. Later into the 7th century AD, Frankish bishops would begin to appear as well (Fletcher, 1997, p. 134). Secondly, there came a phenomenon of the Frankish nobility converting to Christianity and adopting or enforcing Christian customs to gain favour with their Christian Merovingian rulers or general influence. Among the actions taken by these elites was the funding of the creation of new churches and the burial of their kin within them (Fletcher, 1997, p. 135). Finally, and most importantly in terms of the conversion of the Frankish nobles and lands by outside authorities, were the numerous missionaries who were sent to evangelise in the new Merovingian kingdom, many of whom were later sainted. These evangelists became increasingly energetic during the 7th century, taking after the model of Saint Columbanus and promoting the creation of monasteries throughout rural areas, which had been neglected by the Gallo-Roman church authorities (Fletcher, 1997, pp. 137-138, 146-148). Largely hailing from regions outside the Frankish homeland and from noble families (though with notable exceptions such as Eligius), the actions of these missionaries are recorded in posthumous *vitae* written by clergymen (Fletcher, 1997, pp. 154-155). Though by no means

fully accurate depictions of the saints as individuals, they aid in constructing a loose picture of the challenges faced by these evangelists. In addition to this, the practices described in the *vitae* are one of the few avenues by which modern scholars can deduce how the non-Christian belief systems of the Franks may have looked like.

An interesting phenomenon which has arisen with modern scholarship though, is the disparity between the traditional narrative of the conversion of the Frankish lands and what was likely the reality of the religious situation. The traditional view of these evangelists coming to spread the gospel to a pagan or largely anti-Christian landscape is erroneous. As can be seen within the subtext of many of the *vitae*, the work of the evangelists was as much about 'correcting' the ways of people who were self-proclaimed Christians as it was about the conversion of pagans. In a section of the second book of the *Vita Eligii*, Saint Eligius explicitly pre-empts each condemnation of a 'pagan' custom with 'no Christian should-' and condemns the wearing of phylacteries including even those created by priests (Audoin 2, 16). Apart from this fact of the dubiousness of the 'pagan' character of these lands, it has also been suggested that these missions could well have held as much of a political aspect as a spiritual one. O'Hara suggests that while the missions of Saint Eustasius and his contemporaries in Bavaria did have some religious purpose in correcting 'false' Christians and isolated pockets of pagans, their work there certainly aided the Frankish rulers in their attempts to consolidate control over the region (O'Hara, 2018, pp. 166-167).

2.4 Gender and Religion in the Early Medieval Period

Along with the radical changes to religion brought with the decline of Western Rome, gender dynamics similarly underwent a period of transformation. The way in which life for women would come to be defined in the post-Roman order came from two origins: the secular, cultural changes brought by tribal leadership, and the religious changes brought by church authorities.

While the Church in the Middle Ages is traditionally seen as a rather misogynistic institution, and to this there is certainly some truth, it cannot be said that it always had that nature. Standing in contrast to the traditional Greco-Roman polytheism, early Christianity often preached of the equality of the genders under God. This naturally offered many avenues to women in the Roman Empire to gain importance within their local religious communities (Wemple, 1981, pp. 127-128). Women with money to spare were able to invest in the collection of saintly remains or the construction of shrines for said remains. These

allowed them to hold influence not only in their local area, but also in the Christian-wide community through the developing cult of the martyrs (Berger, 2021, p. 191). There are even cases of women leading Christian rituals for communities gathered at their households, though this trend was only prominent prior to the wide-scale acceptance of Christianity (Berger, 2021, pp. 185-186). Certainly, the importance of women in the spreading of the religion can be seen in individuals such as Saint Helen, the mother of Constantine the Great who was revered for her discovery of the true cross as well as her patronage of many building projects for places of worship (Berger, 2021, p. 191; Fletcher, 1997, p. 56).

The exact reasoning for the transition towards a more misogynistic view towards the position of women within the Church is unknown, but it begins around the period of the Late Empire. Much of the reaction towards the position of women was aimed at ensuring the celibacy of the priesthood. The reasoning for the implementation of edicts regarding the separation of male priests from interaction with women was the idea that if faith leaders were betrothed to women, the latter would act as temptresses who would encourage the former to shirk their duties to their congregation in exchange for Earthly pleasures (Wemple, 1981, p. 136). This line of thought seemingly dominated the rulings of church authorities throughout the 6th to 10th centuries, as they attempted to restrict women from taking any part in leading religious ceremonies and rituals (Wemple, 1981, pp. 143-148).

On the secular side, there were also a number of changes which came during the period of Late Antiquity and the Early Mediaeval Period in Frankish society. Standing in contrast to earlier recordings of relatively egalitarian gender dynamics in Germanic societies such as that of Tacitus' *Germania*, contemporary records of Merovingian and Alemannic societies and their laws point towards a more male-dominated space. Women, while having heightened value in terms of *wergild* (a debt to be paid when an individual is murdered), were especially valued when of child-bearing age. However, they were prohibited from bearing arms lest they forfeit their families right to *wergild* in the case of their death. Women were also legally subservient to their husbands in the law and were subject to the choice of their husbands in cases of divorce (Wemple, 1981, pp. 28-29).

On the ground however, the realities of female participation in rituals were much different than what the authorities had wanted. Noblewomen continued to gain much influence through female monasticism (see figure 2.4). The rural monastic tradition established by Saint Columbanus would come to have a large impact on the religious landscape. Due to the relatively egalitarian nature of monasticism compared to the main church at the time, the women who gathered to create these communities were by no means lacking in influence compared to their male counterparts (Wemple, 1981, pp. 158-160). On the side of celibacy, it is true that the taking of wives by priests became more uncommon over the Merovingian period. However, priests continued to take women as concubines instead who would also aid the priest in carrying out mass and other rituals, much to the chagrin of some officials. Seemingly though, the political will within the Church to fully enforce the laws which were meant to be in effect was lacking, and it was not until the Carolingian period that reforms were enacted to take concrete steps to subvert most of these paths (Wemple, 1981, p. 141-143).

Figure 2.4 *HEILIGE IRMINA VON OEREN TRIER*. Saint Irmina was a former noblewoman who, after being widowed, dedicated herself to the Church. In this position she exercised much influence through her funding of monastic endeavors (Kreiner, 2014, p. 29). (Beck, c.1480-1542).

On the other side of the question of Early Medieval women and religion, however, is the association of sorcery with women. This concept, one which would last up until the Early Modern period, sees its Early Medieval origins in the practices of Celtic and Germanic pagans in the countryside. Certain areas in the landscape of the countryside which tended to be tied to pagan rituals (wells, springs and groves for example), were also often frequented by rural women (Bitel, 2002, pp. 33-35). This caused many of the proselytisers of the period to come to regard many of these practices conducted by women with suspicion (Bitel, 2002, p. 33-35). For example, in 585 AD church officials in Auxerre would explicitly ban the gathering of women at springs and wells for the purpose of 'venerating' them (Bitel, 2002, p. 35). Similar denunciations of practices can often be seen in the *vitae* of saints, where seeresses, sorceresses, and even just women in general are found to be holding on to their heathen ways through the acts they perform or what they wear (Audoin 2, 16).

Fig 2.5 *Bonifacius*. Saint Boniface was an evangelist during the late Merovingian period, whose great miracle against the pagans is depicted here. His show of Christian dominance over the pagan natural world through the felling of Donar's oak is an example of the Church's views upon 'nature worship' such as that of springs and groves. (Doepler, 1905, p. 16).

Though heathenry and magic are by no means considered the exclusive realm of women, it must be stated that there exists a focus on female activities in *vitae* and anti-pagan laws which is not present to the same extent with regards to male activities. For example, in the *Vita Eligii*, during a large rant on the 'pagan customs' of the populace, Eligius explicitly calls out women in their suspension of amber from their necks, as well as their tendency to call upon Minerva and other 'ill-starred beings' in their weaving and dyeing. Additionally, he criticises all Christians who 'render devotion' to springs and groves among other places (Audoin 2, 16). What 'rendering devotion' might entail is not made clear, but the sentiment which Eligius espouses rings quite similar to that of the Church in Auxerre.

An area in which the relevance of both gender and religion is that of the treatment of the dead. The burial goods found in graves are a way by which the family of the deceased can give a view of both the life of the deceased as well as their place within society. This, by extension, can give observers hints as to the role of women in religion and ritual.

2.5 Merovingian Burial Practices

Merovingian burial practices were diverse and would change and evolve over the course of the period. The only commonality among them was their general West-East orientation. Some archaeologists in the past had erroneously taken this as proof of the Christian quality of graves (Halsall, 2010, p. 42), but as

shall be demonstrated later in this subchapter, there is much more nuance not only to burial practices but to grave goods themselves.

Merovingian modes of burial could include wooden ‘chamber’ graves, wooden coffin graves, stone sarcophagi, basic burial pits, and burials topped with rock coverings. Within these burials were most commonly found inhumations rather than cremated remains (Halsall, 2010, pp. 217-218, 394). Most importantly, within these are also found grave goods, a characteristic which interestingly only developed later on in Frankish development, just prior to the Merovingian period (Halsall, 2010, p. 268).

The types of grave goods found in Merovingian burials can be split in three in terms of the archaeological record; the assemblages found in female graves, those found in male graves, and neutral objects. It should be noted that male and female assemblages, while often associated with their respective sex, are not always so. At grave 32 at Ennery, for example, the individual interred had a biologically male skeleton, but a ‘female’ grave assemblage (Halsall, 2020, p. 167). The exact reasons for this combination are unknown, but it is nonetheless a marker that there are no exact methods by which to perfectly gender a grave through burial goods. In addition to this, there are also several nuances in how gendered assemblages changed over the 6th and 7th centuries, which shall be mentioned in this brief analysis.

Halsall suggests that during the 6th century, the grave goods found interred with men are largely representative of how men interacted with the world. These include weapons such as seaxes, arrowheads, large knives, swords, and spearheads among others, as well as work tools (see figure 2.5). On the other hand, their actual dress and other objects remain rather plain. This is seemingly representative of their contemporary ideal of masculinity, or at least the most common expression of masculinity (Halsall, 2020, p. 175). However, this assemblage was not immune to change throughout the Merovingian period, and in the 7th century some radical differences arose in the way that masculinity was represented in burials. The variety of weaponry decreased, though the number of burials with a ‘token’ weapon increased. In addition to this, more intricate decorative objects such as plate buckles and brooches become common in masculine graves, signalling a change in the ideal of masculinity (see figure 2.6) (Halsall, 2020, pp. 177-178). Halsall (2020) suggests that this has to do with a change in the political landscape becoming more exclusively male, and thus increasing the importance of the representation of the non-military or practical aspects of male life (p. 177).

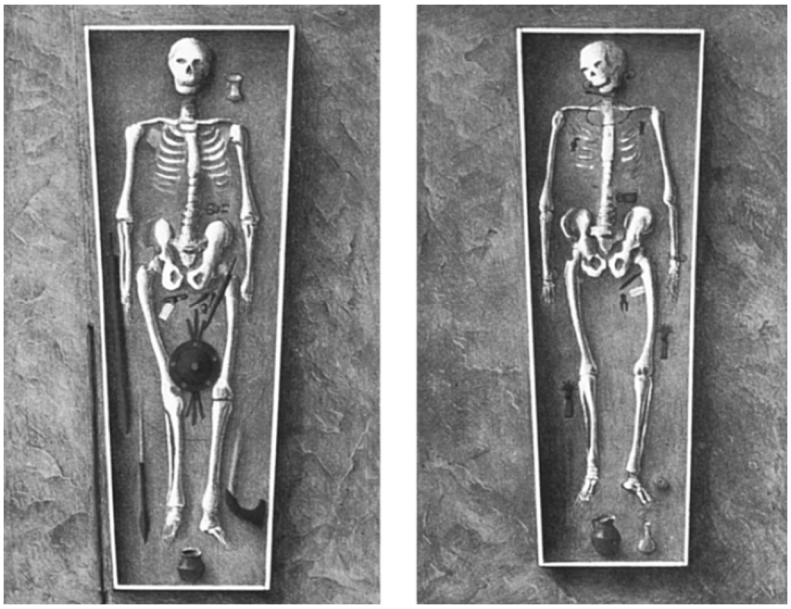


Figure 2.6 *Boulanger's Frankish male and female burials of the fifth and sixth centuries*. While somewhat antiquated, the general themes of 'useful' male goods vs 'aesthetic' female goods fits here. (Effros, 2003, p. 100, Figure 8).

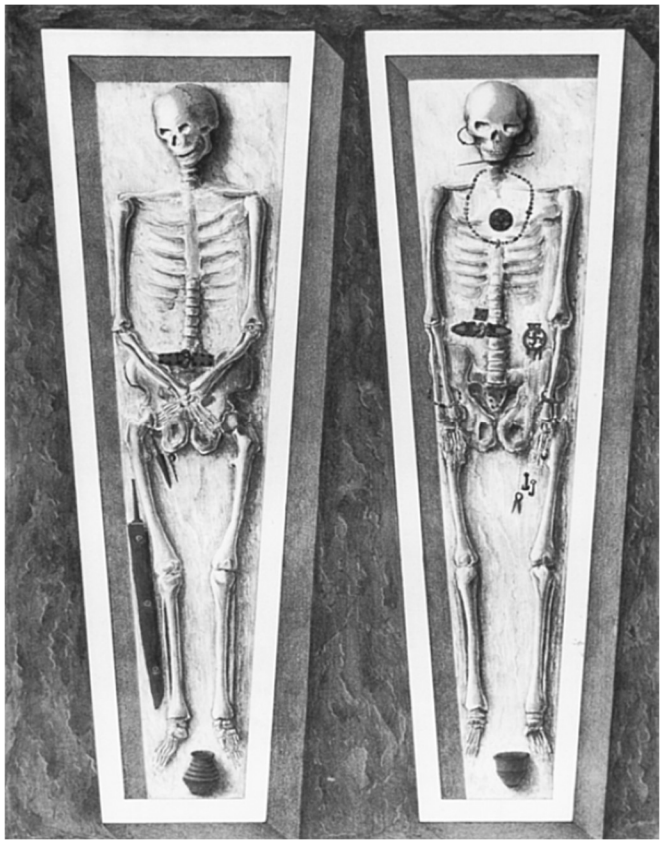


Figure 2.6 *Boulanger's Frankish male and female burials of the seventh and eighth centuries*. Compared to fig. 2.5, the change to a less extravagant burial for the male (with the inclusion only of a 'token weapon') can be seen here. Meanwhile, the female in fact stands out just as much if not more. Perhaps due to the shift of goods representing kin group wealth (Effros, 2003, p. 101, Figure 9).

Women's burials, in the 6th century, appear quite different to that of their male contemporaries. The focus on grave goods such as jewellery, brooches, and pendants among other items gives a distinct view of womanhood as something 'to be observed' as Halsall (2020) posits (pp. 175-176). In stark contrast with the 'useful' nature of the male 6th century grave goods, the emphasis is on aesthetic perception (see figure 2.5). However, Halsall (2020) is quick to point out that this does not necessarily suggest that women held a purely passive role, but

rather were actively moulding how they were perceived by others through their material culture (p. 176). At the turn of the 7th century, there came a shift towards the inclusion of more masculine grave goods such as plate buckles within female burials. Halsall (2020) suggests two main reasons for this change, that either this signals a change in the ideal of femininity towards one which sees a woman's virtue represented by masculine objects, or that it is instead a shift towards simply representing the wealth of an individual and their kin group (see figure 2.6), rejecting the old, gendered distinction between grave goods (pp. 177-178).

Another area of interest with regards to grave goods is that of the treatment of children and the elderly. Once more, the gender divide can continue to be seen here, though to a lesser extent. It can be observed that the threshold to adulthood, or rather adult grave goods, comes at a significantly lower age for girls in comparison to that of boys. The former begin to receive female grave goods in their teens, perhaps due to their betrothal to men or simply as a mark that they arrive at an age where they can reproduce. The latter, on the other hand, continue to be deposited with neutral grave goods up until their late teens or early twenties (Halsall, 2020, p. 170). For the elderly, women begin to be deposited with much fewer grave goods by their forties, and men by their sixties, with their assemblages often reduced to the neutral ones of a child (Halsall, 2020, p. 171). However, it seems that these norms may too have changed in the 7th century, as there comes in some places the appearance of well-furnished child and elderly graves. This could well be part of the general shift towards the domination of kin-group wealth in the choice of grave goods for any given group (Halsall, 2020, p. 178).

Grave goods begin to disappear towards the late Merovingian period, which has been attributed to a number of factors (Parmentier, 2013, p. 78). Similar to the question of West-East grave orientation, a lack of grave goods is a practice which was historically tied to Christianity (Halsall, 2010, p. 42). The reason for this change however is not necessarily solely due to Christianisation. One reason posited by Brownlee is that because the decline in grave goods correlates with the height of trade in the Early Mediaeval Period, it could well-be that due to their being more opportunities to exchange items, there was less of an incentive to have them permanently interred (Brownlee, 2021, pp. 155-156). From a religious standpoint though, as mentioned before in subchapter 2.3, to say that those inhabiting the Frankish polities were fully pagans until the time when missionaries converted them is highly inaccurate. The inhabitants of the Frankish lands did not simply convert fully to orthodox Christian practices out of the blue, many of these people likely considered themselves Christians despite not following the Church's official line. This can also be seen in the archaeological record, where Christian elements are found within graves. Of course,

however, these objects could well have been perceived by the interred individuals or their kin as simply another magical item which took the place of their old charms (Schülke, 1999, p. 92). It is within this latter category that amulets of the Merovingian period are placed, and an overview of their perception by their contemporaries and comparisons to other cultures will be important when addressing the research questions.

3. What are Merovingian Amulets?

This chapter will start with an overview of contemporary objects which are also designated as amulets. This will aid in getting a baseline for the values commonly attributed to such objects, as well as the relevance of certain materials in a 'magical' context, which will come back later. Afterwards, the main object type of this thesis will be covered, openwork amulets. This will mainly cover existing knowledge on their uses and distribution, as well as an analysis of their motifs based on existing work as well as bringing in new literature for further insights.

3.1 Amulets, Pendants, and Phylacteries in the Early Medieval Period

In the material culture of the Germanic successor states of the Roman Empire, there exists a category of items which are generally defined by them being hung from parts of the human body. These vary in many ways, even in name, with some being listed as pendants, amulets, curing stones, necklaces, and even as phylacteries.

There immediately appears some level of baggage when the term 'amulet' is used to define an item. In older works on the topic such as that of Hildburgh (1942), the definition of an 'amulet' often implies that the hanging object has some sort of power which protects the user (Meaney, 1981, pp. 3-4). Given the breadth of items that get labelled as 'amulets' despite their true purpose not often being particularly transparent, it would be beneficial to keep in mind that the traditional definition does not necessarily apply to all these items. Nonetheless, it is true that a fair number of items in this category did fit in with the original definition, or at least were perceived to have fit in by contemporaries.

Amber amulets for example, are a type which is prevalent in the Frankish territories, and one whose ties to the 'magical' aspects of amulets are more explicit. Historical sources as early as Pliny the Elder's Natural History in the 1st century A.D. attest to their use for protection. However, more importantly, there are also records from the Early Medieval Period itself recording the lives of evangelists like Saint Eligius who operated in Gaul during the early 7th century, which condemn the use of such amulets due to their powers being aligned with witchcraft (Meaney, 1981, pp. 70-71).

There are also other hanging items, which despite lacking explicit condemnation by church officials, have nonetheless been theorised to have held amuletic powers in the eyes of their users. For example, Meaney

suggests that the use of the teeth of canine animals and boars as pendants may have had a protective effect upon the user against their attacks. She additionally speaks of the possible nature of cowry shells and pig's teeth as fertility talismans (Meaney, 1981, p. 134). The use of objects such as tusks and antlers as objects for such purposes has been corroborated by Gilchrist in his analysis of Mediaeval texts in the Corpus Christi 125 collection (Gilchrist, 2019, p. 397). The idea of cowry shells acting as fertility objects is somewhat contentious. The two major arguments in favour of this include the fact that cowry shells resemble the female genitalia to an extent, and that the connection of shells in general with the concept of fertility is well-established (Cattaneo-Vietti et al., 2016, pp. 39-40). An example of this would be the goddess Aphrodite who in Greek mythology had emerged from a shell. On the other hand, no such connection appears within the context of Germanic culture. Hildburgh argues that while cowry shells in Germanic areas may not have held a purpose as fertility amulets, they nonetheless had a role as amulets for luck or against jealousy and the effects of the 'evil-eye', which could among other things include sterility (Hildburgh, 1942, pp. 187-193). There is an argument to be made for the validity of both arguments as, though Germanic culture may have lacked the shell-fertility connection, they had had contact with the Greek and Roman which did by the Early Mediaeval period.

Quartz is another type of material which appears in discussion of apotropaic and cultic materials. Amethysts, for example, are mentioned as having magical properties in both antiquity and the Early Mediaeval Period. Pliny attributes to it a great number of virtues, ranging from ''promoting health and good sleep to protection from animals and poison. Bede seemingly agreed with Pliny's account, but also 'ascribed to it the virtue of recalling the mind of the humble to the Heavenly Kingdom' (Meaney, 1981, p. 77). Rock crystal, another type of quartz, has been interpreted as having spiritual value within a Christian context. The interaction of the crystal with the light of the sun has been compared to the Virgin Mary in Mediaeval literature, and the tale of Saint Columbanus' curing stone is likely to refer to a piece of rock crystal he acquired from a river (Meaney, 1981, p. 92).

The magical nature of antler ivory is a tad nuanced as well. Antler was a material in wide use in the secular realm during antiquity and the Early Mediaeval Period. Thus, it is a bit difficult to attribute an inherent ritual or protective property to it. However, its use in objects which do appear to hold more meaning than simple practical tools would suggest that there may have been something to the material which was appealing from a protective standpoint. Suspended antler discs were often covered in circle-dot patterns (see figure 3.1), which have been suggested to be simplified solar representations. Meaney presents the possible interpretation of antler amulets as catalysts for youth or long life (Meaney, 1981, p.

142). In addition to this, the use of antler for fertility in Mediaeval has been attested to by Gilchrist (2019) as mentioned above (p. 397). There are also the 'Donar clubs' which, while typically being made of bone rather than antler, share the circle-dot of the antler discs and have been interpreted as fertility amulets due to their positioning in the grave and association with cowry shells (Meaney, 1981, p. 164; van Eerden & Nicolay, 2024, p. 14).

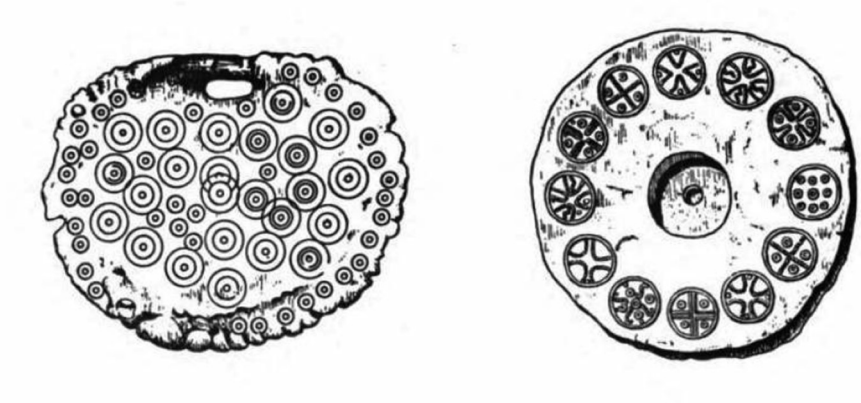


Figure 3.1 *Frisian and Sainte-Sabine Stags' Antler Amulets*. These amulet discs are covered in geometric symbolry, with the Frisian one on the left hosting the classic circle-and-dot pattern. (Meaney, 1981, p. 143, Figure IV.ee)

The concept of apotropaic hanging items is not restricted solely to the natural realm. While somewhat contentious, there have been arguments made about the use of perforated coins as amulets. During Late Antiquity, coins depicting famous kings or emperors were worn with the idea that these coins would give the figure's protection over the wearer, or that they would imbue the wearer with luck (see figure 3.2). This tradition of perforated coins would continue through the Merovingian period as well, with burials containing old roman coins and imitation roman coins among others (Morgan, 2018, pp. 42-44). Coin pendants featuring Christian elements have also been suggested to have acted in a protective nature, regardless of any features of monarchs on the reverse (Meaney, 1981, pp. 220-221). In addition to this, some burials have been found containing Frankish tremisses with crosses upon them placed within, take for example grave 50 at Landau III (see figure 4.10) (Renner, 1970, p. 161). Whether perforated or not, it is possible these could also have been placed on the dead or carried in life with the intention of providing protection to the individual, or alternatively as a mark of religious preference.

Figure 3.2 *Coin Pendants*. Here are multiple examples of such coin pendants with both anthropomorphic and cruciform designs. The mix of spiritual, political, and cultural symbology which these evoke speaks to the complex nature of amuletic objects. (Meaney, 1981, p. 217, Figure VI.x)

Though many of these objects often are suspended from the neck or one's girdle, this is not always the case. A different suspension method would appear with organic pendants due to their use not only as protective objects, but also as medicinal ones. Several records attest to the health benefits of binding certain plants or animal pieces to specific parts of the human body should there be localised ailments (Meaney, 1981, p. 49). The eclectic nature of the use of this category of items makes for a difficult analysis of what can be considered as 'magical protection' and what could have been seen by the people of that time as nothing more than homoeopathic remedies. Even this is a limited outlook, considering the theories regarding the use of these items as symbolic, cultural, or purely aesthetic expressions.

Once again, the topic of gender becomes relevant when speaking of this category of items for two main reasons. Firstly, there is the fact that in the archaeological record (at least for the research area of Merovingian territory), these items appear near exclusively in female graves (Halsall, 2010, p. 294). The presence of amulets or pendants has historically been one of the main identifiers for the gender of the individual buried should there be a lack of human remains, however it should be noted that there is no guarantee of the total accuracy of that method. Secondly, in saintly records from the period, accusations

of heathenry due to the use of phylacteries were either gender-neutral or explicitly targeting women, such as in the previously mentioned *vita* of Saint Eligius (Meaney, 1981, pp. 70-71). Whether this derives from factual observations of the use of these kinds of objects or instead from the religious environment which, as described in the previous chapter, was becoming increasingly hostile towards women, is unclear.

As demonstrated in this subchapter, there are several object and material types which are commonly associated with 'magic'. However, these connections are not always evident when looking purely at the historical record. Gilchrist (2019) takes the example of Pilgrim's badges, which appear to have been deposited en-masse into bodies of water across Western Europe. Such a common phenomenon, in his eyes, would suggest some sort of ritual purpose to these depositions, potentially acting as a thanks to a saint or signalling the end of their pilgrimage. Despite the evident commonality of this act, no examples of such events are recorded anywhere, and this emphasises the need for an archaeological perspective to be considered (pp. 10-12). This example shows the importance of using many different approaches when attempting to look at the possible ritual use of an object, even when some avenues say otherwise. This is where the object type of openwork amulets, seemingly invisible in the historical record, come in.

3.2 Openwork Amulets and their Iconographies

To give a quick overview, the recent comprehensive work on openwork amulets by Parmentier (2013) shall be consulted. Openwork amulets are a type of hanging disc which are defined by their circular exterior, with a geometric pattern, anthropomorphic figure, or zoomorphic figure present on the interior. They were usually made of bronze, though the actual ratio of copper to tin does not appear to be particularly uniform (pp. 30-31). They are typically surrounded by a fitting ring which was likely used to suspend the amulet, of which most are constructed of antler, however there are bronze examples of these as well. Unlike some of the other items mentioned in section 3.1 above, they lack any references in records contemporary to the Merovingian period. This lack of original information on their purpose, combined with their relative rarity in the archaeological record outside of funerary contexts, makes for an interesting object type. Material analysis and grave context have given several clues as to their use, however.

Often alongside these amulets there have been leather fittings and suspension straps found. There is also evidence of amulets being worn down at parts of the edges as well as repair at some of these parts.

Finally, the presence of other suspended items below the amulets, which themselves typically appear below a girdle, demonstrates their practical use as a hanger for objects (Parmentier, 2013, p. 38). These range from everyday items like knives and combs, to items with more apotropaic value such as rock crystals and Cypraea shells (Parmentier, 2013, pp. 49-50).

Apart from the utility of these amulets, their other two aspects lie within the aesthetic and symbolic realms. Both of these primarily derive from the diverse motifs present on them. The seminal work on the typology of the iconography of openwork amulets, Dorothee Renner's *Die Durchbrochenen Zierscheiben Der Merowingerzeit* (1970), presents an analysis of them. She sorts the iconographies into 18 types, as well as a number of sub-types, though more were added to the set by Parmentier's 2013 work. A simple overview of most main types is presented below (examples of each type are presented in appendix A):

Type I: Straight rays protruding from the centre, which often is a circle, making the disc resemble a wheel with spokes.

Type II: Jagged lightning-like rays protruding from the centre, which is almost always a circle, akin to the geometric shape of a 'sonnenrad'

Type III: Rays protruding from the centre each turn into small semi-circles when reaching the boundaries of the interior of the disc.

Type IV: Straight rays protruding from the centre in the shape of a cross, which turn into small rectangles when reaching the boundaries of the interior of the disc.

Type V: Straight rays protruding from the centre in the shape of a cross, which turn into small, staged rectangles when reaching the boundaries of the interior of the disc.

Type VI: Three beasts or snakes protrude turning from the centre of the disc, in a triskelion-like form.

Type VII: Multiple beasts protrude turning from the centre of the disc, with mouths agape.

Type VIII: Four animals intertwine with one another to form a cross-like shape.

Type IX: Rays protrude from the centre, which has 4 holes within it, often rectangular ones.

Type X: Cross motifs present.

Type XI: Swastika motif present.

Type XII: Image of horseman, holding a lance, having arms outstretched upwards, or having one or both arms holding reins.

Type XIII: Image of two humans crossed over one another.

Type XIV: Star of David motif present.

Type XV: Straight lines protruding from the centre, with crescents halfway down the vertical and horizontal lines, pointing outwards.

Type XVI: Rounded arches touching the boundaries of the interior protrude from a circle around the centre of the disc.

Type XVII: Silhouette of a horse without a rider.

Type XVIII: Lines in the form of a 'pelta' (wicker shield) motif.

Type XIX: Diamond interior surrounded by spoked wheel.

Type XX: Four semi-circles touching the boundaries of the interior which are connected in the middle by a circle.

Type XXI: Two opposing individuals whose hands meet, forming a diamond.

Of these types, there is a distinction which can be made between geometric motifs and zoomorphic and anthropomorphic motifs. Arguments have been made for the possible cultic interpretation of both categories, though with some hesitance for the former (Renner, 1970; Parmentier 2013).

Firstly, there should be a disclaimer regarding the apotropaic interpretation of geometric designs. Some hesitance should be shown in attributing spiritual or ritual value to these motifs. While some shapes do have historical precedence in their interpretation as belonging to some cult or another, the idea that some of these may have been developed out of a purely aesthetic appreciation of the geometry cannot be ruled out fully. Nonetheless, to neglect all of these interpretations on that basis would be foolish, so they will be mentioned.

The 'sun-wheel' presented in the type I (see figure 3.3) motif is a design deeply rooted in Gallic tradition, with its circular centre and rays possibly representing the sun. The old Gallic context may have influenced the creation of motifs, but the meaning may not have been the exact same (Renner, 1970, pp. 71-72).

Parmentier (2013) posits that this ‘sun-wheel’ design, or at least the types with more rays, could be designed as such to allow for more points of attachment for leather straps to suspend additional items (p. 80). This is a reasonable argument, though it should be mentioned that there has also been a precedent for the representation of the sun as a wheel in Northern Germanic paganism, and therefore such an interpretation in this motif would not be out of the question (DuBois, 2017, pp. 193-194). Similarly, the swastika has also been seen as a symbol representing a spinning sun with its crooked rays. Renner (1970) suggests that the fact that type XI (see figure 3.4) and II B-2 swastika amulets were so common in Alemannic areas makes that the connection to ‘sun-worship’ is quite clear (p. 79).

Figure 3.3 *Type I A-2*. Sun-wheel amulet. (Renner, 1970, Figure 1.24)

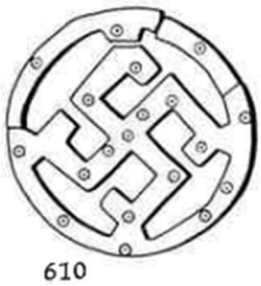


Figure 3.4 *Type XI*. Swastika amulet. (Renner, 1970, Figure 30.610)

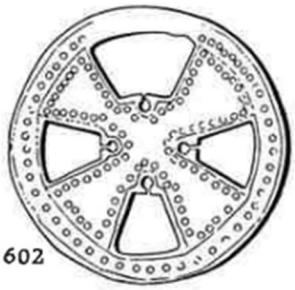


Figure 3.5 *Type X D*. Cruciform amulet. (Renner, 1970, Figure 29.602)

An overarching common geometric type are those amulets containing cruciform motifs, with amulets from types I (see figure 3.3), III-V, and X (see figure 3.5) being primary examples of this. There are other types though where cruciforms make up lesser parts of the design or have been added to the primary motif. This is perhaps one of the most controversial motifs, due to the fact that cruciforms are so integral to Christian art whilst simultaneously being one the simplest geometric patterns. Renner (1970) largely rejects the interpretation of these amulet motifs as being unquestionably depictions of Christian symbolry, and similarly to Parmentier reasoning on type I, suggests some of these designs could be used for purely practical purposes. However, she does add that the cruciforms on these and other types may have been considered as representing Christian faith by the wearer (p. 73). Parmentier (2013) even suggests that the interpretation of cruciforms as Christian or not depends largely on the beliefs of the author analysing them (p. 87). Parmentier’s suggestion is certainly valid given the fact of the nuance which must be held when considering aesthetic appreciation for geometry.

It has been suggested by numerous scholars that several animals depicted in Merovingian objects have ties to Germanic mythology, or at least their symbolic meaning does. Wild animals which are possibly shown in type XVII, VII, and some atypical finds have been seen as representing values such as strength, protection or rebirth. The triskelions of type VI which are made up of snakes, have similarly been assumed by some to be examples of motifs directly derived from Germanic pagan tradition (Parmentier, 2013, pp. 80-83). The type of VII G also presents an interesting example, with a central figure who has been interpreted as Tyr, Woden, Hercules or as a type of snake monster surrounded by wild beasts (see figure 3.6). The origins of this figure are very unclear, and may have come from Germanic, Rhaetic, or potentially even an evolution of Coptic imagery (Renner, 1970, pp. 77-79). Given how the figure's hands are outstretched as well, it could potentially represent a 'Master of Animals' archetype or an 'orant' praying figure. However, there have also been arguments made regarding possible non-pagan interpretation of animal motifs in Early Mediaeval Germanic art. Wamers (2009) puts forward the idea that the art form known as animal-style ii or Salin-style ii has a nuanced nature, and that while it was clearly 'rooted in ancient pictorial, salvatory and apotropaic magic symbolism' (Wamers, 2009, p. 204), it was nonetheless smoothly brought into a Christian context (pp. 203-204). Take for example birds, which appear in multiple amulet types. While having ties to Germanic tradition in the form of Odin's ravens, there have also been cases where eagles have been depicted in a Christian context as the ascension of Christ to Heaven (Wamers, 2009, p. 170). Type XII C showing a bare horse without a rider has also been interpreted by Renner (1970) to have had protective symbolry and may have had some Christian relevance (pp. 82-93). Similarly, she suggests that the discs of type VII E could also show a Christian interpretation of the birds attempting to drink from the centre of the cross as a cup (Renner, 1970, p. 77). Parmentier (2013) has additionally stated that the horse has been an animal sacred within Indo-European cultures and that it could be from such a perspective that its apotropaic value is derived (p. 83).

Figure 3.6 *Type VII G*. Wild man amulet. (Renner, 1970, Figure 26.537).

Figure 3.7 *Type XII A-2*. Orant rider amulet. (Renner, 1970, Figure 31.627).

Figure 3.8 *Type XII B*. Horseman amulet. (Renner, 1970, Figure 31.637)

The complex interpretation of the anthropomorphic types XII A (see figure 3.7) and B (see figure 3.8) rider motifs is expressly stated by Renner. Original assumptions on the nature of type A, which is split between the 'orant-rider' or praying rider and the rider holding his horse, seemed focused on the interpretation of the rider as showing Merovingian nobles or Woden. Renner (1970), though, also mentions that the similarity of the praying motif to Coptic imagery as pointed out by Ebert and Holmqvist could be relevant due to the near-exclusive spread of this amulet in Christianised territory (pp. 79-81). It has also been stated that within a Christian context the rider could be interpreted as Christ the redeemer during the apocalypse (Parmentier, 2013, p. 85). Type XII B, which had also originally been interpreted as Woden, seems also to have possibly had Mediterranean origins. Returning to the Coptic or Christian context, there is the possibility of this rider potentially representing King Solomon, Christ, or an 'equestrian saint' fighting against evil. An alternative interpretation comes from the fact that there have also been depictions of Roman emperors on different mediums in such a position and as such there is certainly a possibility of such imagery being derived from Roman imperial propaganda (Renner, 1970, pp. 81-82).

The other anthropomorphic motif of two humans crossed over one another, type XIII, similarly has a contested interpretation. The motif appears to be derived from pagan sources according to Renner, though a Christian interpretation is not out of the question, due to similar shapes being seen in contemporary Irish high crosses (Renner, 1970, p. 84). Others however have identified the motif as either as a dioskouroian pair representing fertility, or two wrestlers representing Summer and Winter, with both of these concepts calling back to Germanic pagan tradition (Parmentier, 2013, p. 86). An additional interpretation yet

posited by existing research builds partially off of this concept of the two individuals representing the dioskouroian pair. Several examples of type XIII depict what has been interpreted to be two intertwined warriors (see figure 3.9). The idea of twin warrior Gods in Germanic religion is something referenced to as early as Tacitus' *Germania*, in which he compares the pair of Gods to the Roman Castor and Pollux (see figure 3.10) (Tacitus 1, 43). However, apart from this religious viewpoint, there is also a tradition within several Germanic tribes of pairs of semi-mythical warrior kings leading their tribes in important struggles. This grew out of the transition from the classical birthright style of Germanic kingship to the meritocratic warrior-kingship which many tribes ended up adopting (Wolfram, 1997, p. 16). It could then be possible that this symbology was also a way in which individuals could emphasise their personal cultural heritage. It should be added however, that the dioskouroian pair did not always appear in other cultures as pagan entities, and rather could be depicted in Christian contexts (van den Hoek, 2013, pp. 297-300). Whether this would have been the case in this scenario is unclear, but the precedent for a Christian interpretation of them did exist.

Figure 3.9 *Grave 5 at Westhofen II*. This is an example of a type XIII B motif which has been interpreted as featuring two warriors. (Grünewald et al, 2009, p. 951, Figures 991-994).

Figure 3.10 *Silver Denarius of Lucius Memmius*. The prominence of the dioskouroian pair in antiquity is not to be underestimated, and in this coin can be seen a more militaristic rendition of the two. While unlikely to be showing a Germanic warrior-king here, this nonetheless speaks to their association with warfare. (van den Hoek, p. 283, Figure 30).

To reiterate, there is no way to fully confirm the ritual meaning behind the designs of these amulet motifs, these could theoretically all have pure aesthetic attraction to the wearers. However, the mountain of evidence pointing towards the possible apotropaic or cultic interpretations of these motifs should not be disregarded. This, in combination with the context of the religious environment of the period in which they were created suggests that the purpose of these amulets could certainly go beyond their use as hangers.

3.3 Temporal and Spatial Distribution of Openwork Amulets

The period during which openwork amulets were produced, or at least deposited within burials, was exceptionally short. While there are earlier examples of similar creations, none have been seen by academics on this topic as having been the direct predecessor to these amulets. One of the closest possible object types, the Gallo-Roman 'cog' which had the same form as a type I style amulet, was of a much smaller size and found exclusively within religious contexts (Parmentier, 2013, p. 18-20). Their relevance however, outside of a possible influence for the first type I amulets, is unclear. It has also been suggested that decorated antler hanging discs were the predecessors of openwork amulets (Koch, 2017, p. 535). Certainly, there is a point to be made about the likelihood of these discs preceding the antler rings surrounding the amulets, but the question of whether openwork amulets were an artistic evolution of these rings or that these rings were added to the amulets to emphasise their apotropaic nature is unclear.

Openwork amulets in the Early Mediaeval context appear as early as the start of the 6th century, and they disappear towards the end of it during the late 7th century. The study on the amulets between the Loire and Rhine found that it was during the early-to-mid 7th century that they reached their height in popularity, based on their prevalence in graves dated to that time. It was additionally around that time that the motifs on the amulets became more diverse, with zoomorphic and horseman designs developing during the 6th and 7th centuries respectively (Parmentier, 2013, pp. 75-77). Their disappearance coincides not only with the end of the Merovingian period, but also with the overall disappearance of grave goods in Frankish lands (Parmentier, 2013, p. 78). As mentioned in subchapter 2.5, the reason for this change isn't fully clear, but the presence of openwork amulets nonetheless follows this change in burial style. It

should be noted though, that this did not only lead to openwork amulets no longer being present in funerary contexts, but in the entire archaeological record.

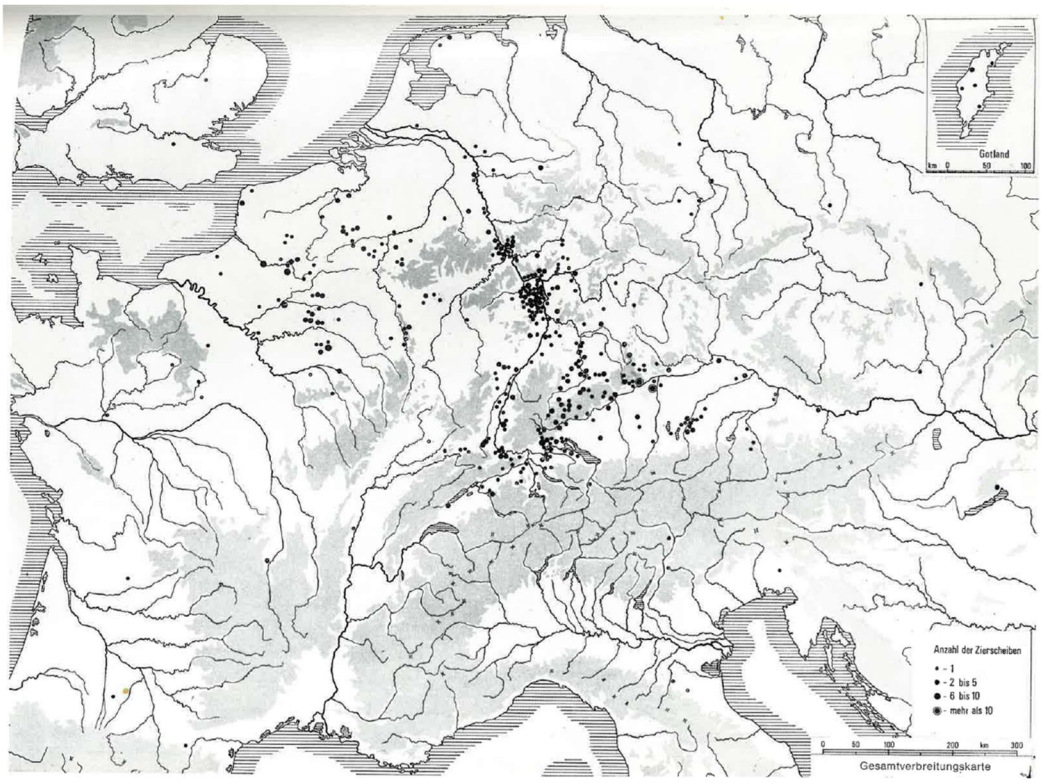


Figure 3.11 *Map of Amulet Distributions*. This map by Renner, though lacking some examples due to its creation in 1970, nonetheless shows some general trends in amulet hotspots which remain relevant to contemporary research. (Renner, 1970, Map 1).

In terms of spatial distribution, openwork amulets present an interesting case (see figure 3.11). The two main regions in which these objects are distributed are the Merovingian realms of Austrasia and Neustria, and the subject realms of Bavaria and Alemannia (see figure 2.2). Despite this fact though, the earliest known examples of graves containing these amulets appear to be two burials in Thuringia (relatively equivalent to the modern federal state) and the Langobard territories (present-day Northern Italy and parts of Tyrol), fairly detached from the two main distribution regions (Renner, 1970, p. 62).

There are the Neustrian and Austrasian amulets which appear in modern-day France, Belgium, Netherlands and some areas west of the Rhine. Then there are the Alemannic and Bavarian amulets, which were present in modern-day Alsace, Switzerland, Baden-Württemberg, and Bavaria. These realms, on the eastern extremities of direct Merovingian authority, contain the two biggest concentrations of amulet depositions. This is one of the reasons why areas within these realms were chosen as the case

studies for this thesis. Each region appears to have preferences for different motifs, though there are some which are overarching types, which has been suggested to be perhaps due to roaming craftsmen or trade between areas (Parmentier, 2013, p. 95).

Otherwise, there were several examples found in areas on the Frankish periphery, such as in the Frisian territory in the modern-day Netherlands and Thuringia (Renner, 1970, pp. 218-221). Additionally, 3 examples were found in South-Eastern England, and 6 more were discovered on the isle of Gothenburg in modern-day Sweden (Parmentier, 2013, p. 22) (Renner, 1970, pp. 218-221).

4. Case studies and Interpretation

This chapter will start with a quick overview of the methodology of this case study, before moving on to the two research areas. Both will have a quick summary of the data derived from their analysis, and this chapter will end in a discussion of the results in comparison to one another. A larger discussion on the results in the larger context of the previous chapters will be conducted in chapter 5.

4.1 Methods

With the historical context as well as the overview of existing knowledge of openwork amulets all covered, it was necessary to collect some concrete data from sites, to try to apply the theoreticals which have been detailed up to now to the realities of the material. Within the two research areas, I studied several pieces of literature to try to assemble a proper overview of all examples of openwork amulets appearing in funerary contexts. The base literature for this was the book by Renner (1970), however this was supplemented with several other works including: Grünewald et al. (2009), Parmentier (2013) Polenz (1988), Koch (1977), Haas-Gebhard (2022), and Koch (2017).

While there are also amulets found in confused contexts, this study will focus solely on two categories which are kept separate in data recordings:

A. Amulets which are explicitly recorded to have been found within excavated graves.

B. Amulets which were found within cemetery sites during excavations, though their exact grave context is unknown, or the other finds of their graves have not been recorded.

From intact or semi-intact graves, information including gendered burial goods, burial goods with possible apotropaic interpretations as were mentioned in section 3.1, and pendants or amulets will be collected. Meanwhile, from both known and unknown graves the type of motif and the kind of fitting ring present will be marked down. This will allow for an analysis from multiple sides through a gendered perspective, an apotropaic lens, and a spatial distribution lens, as the primary research area will be mapped out. Meanwhile, the secondary research area acts as a ‘compare and contrast’ for aspects like amulet motif preference, presence of apotropaic items and gendered grave goods among others.

Above-all, it must be recalled that when analysing the goods within a given grave, the conclusions derived do not pertain to the exact beliefs and living conditions of the individual buried within. Rather,

the items placed represent a conglomeration of the ideals of society towards how one should be represented in death, the way in which the individual's family has wished for them to be perceived in eternity, and to a certain extent the actual conditions of the interred. Due to the fact that the extent to which each of these factors is represented cannot be deduced, it must be kept in mind that it is this confederated identity of the individual which one is looking at (Schülke, 1999, pp. 94-95). This does affect this research of course, as it is possible that the identification of these amulets as apotropaic or religious meaning could well have differed from family to family, let alone from the actual individual carrying it.

Figure 4.1 *Map of Research Area 1*. A Google Earth Pro map upon which the outline of the primary research area has been drawn. (Adapted from Google Earth Pro).

4.2 Rheinhessen

In this case study of the presence of amulets in graves, the primary chosen area is a stretch of territory which goes from Landau in the South, along both sides of the Rhine's bank, up to the Northern extent of Rheinhessen and then to the East up to Frankfurt (see figure 4.1). The reasoning for this choice is because this rough geographical region is the site of one of the highest concentrations of cemeteries containing openwork amulets. This is not the only reason that this region can be of interest, however. This area includes an internal border within the Frankish domain, with the Northern section lying within the boundaries of Frankish Austrasia, while the rest of the area belonged to the Duchy of Alemannia which had by the end of the 5th century found itself under Frankish control. Historical and archaeological records show the presence of several early Christian communities within this region, with at least Mainz, Speyer and Worms having hosted some (Mullen, 2004, pp. 225-226). A total of 96 amulet graves spread across 54 cemeteries were found within this area.

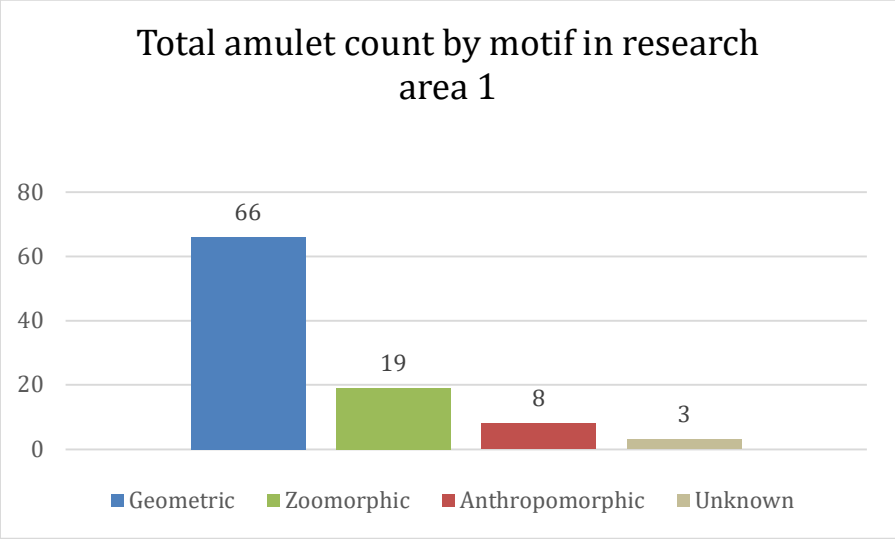


Figure 4.2 *Total amulet count by motif in research area 1*. Chart of the total number of amulets split across the different motif types in research area 1.

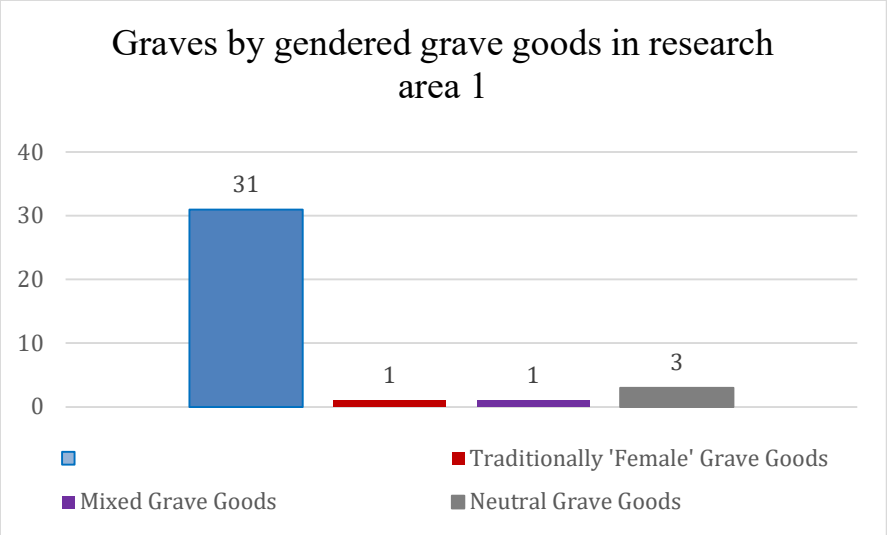


Figure 4.3 *Graves by gendered grave goods in research area 1*. Chart dividing graves in the research area by gendered grave goods or lack there-of in research area 1.

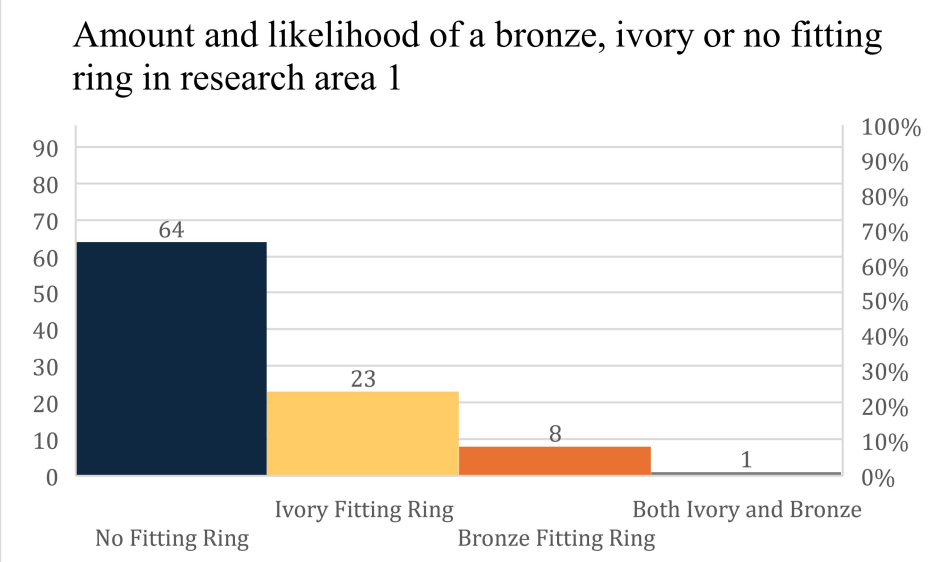


Figure 4.4 *Amount and likelihood of a bronze, ivory or no fitting ring in research area 1*. Chart of graves by presence and type or lack of fitting rings in research area 1. Numbers displayed on bars are equivalent to the number of graves containing or not containing fitting rings.

Grave Site and Number	Hanging object with apotropaic relevance	Any object with apotropaic relevance
Westhofen 1 (XI)	Figure-eight with suspended shells	
Westhofen 1 (1)	'Toilet-device', cruciform pendant	
Wahlheim (1)	2 pierced coins (Vespasian and Antoninus Pius)	Amber earrings
Gumbsheim (1)	Cruciform pendant	
Landau III (25)	Cypraea shell	Frankish tremissis with cross, Roman small bronze coin
Mannheim-Seckenheim (375)	Cypraea shell	Amber beads
Rommersheim (19)	Cypraea shell	
Eimsheim (1)	Cypraea shell, ivory club pendant	Bronze cruciform fitting
Westhofen 1 (155)	Perforated shell	
Planig (?)	Pierced coin of Domitian	
Offstein (9)	Shell, Cypraea shell	
Weinheim (18)		Octagonal Rock Crystal
Wörrstadt (4)		2 roman coins (Vespasian and Maximinus Thrax), Roman and late la Tene items
Rommersheim (40)		Amber beads
Köngernheim II (40)		Amber bead

Table 4.1 *Apotropaic item graves in research area 1*. This table shows the graves which contain either hanging apotropaic or regular apotropaic items in research area 1.

Out of all cemeteries which contain amulets and have a known grave count of a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 200, the mean percentage of graves to contain one is **3.84%** (see appendix F.). Geometric motifs seemingly dominate this region, apart from several zoomorphic motifs which are mostly clustered, and a handful of anthropomorphic motifs (see figure 4.2 and appendix b).

The seemingly flat distribution of amulets throughout cemeteries of varying sizes could suggest that these objects may have been a target for grave re-opening. In **35 of the 54** cemeteries, only 1 grave contained an amulet, and only **10** cemeteries contained more than 4 amulets. Sprendlingen for example, has the highest count at 7 amulets at a cemetery size of 95 burials, placing it at almost double the average set

above. On the other hand, the fact that many of the graves containing amulets are rather empty, perhaps due to grave re-opening, could suggest that they were not particularly sought-after either.

Regarding the apotropaic items, out of all 42 known graves hanging ones make up 26.19% of them, meanwhile 35.71% of the 42 graves contain any type of item with apotropaic relevance (see table 4.1). While not incredibly high, one could imagine that, given the possible disturbance of the graves, this number may have been much higher before. A preference for antler fitting rings over bronze ones can also be observed in this area, with the number of the former being almost three times that of the latter (see figure 4.4). The appearance of male goods like weapons in some graves is interesting (see figure 4.3), however female-gendered graves seem to dominate nonetheless, and this shall be discussed more in subchapter 4.4.

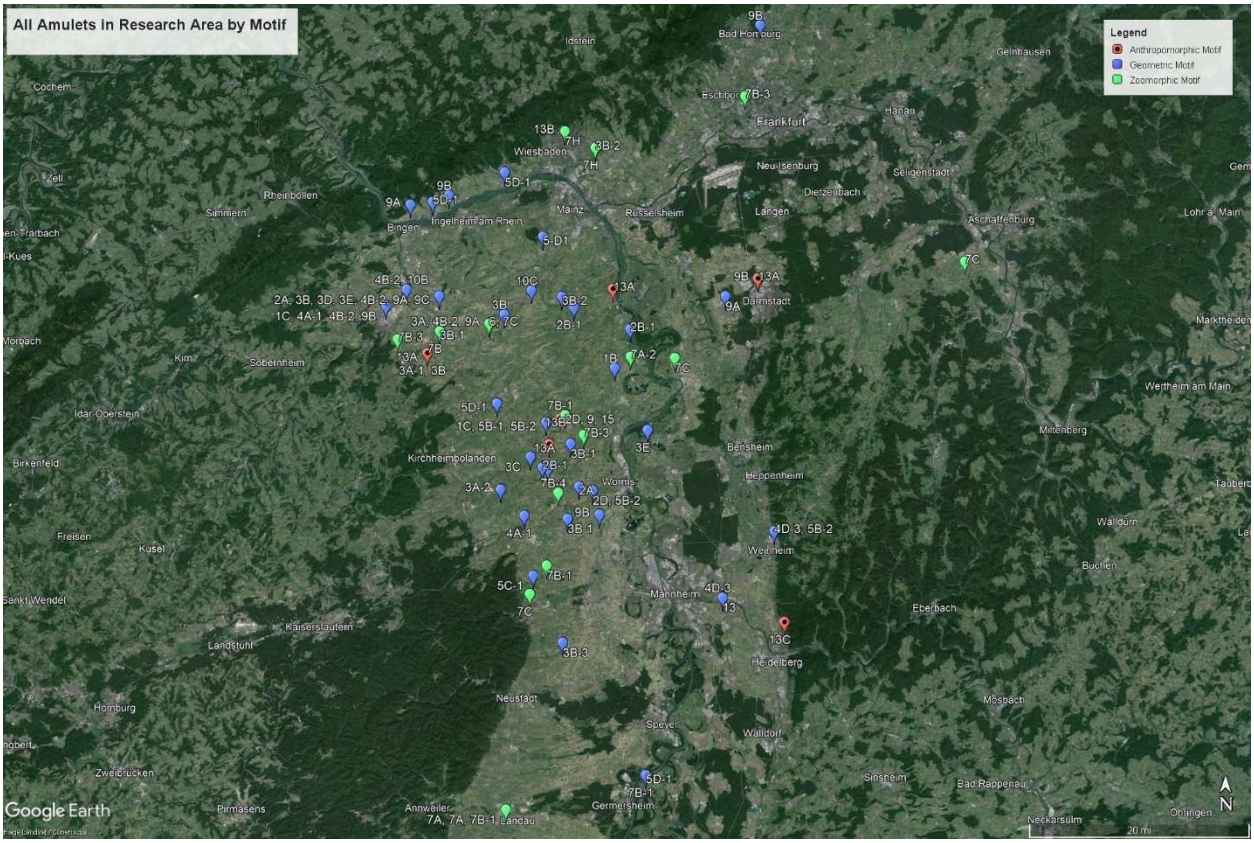


Figure 4.5 *All amulets in research area by motif*. Map including all the amulets in the primary research area. (Adapted from Google Earth Pro).

In terms of location, whilst the presence of the amulets can be found almost everywhere across the region, there are two primary focus points (see figure 4.5). One of which appears in and to the East of Bad Kreuznach, and the other in the area between Worms and Alzey. All three of these locations existed prior to the transition of the Empire, and though it is doubtful that all these continued to be inhabited at their capacity of two centuries prior, it can nonetheless be imagined that the cemeteries could have also been serving the descendants of those who lived within these concentrated population centres. In addition to this, it would not be out of the question that existing manufacturing centres in these locations could have been responsible for the production of openwork amulets.

4.3 Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg

To supplement the amulets in the original research area, a second region was selected within the modern-day regions of Bavaria and Baden-Wurttemberg. Similar to the primary research area, by the 6th century this area was controlled indirectly by the Merovingian dynasty through a client state run by the Agilolfing dynasty. Prior to the control of this area by the Merovingians however, it made up a part of the Roman province of Raetia Secunda. Due to this province's location on the border with *'Barbaricum'*, its administrative capital *Augusta Vindelicorum* (now Augsburg) was not only a hub of trade but a seemingly well-populated settlement (Goffart, 2006, p. 220). It should also be noted that *Augusta Vindelicorum* was likely the site of an early Christian community in the province (Mullen, 2004, p. 222). One interesting aspect of this area, however, is the character of the local population by the period in which openwork amulets appear. Genetic studies from several cemeteries have shown a remarkable continuation from the Late-Antique population up through to the Early-Mediaeval period, with one large and diverse wave of migration coming through around the turn of the sixth century. Similar population movements during late Antiquity would suggest to a certain extent a regular supplementation of outsiders to the local population (Velte et al., 2023, pp. 23-24).

Apart from the interesting context of the region, the main reason for the choice of this as the secondary research area to compare and contrast the data of the former one is the presence of two large cemeteries containing many openwork amulets. Schretzheim itself contains an Early Mediaeval cemetery with 630 graves. Not only this, but among these burials, 13 of the 23 amulet graves were reported to be undisturbed

unlike the near-empty graves of Rheinhessen. The other major cemetery, Nordendorf contains 18 amulet graves.

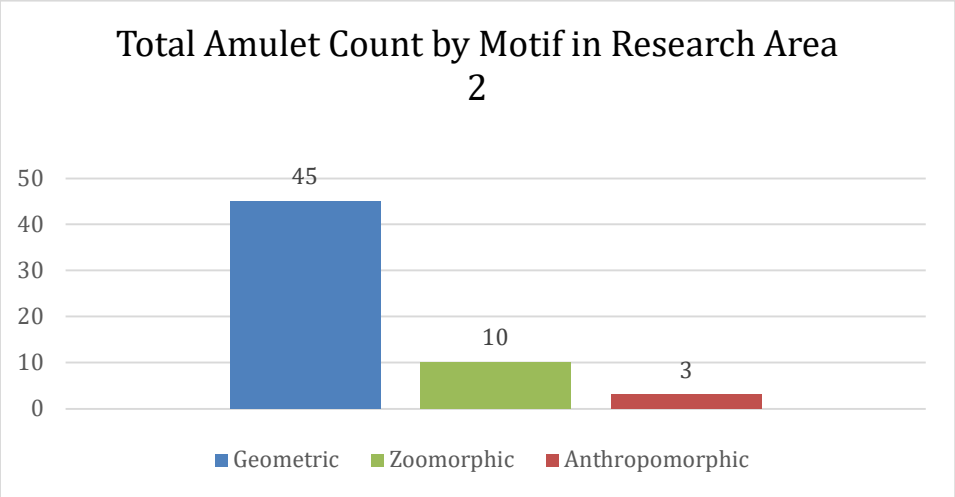


Figure 4.6 *Total amulet count by motif in research area* 2. Chart of the total number of amulets split across the different motif types in research area 2.

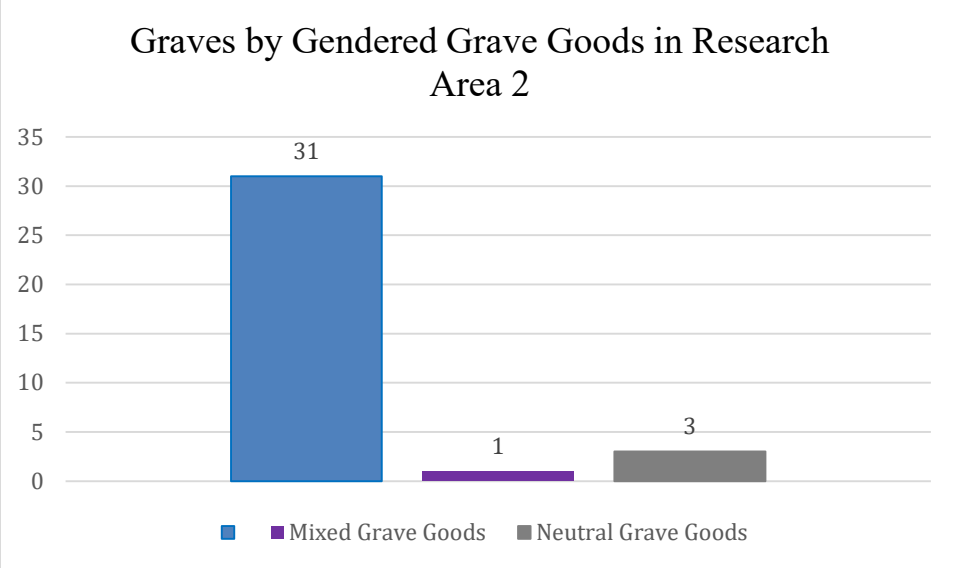


Figure 4.7 *Graves by gendered grave goods in research area 2*. Chart dividing graves in the research area by gendered grave goods or lack there-of in research area 2.

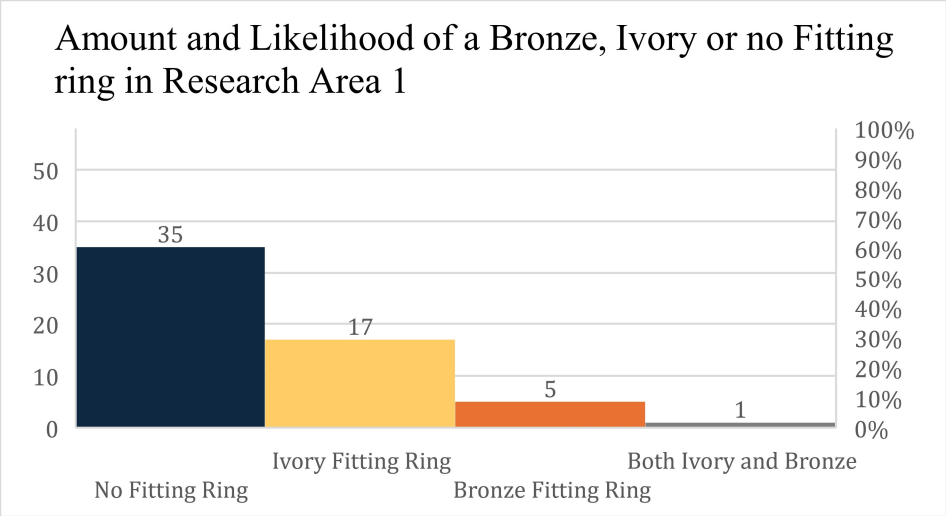


Figure 4.8 *Amount and likelihood of a bronze, ivory or no fitting ring in research area 2*. Chart of graves by presence and type or lack of fitting rings in research area 2. Numbers displayed on bars are equivalent to the number of graves containing or not containing fitting rings.

Grave	Hanging Object with Apotropaic Relevance	Any Object with Apotropaic Relevance
München-Giesing (66)	2 perforated Roman coins	
Pfahlheim (21)	Perforated Cypraea shell	
Schretzheim (126)	Perforated bronze coin	Rock crystal bead, 3 amethyst beads
Schretzheim (133)	Broken beaver tooth, fragment of a blue glass armring (late-Latène)	
Schretzheim (22)	2 perforated roman bronze coins	
Schretzheim (233)	Perforated Cypraea shell	4 Rock crystal beads
Schretzheim (26)	2 perforated bracteate imitations of Justinian I solidii, perforated bronze coin, perforated Cypraea shell	3 rock crystal beads
Schretzheim (282)	11 perforated Roman bronze coins	
Schretzheim (304)	Perforated Cypraea shell	Amethyst bead
Schretzheim (347)	Perforated bronze coin, bone disclet	
Schretzheim (361)	Antler disc	
Schretzheim (540)	Perforated bear tooth, anchor-shaped pendant	Rock crystal bead
Wittislingen (?)	Perforated Cypraea shell	
Schretzheim (305)		Amethyst bead, 3 rock crystal beads
Schretzheim (612)		Rock crystal bead
Pfahlheim (10)		Rock crystal bead

Table 4.2 *Apotropaic item graves in research area 2*. This table shows the graves which contain either hanging apotropaic or regular apotropaic items in research area 1.

Combining the grave counts of all known cemeteries in this area with the number of amulets results in a mean of 3.34**%**, though Schretzheim skews this number a fair bit due to the number of amulets. Excluding Schretzheim the mean jumps down to **2.88%** (see appendix F.). From the perspective of spatial distribution, a similar, though in this case even more exaggerated pattern can be observed. The Schretzheim cemetery, lying nearby the Roman settlement of Phoebiana, contains 23 amulet graves. Nordendorf meanwhile, with its 18 amulets, lies just 27 km North of modern Augsburg and the same distance East of Schretzheim. Despite this high concentration, at Schretzheim itself the mean percentage of graves containing amulets (**3.65%**) nonetheless fits closely to the average set at the primary research area. Even considering this fact, the number of amulets is nonetheless impressive as no other cemetery of a similar size in the primary research area contains as much as a quarter of the amulets present at this site. Unsurprisingly though, geometric motifs dominate these cemeteries (see figure 4.6).

Regarding the apotropaic items, out of all 35 known graves hanging ones make up 37.14% of them, meanwhile 45.71% of the 35 graves contain any type of item with apotropaic relevance (see table 4.2). This is a massive increase in comparison to the first research area and can likely be explained by the relative lack of disturbance in many graves. Again, the preference for antler over bronze fitting rings can be observed (see figure 4.8), though the numbers here are a tad skewed as none of the unknown grave examples were recorded to have had fittings with them (see appendix E.), unlike those of research area 1. If one were only to consider the known graves, then the number of amulets without fittings would jump down to 12.

Here, the number of known graves with female burial goods is even more one-sided (see figure 4.7). In fact, even out of the 3 graves which were considered to have neutral grave goods, the excavation team marked them as ‘female graves’, though the basis for this is not entirely known.

Finally, there appear to be three graves from which openwork amulets were potentially taken post-interment in Schretzheim. This is due to the presence of antler ivory fitting rings in all the graves while

lacking amulets (Koch, 1977, p. 83). This would present the most solid evidence so-far for the targeting of openwork amulets in grave-reopening.

4.4 Interpretation of Case Study Data

There can be proposed numerous reasons for the rarity of the amulets, though there are several prominent contenders. Firstly, there is the idea that these objects were solely in the possession of richer individuals, naturally making their appearance sparse in grave fields. This does seem to be true when looking at some of the well-furnished graves at Schretzheim (see appendix D), though it must be noted that there is a great variance in the grave-by-grave wealth of the combined grave goods, and that this is even less clear in the cemeteries of the primary research area (see figures 4.9 and 4.10). Secondly, there is the idea that they could have been targets of grave re-opening, which could be supported by some of the evidence at Schretzheim (Koch, 1977, p. 83). On the other hand, the number of disturbed graves in the primary research which still had their amulets suggests otherwise, take for example Westhofen 1 (155) (see figure 4.9). Thirdly, there is the possibility that actual deposition of these amulets could have been an uncommon activity. There are numerous examples of fragmentary or repaired openwork amulets in the burial record, and thus it is not out of the question that these amulets could often have been used for generations until deposition of grave goods was no longer a common practice or until these amulets were no longer popular and were then discarded once they broke. Fourthly, it could be that these amulets were regarded as apotropaic, and thus considered taboo by some portions of society who more strictly followed the teachings of the Church. In sum, these reasons can largely be split into two camps: A. that these objects were sought after only by a limited caste of society, either the rich or those willing to invest into the creation of these as apotropaic items; or B. that their rarity is an aberration, and that this superficial rarity is due to the discarding of amulets during life or their seizure after death.

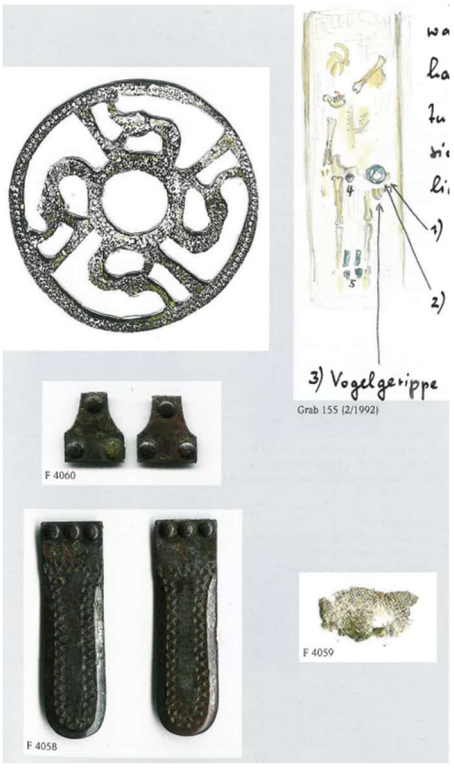
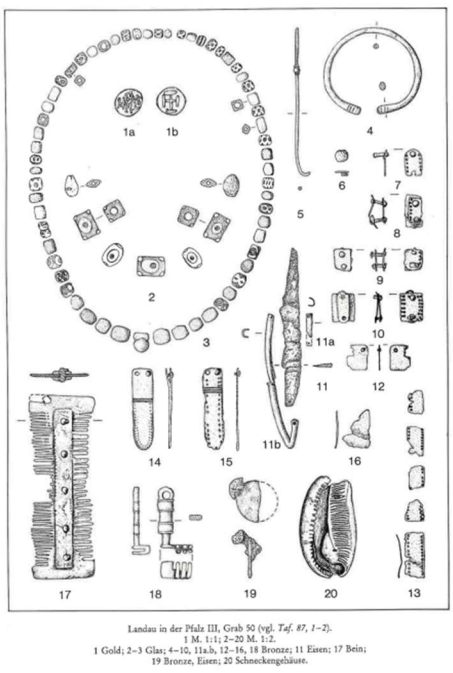
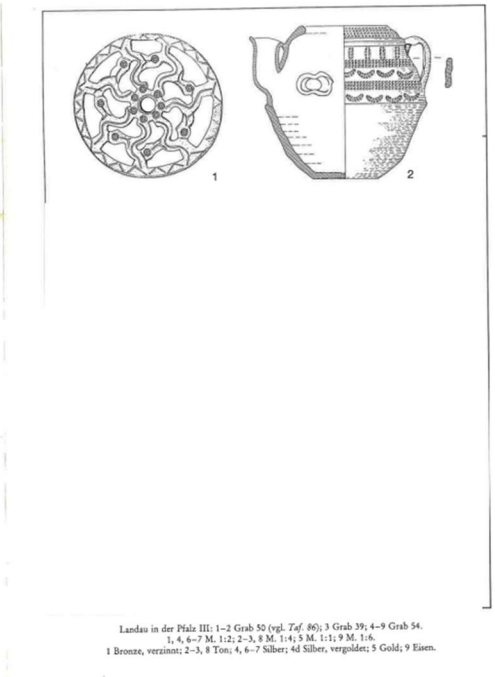


Figure 4.9 *Grave 155 at Westhofen 1*. This grave, while seemingly heavily disturbed by looting, nonetheless contains its openwork amulet. (Grünewald et al, 2009, p. 1211, Figures 4058-4062).



Landau in der Pfalz III, Grab 50 (vgl. *Taf. 87, 1–2*).
1 M. 1:1; 2–20 M. 1:2.
1 Gold; 2–3 Glas; 4–10, 11a.b, 12–16, 18 Bronze; 11 Eisen; 17 Bein; 19 Bronze, Eisen; 20 Schneckengehäuse.



Landau in der Pfalz III: 1–2 Grab 50 (vgl. *Taf. 86*); 3 Grab 39; 4–9 Grab 54.
1, 4, 6–7 M. 1:2; 2–3, 8 M. 1:4; 5 M. 1:1; 9 M. 1:6.
1 Bronze, verzinnt; 2–3, 8 Ton; 4, 6–7 Silber; 4d Silber, vergoldet; 5 Gold; 9 Eisen.

Figure 4.10 *Grave 50 at Landau III*. This grave is one of the best-furnished examples within the primary research area and stands in stark contrast to most graves. (Polenz, 1988, Figures 86.1A-86.20, 87.1-87.2)

The differences in the quantities of the three main symbological categories becomes quite apparent after looking at both research areas. The disparity between geometric and anthropomorphic or zoomorphic motifs is great in both research areas.

The geometric types, recognized as both the earliest and most common forms of openwork amulets, are accordingly the most widespread and numerous of motifs (see figures 4.2 and 4.6). Comparatively, the zoomorphic types, whilst being distributed mainly in the areas nearby possible major manufacturing centres, already show proof of either potential independent manufacture or independent symbological preference outside of the major centres. For example, the cemetery at Landau III represents the sole case in which a site with more than one amulet contains only non-geometric (in this case zoomorphic) amulets (Renner, 1970, p. 219). Similarly, the anthropomorphic amulets appear both in the larger concentrations and as isolated examples in single cemeteries. Unlike the zoomorphic ones however, these amulets only appear once per site. The question of their rarity is to be discussed in the following discussion chapter.

When present, the preference for fitting rings made of antler ivory, which has been attested to in other regions, can be observed in both research areas. The trends in the secondary research area would suggest that the lack of fittings occurs primarily in disturbed graves. Meanwhile, in the primary research area, the existence of a trend is rather unclear as fittings appear in both disturbed and relatively undisturbed graves. This discrepancy could be explained by localised differences in item preferences when re-opening burials. Alternatively, there is the possibility of the decay of these organic fitting rings, as they often appear fragmented or even only remnants of them are discovered. Otherwise, it could simply be the case that the use or deposition of fitting rings was less popular in the primary research area.

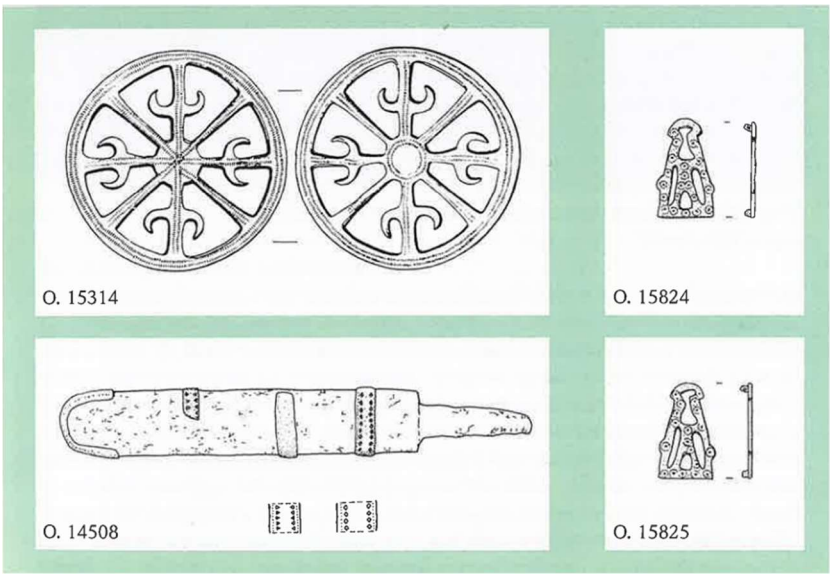


Figure 4.11 *Grave XI at Westhofen I*. Illustration of some of the grave goods found in grave XI, including the sheathed sword. (Grünewald et al, 2009, p. 935, Figures 15314, 15824, 14508, 15825).

The gendered grave goods which appear alongside the amulets would generally fit the pre-existing idea of them as appearing in female burials. Most burials contain pearls and at least some jewellery (see appendices C and D), though their quantity varies heavily from burial to burial. The likeliest of the burials to be of a male individual would be that of Biebesheim (6), which contains a lance head (Renner, 1970, p. 167). The other potential 'male' burials are those of Mölsheim (12), Westhofen 1 (XI) (see figure 4.11), and that of Pfahlheim (10) (see appendix C) (Renner, 1970, pp. 110, 116). However, all three of these also contain female grave goods, and in the case of Westhofen 1 it is suggested that this was a double burial of a male and female individual (Grünewald et al., 2009, p. 934). Of course, though, it must be considered that one of the prime categories of items to be taken from graves is that of weaponry (Klevnäs et al., 2021, p. 1017). Thus, it could well be the case that several graves, especially in the more heavily disturbed primary research area, could have contained a more mixed assortment of goods gender-wise at the time of inhumation. Nonetheless, the data from the secondary research area with less-disturbed contexts does point towards the idea that the individuals within these graves were buried as women (see figure 4.8). It should be stated that very few of these cemeteries have had a scientific analysis of the remains conducted, so the designation of graves as male or female in the literature is uncommon, and even when stated, the justification is not always given.

The association of openwork amulets with other regular hanging objects as well as apotropaic hanging objects, while less clear in the primary research area, looks to be rather uncommon in the secondary research area. The amulets look to act often as mounts from which to suspend other apotropaic objects, which is visible in sites such as Schretzhheim and Pfahlheim due to the placement of objects and straps in relation to the amulets. In the primary research area, though the exact locations of some objects are less

clear, apotropaic hanging objects can be found which in the secondary research area are clearly associated with the amulets, and thus there is no reason to exclude the possibility that these could also have been suspended from the amulet.

5. Discussion

With the data from the two research areas considered, the facts laid out in previous chapters can now be re-visited to try to address the primary research question. The data will now be compared to contextual information regarding the symbology and distribution of amulets, other apotropaic items, and gender dynamics. A summary of these will be given and then there will be a discussion on the limitations of the research and further actions to be taken on this topic.

5.1 Symbology

The question of symbological relevance returns after having looked through the two case studies. The idea of greater cultic meaning coming with greater rarity in design can be evaluated through the other grave goods present in the burials. While it should be recalled that the question of interpreting geometric designs in a cultic sense can be problematic because it is highly difficult to differentiate aesthetic taste from meaning, some observations can be made after going through the data.

A preference in each research area for one or two general geometric types can be observed, but present in both areas are those types with a central cruciform pattern (see appendices C and D). This could simply be due to the ease of manufacture that comes with having such a form in the centre of the disc, or alternatively that these just happen to be part of an aesthetically pleasing pattern. However, it could also be considered that this popularity is due to a wish by these individuals to identify themselves as Christians through the integration of the cross within the amulet's design as mentioned by Renner (Renner, 1970, p. 73). As mentioned before, no absolute conclusions can be drawn here, however the popularity of this symbol should be noted as having potential relevance.

The zoomorphic amulets, while less common, do not appear to have a significantly higher association with other apotropaic items than geometric amulets. Certainly, it should not be denied that these designs have a plethora of cultic interpretations, both pagan and Christian, this heightened cultic relevance does not seem to reflect itself in other grave goods. Nonetheless, it could still be imagined that the cultic value of the symbology itself might disregard the need for additional apotropaic items to be present. Should it be accepted, however, that this rarity does not come from its cultic value, it could also be explained through the higher intricacy of these designs in comparison to geometric ones. These zoomorphic types,

while built off of geometric designs, do require some additional effort to add the details of the animals which they depict. Additionally, these designs do appear later than geometric ones, and thus would likely be less present due to a shorter period of deposition within burials (Parmentier, 2013, p. 77).

The third symbological type, that of anthropomorphic designs, presents an interesting case. Similarly to the zoomorphic amulets, there is no exceptional association with other apotropaic items, they came later as designs, and they are one of the more intricate design categories (Parmentier, 2013, pp. 75-77). The fact of the absolute absence of the horseman and rider amulet types should be noted. Even if their motifs do not hold great cultic value as representing, say, Woden or an equestrian saint, this could show a major cultural split between the designs of the Frankish and Alemannic heartlands and these peripheral regions, if not a socio-religious one. Meanwhile, the singular anthropomorphic design present in the covered research areas was that of the crossed pair. Given the very striking religious and cultural aspects of this amulet type, it is difficult to come up with a solid conclusion as to the reason for their simultaneous rarity and wide dispersal within the research areas. The idea of the crossed warriors as a cultural marker is certainly no impossibility, but to attempt to confirm such a hypothesis would require further actions which were outside the scope of this thesis, which are described in subchapter 5.6. Otherwise, the religious interpretation of them is a possibility nonetheless. Absolute confirmation of either scenario is near impossible of course but it is more likely than not that there is some meaning to these above their pure aesthetic value.

5.2 Distribution of Amulets

With the analysis of the two research areas, several observations become evident concerning the distribution of openwork amulets.

Firstly, their spatial distribution demonstrates that, while they are obviously largely limited to the greater Frankish demesne, their appearance in cemeteries is concentrated rather logically nearby what were likely highly populated settlements. In the primary research area, as mentioned in the previous chapter, these were around Bad Kreuznach, a former Limes fortress town, and between Alzey and Worms which both had settlements during the Roman period. Similarly, in the second research area, the Schretzheim cemetery lay just near the old Roman settlement of Phoebiana, and the Nordendorf cemetery only a 27 km distance from Augsburg, the capital of Rhaetia Secunda (Goffart, 2006, p. 220). Due to the likelihood that

these areas continued to be occupied during the post-Roman period, it can be imagined that smithies in these areas would have provided the service of the manufacture of these amulets.

Along with this, it would not be out of the question that there were pagan communities still present in the area given that there were contemporary missions to the Alpine region, though of course this must be taken with a grain of salt as the extent to which these people may have been pagans rather than non-orthodox Christians is unclear (O'Hara, 2018, p. 167). Nonetheless it would seem that there was no major issue taken with the production of these amulets by authorities as that would likely have taken place in the same areas where major communities were centred and were then deposited in cemeteries which serviced these same centres.

From a religious perspective, there is something to be said about the relevance of the presence of Christian, or at least self-identifying Christian communities in the area. As stated in the previous chapter, there were several Christian communities already present during the Roman period in the research areas (Mullen, 2004, pp. 222-226). Certainly then, it would not be out of the question that individuals who saw themselves as Christian would carry these cruciform pendants to present themselves as such. Then, during the latter half of the 6th century in the Bavarian and Alemannic regions, there was an intervention by the Church to establish authority under the guise of converting the populace (O'Hara, 2018, p. 167). Perhaps this active presence of evangelists and the stories of miracles they were performing could have encouraged many to adopt cruciform symbolry into their personal apotropaic collection. As posited by Ludwig Pauli regarding three graves at Lauterhofen, the women buried with charms as well as Christian symbols could have just regarded these cruciforms as new magic objects which replaced the old ones (Schülke, 1999, p. 92).

From a temporal standpoint, there are also some interesting observations. The late popularity of openwork amulets in the Merovingian period poses several questions. On the one hand, it could be argued that the fact of their increasing popularity in a time when the Church was trying to further intensify its enforcement of orthodoxy which included prohibition of phylacteries would point to the authorities not seeing the amulets as a threat to said orthodoxy. On the other hand, though, the prohibition of such practices was certainly not accomplished by the end of the 7th century, and they would even continue this fight well into the 8th century, by which time openwork amulets had disappeared along with everything else from the grave record (Parmentier, 2013, p. 78). Rather, it would seem more likely that the religious

turmoil in this period could have driven individuals further towards use of amulets containing both vaguely Christian and non-Christian elements to protect themselves in a rapidly changing religious environment.

The question of why exactly these amulets were deposited when they were remains unanswered. As has been recognised in other studies, openwork amulets were often repaired to extend their usability rather than simply discarded (Parmentier, 2013, p. 39). For the later burials, this could perhaps be explained by the idea of a movement towards a kin-group's show of wealth in the interment of their family members (Halsall, 2020, pp. 178). For the 6th century examples though it appears much less clear. Perhaps in these cases the amulets were seen as a sort of spiritual protection for the dead individual who carried them, continuing the purpose they had in life. Alternatively, one could imagine that the family members who assembled the grave goods might have intentionally placed an amulet with a particular motif among them to satisfy their religious preferences. Perhaps if the interred individual was not an avid Christian, their kin who were could have placed a cruciform amulet in there as a way to 'save their soul'.

5.3 Relevance of other Burial Goods

From the two research areas, a rather clear picture reveals itself of the not uncommon association of openwork amulets with other apotropaic items and materials.

Antler ivory, which appears not only as a fitting for the suspension of the amulets but also as the base for items suspended from them, is one of the most common materials to be found in the burials. Above-all, it is the common usage of ivory rings as the fitting for the discs which would suggest that they have the potential for an apotropaic interpretation. Regarding the presence of bronze fittings rather than ivory, it would seem to be more of an aesthetic choice. Despite their appearance as early as the 6th century, the commonality of ivory rings makes it more likely that the original fitting rings were meant to be made of ivory. It should be recalled though that there are also examples of ritual objects such as the 'Donar clubs' where they were made from both bone and bronze, but the ritual nature seemingly came not only from their material but also from their form (van Eerden & Nicolay, 2024, p. 14).

Another feature not uncommon of burials containing openwork amulets is the presence of Cypraea Tigris shells. These shells, as mentioned in previous chapters, have been interpreted in several ways to hold symbolism, for example that of fertility in Anglo-Saxon contexts (Meaney, 1981, p. 134). However, what makes their presence doubly interesting in burials in the secondary research area is what appears to be evidence of their direct suspension from the amulet. This could act as further evidence of the amulets being regarded as having direct ties to more overtly symbolic items, or even having a symbolic function themselves.

There is also the minimal presence of likely explicitly Christian grave goods which appear in the primary research area. These three act as the only examples of what could be actual religious symbols, and no 'pagan' equivalent is found, apart from perhaps in the 'Donar club' pendant, though this appears alongside one of the Christian items in Eimsheim (I) (Grünewald et al., 2009, pp. 520-522). This fact could provide more evidence towards the identification of the cruciform motifs themselves as containing Christian value to the buried and their kin. One could imagine that in lieu of other items identified as 'Christian' such as cruciform pendants or fittings which are similarly vague in their explicit religious value, that the motifs on these amulets would also be viewed as holding such meaning.

5.4 Gender

As discussed in subchapter 4.4, the relationship between these amulets and gender is certainly not as clear as was expected before going through the research. While it is true that they are largely associated with female grave goods, there were also examples of weaponry being found among the burials (Renner, 1970, pp. 110, 116; Grünewald et al., 2009, p. 934). In addition to this, the factor of grave reopening should not be ignored due to the propensity for the removal of male-coded grave goods such as weaponry.

Looking at this from the perspective of gender in the Early Mediaeval Period though, there are some things to be said about how women could have interpreted these amulets. As mentioned in subchapter 2.5, the idea of womanhood, at least in the 6th century, as something to be observed, comes back into relevance here (Halsall, 2020, pp. 175-176). If, as theorised in 5.2, the adoption of these amulets with varying cultic symbolry came about due to the turmoil of the religious landscape in the 6th and 7th centuries, it could make sense that these women would take on these amulets as another perspective from

which to be perceived. Perhaps by wearing, say, cruciform amulets, a woman could demonstrate her piety and dedication to the Church to her community. Or for more vague motifs, these could be representative of her connection to spirituality or cultural heritage.

While it was difficult to find recordings of the estimated ages of the interred individuals, it seems that these women were largely young or middle-aged. With this in mind, the possibility of the antler disc surrounding the amulet acting as a catalyst for fertility would not be an odd interpretation. The single burial which was explicitly considered to be of an older woman was at Wittislingen (Haas-Gebhard, 2022, p. 40). This, though, could seemingly be excused by the possible change of grave goods towards representing the wealth of the kin-group rather than the individual, given that her burial took place in the mid-to-late 7th century (Haas-Gebhard, 2022, pp. 16-17; Halsall, 2020, pp. 177-178).

5.5 Overall Conclusions

Several times over the course of this paper, caution has been advised when trying to attribute religious or ritual meaning to art. This still rings true, and no absolute answer can be given to the question of the extent to which openwork amulets acted as cultic objects. Nevertheless, the evidence in favour of some level of meaning past their pure aesthetic and practical value is plentiful.

On the side of the material itself, there are several points. The continued repair of these amulets as they degraded shows that there certainly was some level of importance to them (Parmentier, 2013, p. 39). Were they simply aesthetic or utility items, their degradation would likely harm their purpose, and at some point, it would be more cost-efficient to commission new ones. The numerous religious interpretations, both ‘Christian’ and ‘pagan’ of the motifs present on the different types, are at times so clear that it is almost difficult not to perceive them through such a lens. The choice of fitting these amulets predominantly with antler rings adds credibility to the connection of these objects to magic. The presence of other hanging objects with magical or apotropaic qualities such as Cypraea Tigris shells, coins and cruciform objects, along with the likelihood of their suspension from the openwork amulet, further solidifies this connection.

From the perspective of the context of the times, additional points can be made. This period of religious turmoil in the aftermath of the collapse of central Roman authority and the re-establishment of church authority in Gaul and Germania could well have spurred the demand for these amulets. On one hand, the amulets could provide a way for one to signal themselves as being pious or spiritual. On the other hand, the adoption of the apotropaic power of Christianity through cruciform motifs could have been appealing for those who were superstitious and wished to continue this through new means which were seen as less controversial than older charms. The more ambiguous designs could also have been a way for an individual to 'hedge their bets' on the topic of how they expressed their personal religious views, while not looking too suspect to others who may have been more orthodox in their religion.

Overall, the combination of funerary and contextual evidence makes for a somewhat solid case that openwork amulets could have been used either as catalysts by which to encourage certain attributes, and/or as ways by which to identify oneself with certain religious or cultural subgroups.

5.6 Limitations and Further Research

There were several aspects of the research conducted for this paper which limited a better analysis of the openwork amulets.

Firstly, much of the literature on the excavation sites and amulet graves were from secondary sources, as many of these excavations took place in the early 20th or even 19th centuries. Additionally, several of the primary writings on the excavations were only available physically in libraries located in Germany, and travelling to these was not feasible during the period of writing of this paper. Due to this, some of the more exact details on grave numbers, individual grave details, cemetery sizes, ratios of male-to-female burials, cemetery dates and theories on the origins of the interred individuals were absent. All of these could be quite useful in determining things such as more exact dating for different motifs, further investigation on the possible cultural aspects of certain motifs, and a larger pool of data to draw from for association with other grave goods. Additionally, an investigation of the placement of amulet graves within graveyards to see if there are any possible groupings of such graves would be interesting.

Then secondly, due to a lack of time, an earlier-planned investigation of cemeteries with amulets in relation to all cemeteries in the primary research area was not fulfilled. This could have given a significantly better outlook on the true rarity of these amulets within the research area, and perhaps a further investigation of the differences between amulet and non-amulet cemeteries to try to identify clear differences.

Another avenue by which further analysis could be conducted is through some newer scientific methods. For example, a strontium isotope analysis of some of the bodies of earlier amulet graves within graveyards could be used to see if these individuals were local or foreign to the area. Similarly, testing of amulet graves grouped relatively close-by to one another could be done to determine if they possibly belonged to the same kin-group. Both could possibly help with addressing the idea of cultural identity in relation to use of amulets or certain amulet motifs.

Overall, there are many ways in which research on the symbolic or cultic nature of amulets can be made better and furthered. Such research could result in great advancements in academia's understanding of this material culture.

6. Conclusion

With the investigation of the openwork amulets now conducted, through symbological, material, and historical analysis, it is time to return to the research question. **To what extent can the role of openwork amulets as cultic items be deduced?**

Looking at the amulets themselves and items they appear with, several things become evident. The various motifs, many of which containing cruciform elements and some more esoteric ones, often have symbolic meaning past their face value as aesthetic designs. In some cases, such as type XIII, it is very difficult to imagine them in a purely secular, or at least a purely aesthetic context. What seems like the propensity for the amulets to be associated primarily with antler fitting rings speaks further to the association of them with 'magical' properties. As discussed previously, the use of bronze rings for some amulets does not necessarily negate the concept of associating apotropaic value to the ring, as other objects such as the 'Donar clubs' can be found made of both 'magical' and 'non-magical' materials while still holding that value. The relative un-commonness of the association of openwork amulets with other apotropaic objects like cowrie shells and pierced coins which were likely suspended from them, as well as other apotropaic materials on the bodies of the interred, suggests an appreciation of these amulets as fitting within the overall protective 'kit'. Whether this was seen as simply an appropriate mounting point for such objects or an integral part of it isn't fully clear, but either option suggests some level of relevance to cultic aspects of life.

The distribution of amulets around major centres like Worms, Bad Kreuznach, Mainz and Augsburg would suggest some level of acceptance, or at least tolerance by Christian officials. The idea of these amulets perhaps even being appealing to self-proclaimed Christians is not out of question either. An object discreetly showing one's religious allegiance could have been a key part of the way that Early Mediaeval women shaped others' perception of them through their material culture. Alternatively, these amulets could also obfuscate the true religious beliefs of an individual, since, as mentioned above, the motifs have many differing interpretations from Christianity to Germanic, Roman or Celtic paganism. In their deposition, it is also possible that the kin of the deceased wished to shape the view of the individual to fit a certain religious narrative which they preferred. During the period in which these amulets existed, such a focus on religion and religious allegiance would have made sense, given the socio-political relevance of evangelism at the time.

The combined evidence seems to suggest that these amulets had some role as either cultic items themselves, or as mounts for apotropaic items. The motifs present could have acted as signifiers or even obfuscators of religious allegiance, or alternatively as cultural markers, though this latter point must be further explored. While it is impossible to ever gauge the exact extent of the cultic nature of openwork amulets, it can be safely said that there is credence to the claim that they had a ritual or spiritual function.

Future research on this topic would do well to try to gain access to as many primary sources as possible on some of these sites, as many weren't easy to access. In addition to this, strontium isotope analyses among other modern scientific methods could reveal quite a bit on the backgrounds of the individuals interred. This would help in answering questions such as the possible cultural origins of certain amulet motifs, as well as answer the question of whether these amulets really were primarily deposited with women.

Abstract

The study of openwork amulets has historically been focused on general overviews of the material, and while their more ritual aspects have been noted in passing, it has not yet been studied in-depth. It is this lack of writings on the topic which inspired the creation of this thesis. To address it, studies of the historical context, motifs present on the amulets, and relation with other 'magical' items of the period are conducted. In addition to this, an analysis of amulet graves in the region of Rheinhessen, Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria is performed. These investigations result in three primary conclusions. Firstly, that the religiously charged atmosphere during which the lifespan of the deposition of these amulets existed could have made for a time in which religious affiliation, through any means, would have been important. For women, the gender which these amulets are commonly associated, the idea of perception is especially important in the Merovingian period. Secondly, many of the motifs of these items seem to have either explicit or subtle religious meanings, and these motifs can often hold double interpretations as either 'pagan' or Christian items. Thirdly, works on other items considered amulets or generally apotropaic in the period show how many items can be considered apotropaic even without historical records explicitly stating that fact. The idea of cultic value arising from both symbological and material aspects of objects is also presented by existing literature, which further suggests the cultic relevance of openwork amulets through their antler rings. Finally, the studies of the research areas reveal the not uncommon association between openwork amulets and items with apotropaic value, such as Roman coins and cowrie shells, many of which could likely have been suspended from the amulets themselves. In spatial terms, what is discovered in this study also questions whether the Christian authorities would have taken offense to these amulets as they did to others. This is because many of these amulets are found in and around major Christian centres.

Overall, the thesis concludes that the evidence highly suggests that openwork amulets could have been items which protected the individual with 'magical' motifs, or even were a way for individuals to signal their religious or cultural allegiance.

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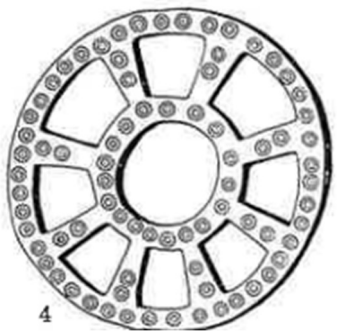
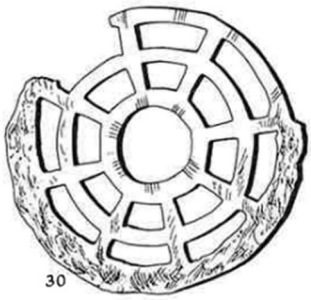
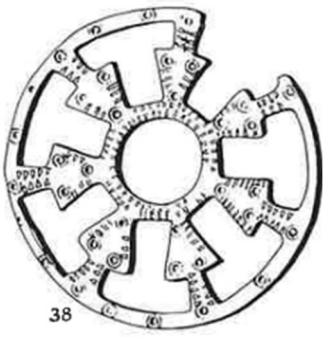
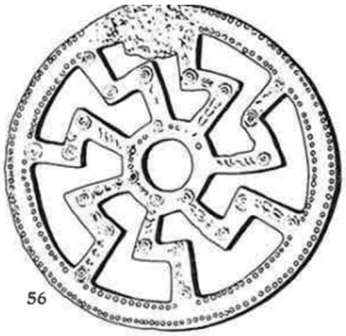
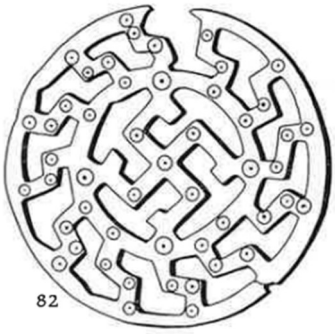
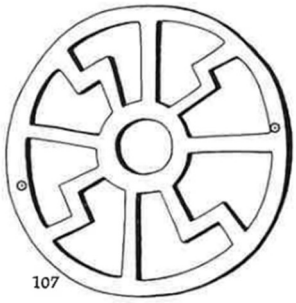
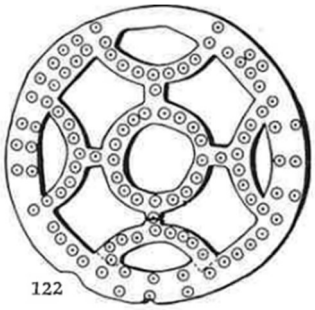
Appendices

APPENDIX A. Amulet motifs with illustrations from Renner (1970)

 I A-1 (Renner, 1970, Figure 1.4)	 I A-2 (Renner, 1970, Figure 1.13)	 I B (Renner, 1970, Figure 2.30)
 I C (Renner, 1970, Figure 2.38)	 II A (Renner, 1970, Figure 3.56)	 II B-1 (Renner, 1970, Figure 4.74)
 II B-2 (Renner, 1970, Figure 4.82)	 II B-3 (Renner, 1970, Figure 4.83)	 II B-4 (Renner, 1970, Figure 5.88)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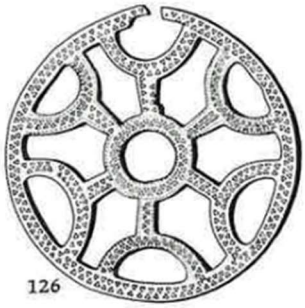
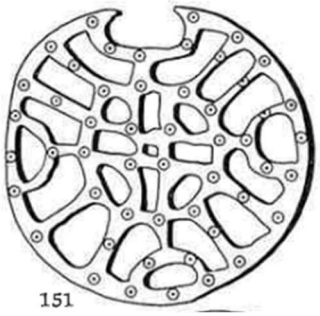
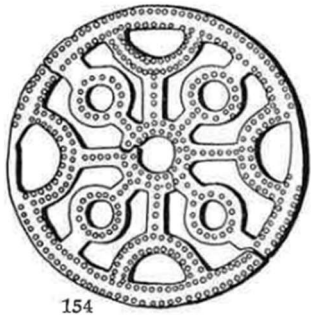
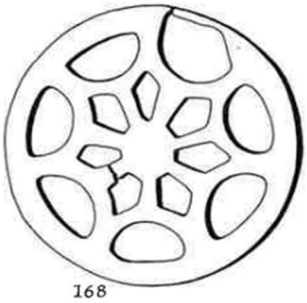
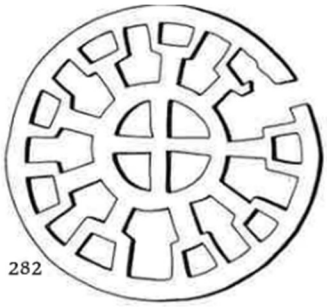
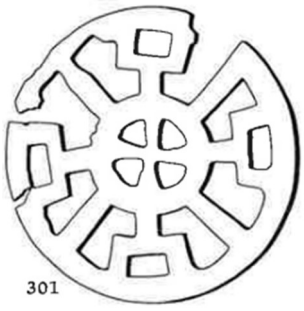
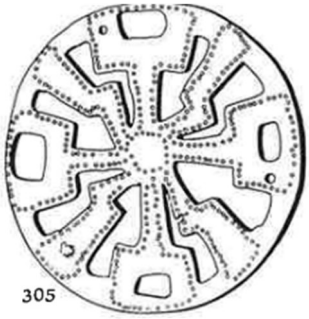
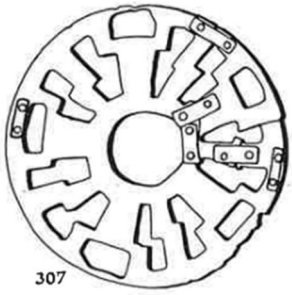
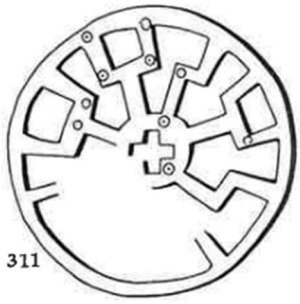
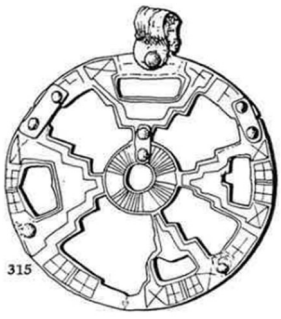
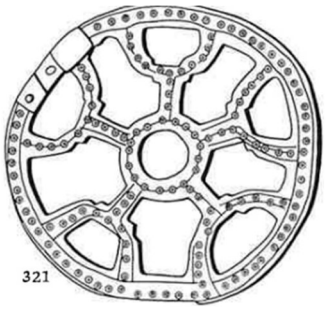
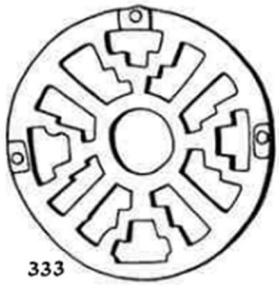
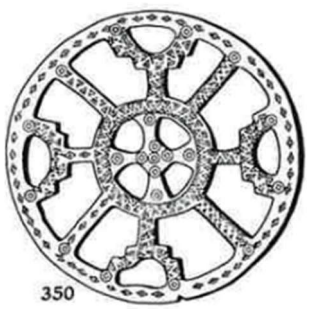
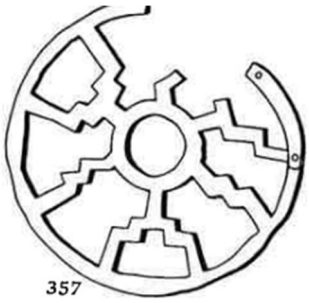
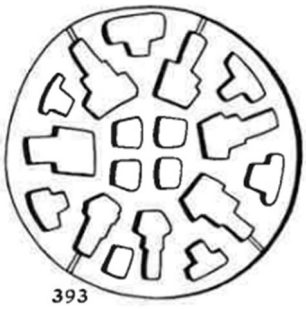
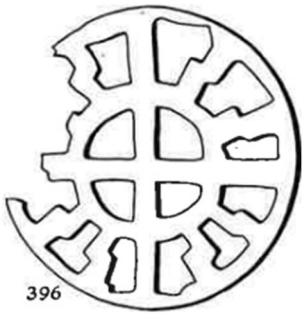
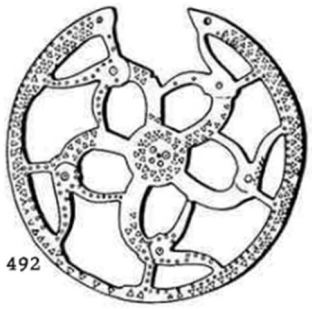
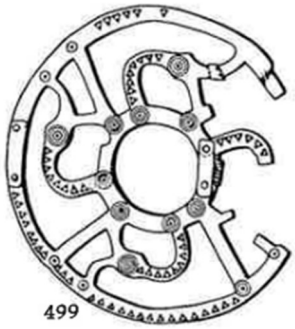
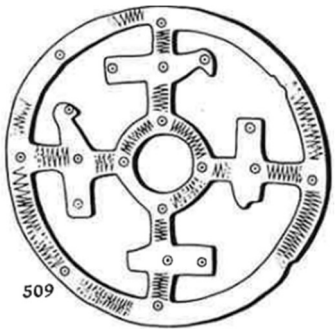
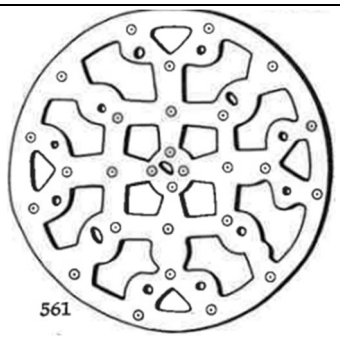
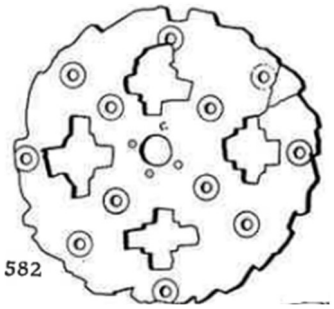
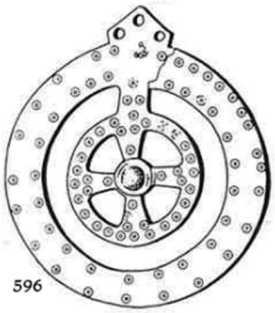
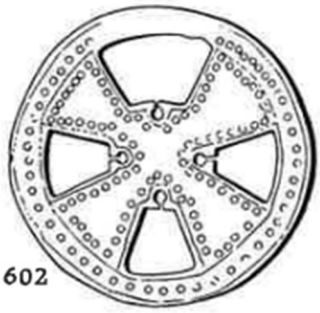
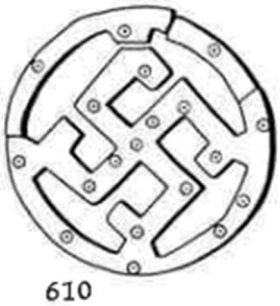
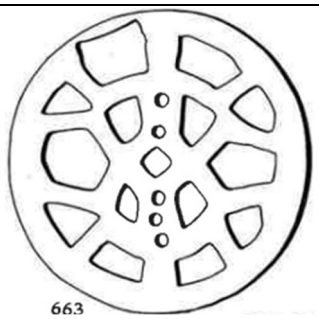
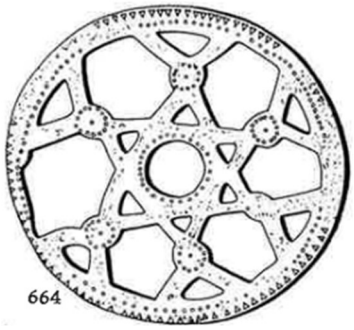
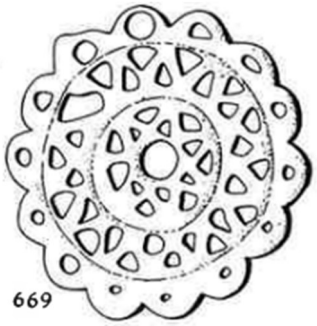
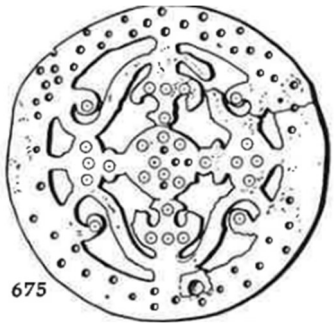
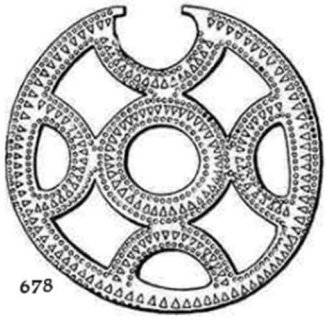
		
III A-2 (Renner, 1970, Figure 6.126)	III A-3 (Renner, 1970, Figure 7.133)	III B-1 (Renner, 1970, Figure 7.138)
		
III B-2 (Renner, 1970, Figure 8.151)	III B-3 (Renner, 1970, Figure 8.154)	III C (Renner, 1970, Figure 8.164)
		
III D (Renner, 1970, Figure 9.168)	IV A-1 (Renner, 1970, Figure 9.180)	IV A-2 (Renner, 1970, Figure 10.214)

		
IV B-1 (Renner, 1970, Figure 11.226)	IV B-2 (Renner, 1970, Figure 13.278)	IV B-3 (Renner, 1970, Figure 13.282)
		
IV B-4 (Renner, 1970, Figure 13.287)	IV C-1 (Renner, 1970, Figure 13.290)	IV C-2 (Renner, 1970, Figure 14.301)
		
IV D-1 (Renner, 1970, Figure 14.305)	IV D-2 (Renner, 1970, Figure 14.307)	IV D-3 (Renner, 1970, Figure 14.311)
		
V A-1 (Renner, 1970, Figure 15.315)	V A-2 (Renner, 1970, Figure 15.321)	V B-1 (Renner, 1970, Figure 16.333)

 V B-2 (Renner, 1970, Figure 16.350)	 V C-1 (Renner, 1970, Figure 17.357)	 V C-2 (Renner, 1970, Figure 17.359)
 V D-1 (Renner, 1970, Figure 17.365)	 V D-2 (Renner, 1970, Figure 19.393)	 V D-3 (Renner, 1970, Figure 19.396)
 VI (Renner, 1970, Figure 20.414)	 VII A-1 (Renner, 1970, Figure 20.436)	 VII A-2 (Renner, 1970, Figure 21.453)
 VII B-1 (Renner, 1970, Figure 22.465)	 VII B-2 (Renner, 1970, Figure 23.479)	 VII B-3 (Renner, 1970, Figure 23.487)

 VII B-4 (Renner, 1970, Figure 24.492)	 VII C (Renner, 1970, Figure 24.499)	 VII D (Renner, 1970, Figure 24.509)
 VII E (Renner, 1970, Figure 25.517)	 VII F (Renner, 1970, Figure 26.534)	 VII G (Renner, 1970, Figure 26.537)
 VII H (Renner, 1970, Figure 26.545)	 VIII A (Renner, 1970, Figure 27.550)	 VIII B (Renner, 1970, Figure 27.556)
 IX A (Renner, 1970, Figure 27.561)	 IX B (Renner, 1970, Figure 28.568)	 IX C (Renner, 1970, Figure 28.578)

		
X A (Renner, 1970, Figure 29.582)	X B (Renner, 1970, Figure 29.587)	X C (Renner, 1970, Figure 29.596)
		
X D (Renner, 1970, Figure 29.602)	XI (Renner, 1970, Figure 30.610)	XII A-1 (Renner, 1970, Figure 30.618)
		
XII A-2 (Renner, 1970, Figure 30.621)	XII A-3 (Renner, 1970, Figure 31.631)	XII A-4 (Renner, 1970, 31.636)
		
XII B (Renner, 1970, Figure 31.637)	XII C (Renner, 1970, Figure 31.640)	XIII A (Renner, 1970, Figure 31.643)

 XIII B (Renner, 1970, Figure 32.650)	 XIII C (Renner, 1970, Figure 32.660)	 XIII D (Renner, 1970, Figure 33.663)
 XIV (Renner, 1970, Figure 33.664)	 XV (Renner, 1970, Figure 33.668)	 XVI (Renner, 1970, Figure 33.669)
 XVII (Renner, 1970, Figure 33.673)	 XVIII (Renner, 1970, Figure 33.675)	 XIX (Renner, 1970, Figure 33.677)
 XX (Renner, 1970, Figure 33.678)	 XXI (Renner, 1970, Figure 34.681)	

APPENDIX B. – Research Area 1 amulet distribution maps

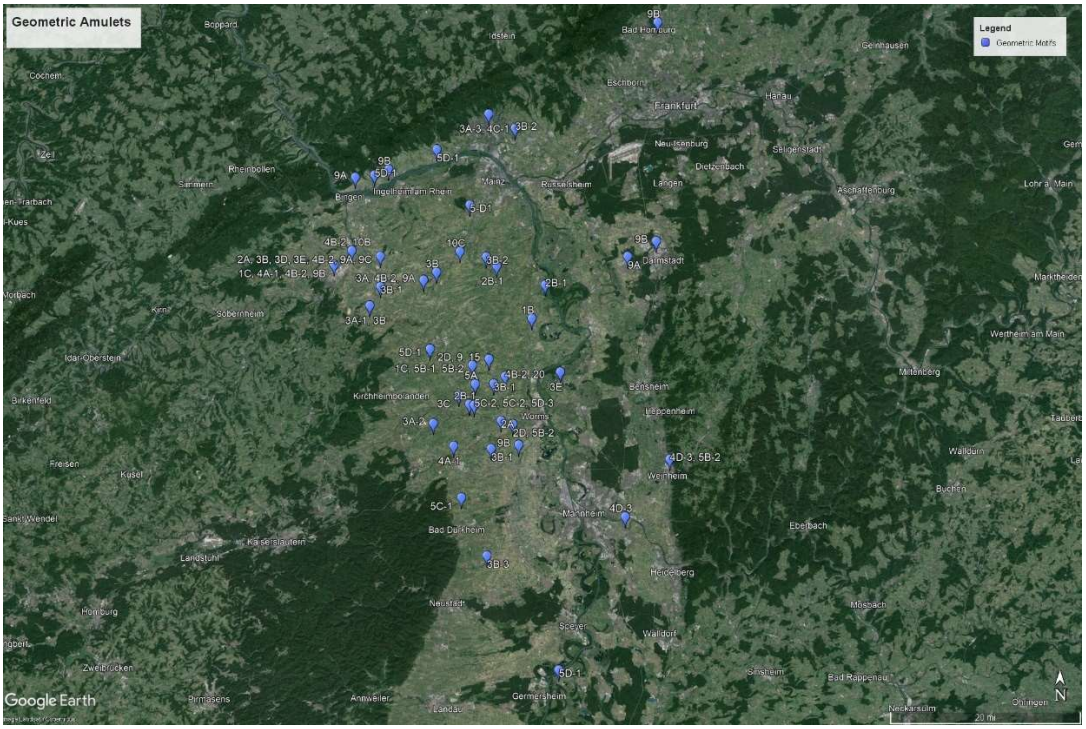


Figure B.1 *Geometric amulets*. A map of the distribution of geometric motifs in research area 1. (Adapted from Google Earth Pro).

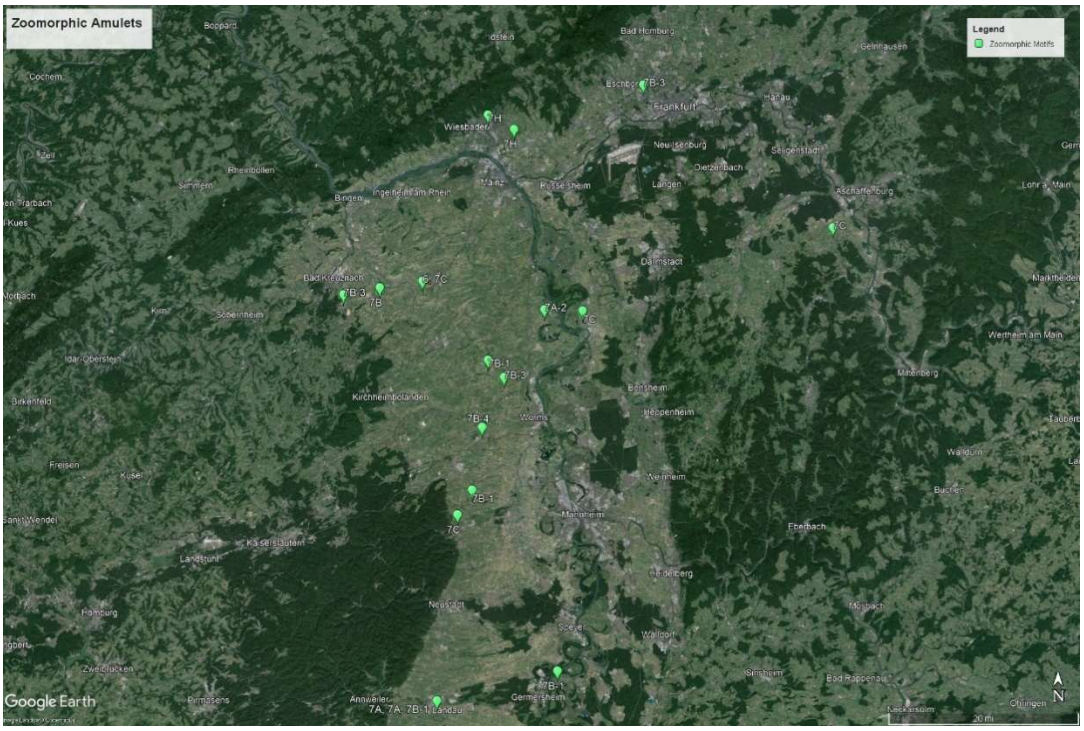


Figure B.2 *Zoomorphic amulets*. A map of the distribution of zoomorphic motifs in research area 1. (Adapted from Google Earth Pro).

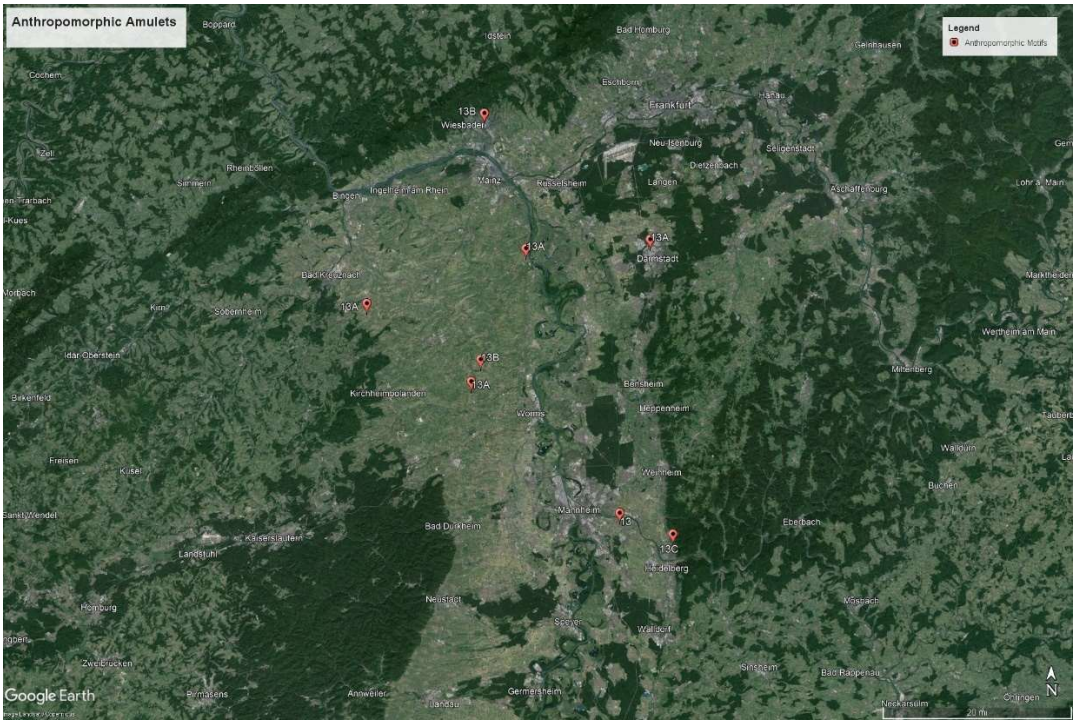


Figure B.3 *Anthropomorphic amulets*. A map of the distribution of geometric motifs in research area 1. (Adapted from Google Earth Pro).

APPENDIX C. Known graves in research area 1.

Grave	Dating	Sex (if assigned)	Amulet type	Ivory ring	Bronze Ri	Beads	Brooch	Jewelry	Other pendants	Weapon(s) or Weapon-associated item	Other items of note
Monsheim 2 (21)	620-650	Female	*	*	*	Y*	Y	Needle, comb, 1 buckle			Various animal bones
Monsheim 2 (19)	580-620	Female	II B-1	Y		Y		Comb, needle, buttons with an	n Smoky topaz pendant		
Rudelsheim (12)	620-650		II B-1	Y		Y(81)					
Wörrstadt 1 (4)	450-670		III B	Y			Y				2 roman coins (Vespasian and Maximinus Thrax), several Roman and late la Tene mate
Mölsheim (12)	600-800		III C	Y		Y*	Y			Iron knife with bronze pommel	Gold bracteate fibula
Sprendlingen (18)	580-650		III D	Y							Whetstone
Rommersheim (79)	UNKNOWN		IX A	Y		Y(74)	Y	Earring, armband, inscribed fitt	t Belt hanger		Cylindrical capsule(possible hanger?)
Eimsheim (1)	650-670		UNKNOWN	Y		Y(25)	Y	Bulla, armring, 1 buckle	Cypraea shell, ivory club pendant		Bronze cruciform fitting
Gundersheim (18)	620-650	Female	V B-1	Y				Earrings			
Monsheim 1 (71)	600-700		V C-2	Y		Y(9)					Various animal bones
Wahlheim (1)	UNKNOWN	Female	V D-1	Y		Y		Amber earrings, needle, 2 simp	o 2 pierced coins (Vespasian and Antoninus Pius)		
Gumbsheim (1)	620-670	Female	VII B	Y		Y	Y	Earrings, hairpin, ring, bone cor	r Cruciform pendant		
Freinsheim (?)	500-700		VII B-1	Y							
Landau III (25)	580-710		VII B-1	Y		Y(colourful)		1 armring, 1 comb,	Cypraea shell		Frankish tremissis with cross, Roman small bronze coin, cast iron pouring vessel, Knife
Frankfurt-Rödelheim (?)	UNKNOWN		VII B-3	Y				2 rings, 2 buckles			
Offstein (9)	620-650		VII B-4	Y		Y		Ring	Shell, Cypraea shell		
Rommersheim (67)	UNKNOWN		VII C	Y		Y(8)	Y	Bone comb, 1 buckle			
Landau III (17)	580-710		VIII A	Y		Y(130)		3 buckles, 1 bone comb)			Bronze grommet (potential pendant?)
Planig (?)	450-600		X B	Y				Earrings	Pierced coin of Domitian		
Mannheim-Seckenheim (375)	500-800	Female (15-18)	XIII	Y		Y*	Y	Needle	Cypraea shell		
Westhofen 2 (5)	600-650		XIII B	Y		Y		1 buckle			One amber bead
Heidelberg-Handschuhsheim (1)	UNKNOWN		XIII C	Y		Y(~200)					
Köngernheim II (40)	500-600		II B-1		Y	Y(83)					
Westhofen 1 (1-2)	600-620		II D						Cypraea shell		
Rommersheim (19)	UNKNOWN		III A		Y	Y(124)	Y	Bone comb, 2 buckles			
Sprendlingen (45)	500-700		III E			Y(12)					
Bad Kreuznach I (?)	500-700		IV A-1				Y	Ring			
Rommersheim (40)	UNKNOWN		IV B-2			Y(84)*		1 buckle, earrings			
Weinheim (18)	525-600		IV D-3			Y	Y	3 buckles			
Westhofen 1 (1)	650-670		IX					Needles, ring, 7 buckles			
Griesheim (1)	UNKNOWN		IX A			Y	Y	1 earring			
Monsheim 1 (9)	600-700	Female	UNKNOWN			Y	Y				
Gundersheim (13)	620-650	Female	V B-2								
Weinheim (10)	UNKNOWN		V B-2				Y	2 buckles, 2 earrings			
Eltville (108)	440-740		V D-1					Needle, ring, bone comb, 1 buc			
Ober-Olm I (6)	550-650		V D-1			Y	Y	Armband, many buttons(?) of v			
Rheinsheim (235)	UNKNOWN		V D-1								
Rommersheim (18)	525-600		VI			Y(18)	Y	Needle			
Westhofen 1 (155)	620-650		VII B-1								
Biebesheim (6)	UNKNOWN		VII C								
Landau III (4)	580-710		VIII A								
Westhofen 1 (XI)	620-650		XV				Y	4 buckles	ckle		Animal rib
									v A belt-hanger with an openwork main piece and triangular middle piece		A bust with inset eyes
									Perforated shell		Bird skeleton
										Lance head	
											Grave "undestroyed"
									"Figure-eight" with suspended shells	Sword in wooden sheath, longsword	

APPENDIX D. Known graves in the secondary research area.

Grave	Dating	Sex (if assigned)	Amulet type	Ivory ring	Bronze ring	Beads	Brooch	Jewelry
Schretzheim (22)	565-630		II D	Y	*	Y(223)		1 bone comb in a case, needle, ring
Pfahlheim (8)	UNKNOWN	Child	I B		Y	Y(70)*	Y(1)	3 buckles, 1 needle with animal head, 2 chain links
Schretzheim (1)	620-660		II A		Y	Y(90)		Earrings, 1 buckle
München-Denning (73)	UNKNOWN		IV A-2		Y			Earrings embedded with gold and almandines, 1 armring, 1 roman de
München-Kirchtrudering (13)	UNKNOWN		IV A-2		Y	Y		Earrings, 1 animal-style II fitting
Pfahlheim (?)	UNKNOWN		VII B-2		Y	Y		
Schretzheim (126)	565-630		I B	Y		Y(83)*		1 needle, 3 buckles, bone comb, 1 agate gemstone
Schretzheim (233)	590-630		II A	Y		Y(142)*	Y(1)	1 ring
Schretzheim (320)	620-660		II B-2	Y				1 needle with animal head, 1 Buckle
Schretzheim (258)	545-570		II D	Y		Y(74)	Y(2)	Bone comb in case, 4 rings, 1 bone disc, needle, 2 buckles
Schretzheim (26)	565-600		II D	Y		Y(29)*	Y(4)	2 buckles
Schretzheim (133)	590-630		II D	Y		Y(89)		Iron needle with loop (potential hanger?)
Schretzheim (304)	590-630		II D	Y		Y(99)*		1 buckle
Schretzheim (347)	590-630		II D	Y		Y(69)		Needle, 1 bone comb, 1 thin silver platelet
Pfahlheim (10)	UNKNOWN		III A-1	Y		Y(31)*		1 earring, 1 gold ring
Schretzheim (305)	620-660		III A-3	Y		Y(53)*		1 buckle
Schretzheim (612)	650-680		IX A	Y		Y(4)		
Schretzheim (361)	620-660	Young Female	V A-2	Y		Y(25)		1 earring
Schretzheim (351)	590-630		V B-1	Y		Y(65)		
Schretzheim (226b)	620-660	Mother and Child	V B-1	Y		Y(19)	Y(1)	Earrings with suspended little baskets(?), 4 ringlets
Schretzheim (440)	565-600		XI	Y		Y(3)		
Schretzheim (540)	590-630		XI	Y		Y(58)		1 hair needle, 1 ring
München-Giesing (66)	UNKNOWN		XIII B	Y				1 buckle, 1 needle,
München-Kirchtrudering (53)	UNKNOWN	Young Female	II A					
Pfahlheim (1[2])	UNKNOWN	Female*	IV C-1					
München-Sendling (52)	UNKNOWN	Young Female	V A-1			Y(4)		
München-Aubing (162)	UNKNOWN		V B-1			Y(54)		3 buckles, 2 needles
München-Aubing (72)	UNKNOWN		V B-1			Y(94)	Y(1)	1 buckle, 1 ring, 1 iron stick(? "stift")
Schretzheim (348)	590-630		V D-1			Y(11)		1 ring, 1 earring, disc object with stamp decoration
Schretzheim (282)	620-660		V D-1			Y(2)	Y(1)	1 cube-headed needle, 1 iron needle
Schretzheim (610)	650-680		V D-1					
Schretzheim (473)	620-660		VII B-2					1 earring
Schretzheim (502)	525-570		VII D			Y(39)*	Y(2)	Bone comb with remains of case, 1 needle
Wittislingen (?)	640-680	Female (50-60)	VII E			Y(3)	Y(1)	1 golden needle, 2 buckles, 1 gold ring with a twisted gold coin(?), 1 n
Pfahlheim (21)	UNKNOWN		XIII D					1 needle with animal head

Other pendants	Weapon(s) or weapon-assoc	Other items of note
2 perforated roman bronze coins		1 weaving sword
		1 bronze cleat, 1 bone-grip knife with a leather sheath
orative attachment (exact nature of object unclear)		Many fittings present of high quality, some even having designs in Animal-style II; Items seemingly associated with amulet due to positioning: 2 rings, 1 chain hanger, 3 chain han
		Items seemingly associated with amulet due to positioning: 1 buckle, 1 perforated bronze disc
4 round golden hangers, perforated bronze coin		Weaving sword, 2 destroyed shells (potentially pendants?)
		Items seemingly associated with amulet due to positioning: 1 Cypraea Tigris, 1 polyhedral bronze pearl, 1 small stone pendant,
		Items seemingly associated with amulet due to positioning: 1 Ring, 1 knife, 7 small needles, 1 double spiral pendant
		Items seemingly associated with amulet due to positioning: 2 rings
2 perforated bracteate imitations of Justinian I solidii, 1 perforated bronze coin		1 Roman game piece, 1 weaving sword, 1 pot surrounded by pig bones and eggshells; Several items seemingly associated with amulet due to positioning: 1 Cypraea Tigris, 1 cylin
		Items seemingly associated with amulet due to positioning: 1 broken beaver tooth, fragment of a blue glass armring (late-Latène)
		Items seemingly associated with amulet due to positioning: 1 Cypraea Tigris, 1 triangular pendant, 1 knife, 1 bronze ring, 2 small rings
1 perforated bronze coin, 1 bronze perforated U-shaped object, 1 jagged bronze pendant		Item seemingly associated with amulet due to positioning: Bone disclet
	1 iron sword (weaving sword?)	Items seemingly associated with amulet due to positioning: 1 bronze square, 1 buckle
		Item seemingly associated with amulet due to positioning: 1 grooved ring
		Item seemingly associated with amulet due to positioning: 1 knife
		Items seemingly associated with amulet due to positioning: 1 ivory ring, 1 ring, 1 buckle
		Hornstone blade
		Curved "cradle" knife (unclear if weapon or utility tool)
1 perforated bear tooth, 1 anchor-shaped pendant		Hornstone blade with edge retouch
		Items seemingly associated with amulet due to positioning: 2 perforated Roman coins, 1 double ring, 1 brackets for mounting
		1 late Roman coin; 1 glass ring fragment; Item seemingly associated with amulet due to positioning: 1 ring
		Items seemingly associated with amulet due to positioning: 1 pair of shears, 1 knife
		Items seemingly associated with amulet due to positioning: 2 flat rings, 1 ring with bumps
		Items seemingly associated with amulet due to positioning: 11 perforated Roman bronze coins, 1 enamel disc brooch, 1 ring, 1 buckle
		Items seemingly associated with amulet due to positioning: 2 rings, 1 iron ring
		Items seemingly associated with amulet due to positioning: 3 linked wire rings, 2 rings
		Items seemingly associated with amulet due to positioning: 2 knives
1 perforated Cypraea Tigris, 1 spherical amulet capsule, 12 bronze pendants		1 bronze pan
		Items seemingly associated with amulet due to positioning: 1 Cypraea Tigris with ring

APPENDIX E. Unknown graves in both research areas

Cemetery	Dating	Amulet type	Ring?
Alsheim	530-620	I B	
Bad Kreuznach I	500-700	I C	
Gundersheim	510-670	I C	
Sprendlingen	500-700	II A	
Worms-Heppenheim I	600-670	II A	Ivory ring
Worms-Wiesoppenheim	530-730	II D	
Wonsheim	600-670	III A-1	
Biedesheim	555-620	III A-2	
Wiesbaden-Dotzheimer Strass	UNKNOWN	III A-3	
Wonsheim	600-670	III B	Bronze ring
Sprendlingen	500-700	III B	
Dirmstein I	510-700	III B-1	
Gumbsheim	600-700	III B-1	Bronze ring
Hahnheim I	500-700	III B-1	
Mörstadt	480-725	III B-1	
Wiesbaden-Erbenheim	UNKNOWN	III B-2	Bronze ring
Meckenheim (?)	570-700	III B-3	
Biblis-Wattenheim	UNKNOWN	III E	Ivory ring
Grünstadt III	525-700	IV A-1	
Bad Kreuznach I	500-700	IV B-2	
Planig	450-600	IV B-2	
Sprendlingen	500-700	IV B-2	
Worms-Abenheim	510-670	IV B-2	
Wiesbaden-Dotzheimer Strass	UNKNOWN	IV C-1	
Mannheim-Neckarau	500-800	IV D-3	Bronze ring
Rüdesheim	600-650	IX A	
Sprendlingen	500-700	IX A	
Bad Kreuznach I	500-700	IX B	
Darmstadt-Windmühle	UNKNOWN	IX B	
Gonzenheim	UNKNOWN	IX B	
Großniedesheim II	550-625	IX B	
Winkel-St. Bartholomä	600-700	IX B	
Sprendlingen	500-700	IX C	
Dalsheim I	510-670	V A	
Worms-Wiesoppenheim	530-730	V B-2	
Kallstadt-Neugasse/Am Hübat	600-700	V C-1	
Monsheim I	510-700	V C-2	
Geisenheim	550-700	V D-1	
Monsheim I	510-700	V D-3	
Gimbsheim	650-730	VII A-2	
Rheinsheim	UNKNOWN	VII B-1	
Frei-Laubersheim	500-700	VII B-3	
Worms-Abenheim	510-670	VII B-3	Bronze ring
Pfeffingen	UNKNOWN	VII C	
Pflaumheim	500-700	VII C	
Wiesbaden-Dotzheimer Strass	UNKNOWN	VII H	
Wiesbaden-Erbenheim	UNKNOWN	VII H	
Udenheim	600-700	X C	
Dalsheim I	510-670	XIII A	
Darmstadt-Windmühle	UNKNOWN	XIII A	
Nierstein II	UNKNOWN	XIII A	
Wonsheim	600-670	XIII A	
Wiesbaden-Dotzheimer Strass	UNKNOWN	XIII B	
Worms-Abenheim	510-670	XX	Bronze ring

Cemetery	Dating	Amulet type
Schretzheim		II B-1
München-Englschalking		V A-2
Nordendorf		I B
Nordendorf		II A
Nordendorf		II B-2
Nordendorf		II B-4
Nordendorf		II B
Nordendorf		II D
Nordendorf		II D
Nordendorf		IV C-1
Nordendorf		IV D-2
Nordendorf		V B-1
Nordendorf		V B-1
Nordendorf		VII B-2
Nordendorf		VII B-3
Nordendorf		VII D
Nordendorf		VII D
Nordendorf		VII E
Nordendorf		XIII B
Nordendorf		UNIQUE GEOMETRIC
Ulm		IV A-2
Ulm		V A-2
Ulm		VII G

Note: Above is research area 2, left is research area 1.

APPENDIX F. Cemeteries in both research areas

Cemetery	Dating	Grave N.	Amulet N
Alsheim	530-620	18	1
Biblis-Wattenheim	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN	1
Biebesheim	UNKNOWN	6	1
Biedesheim II	555-620	2<	1
Dirmstein I	510-700	209	1
Eimsheim	580-620, 65(	21	1
Eltville	440-740	645	1
Frankfurt-Rödelheim	UNKNOWN	1<	1
Frei-Laubersheim	500-700	UNKNOWN	1
Freinsheim	500-700	70	1
Geisenheim	550-700	46	1
Gimbsheim	650-730	7	1
Gonzenheim	UNKNOWN	25	1
Griesheim	UNKNOWN	484	1
Großniedesheim	550-625	4	1
Hahnheim I	500-700	134	1
Heidelberg-Handschuhsheim	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN	1
Kallstadt-Neugasse/Am Hübau	600-700	3	1
Köngernheim II	500-600	49	1
Mannheim-Seckenheim	500-800	800<	1
Meckenheim (?)	570-700	UNKNOWN	1
Mölsheim	600-800	20<	1
Mörstadt	480-725	331	1
Nierstein II	UNKNOWN	1	1
Ober-Olm I	550-650	63	1
Offstein II	620-650	13	1
Pfeffingen	UNKNOWN	16	1
Pflaumheim	500-700	25	1
Rudelsheim	530-600	48	1
Rüdesheim	600-650	4	1
Udenheim	600-700	4	1
Wahlheim	UNKNOWN	1	1
Westhofen II	510-700	UNKNOWN	1
Winkel-St. Bartholomä	600-700	8	1
Worms-Heppenheim I	600-670	32	1
Wörrstadt	450-670	34	1
Grünstadt	525-700	UNKNOWN	1
Mannheim-Neckarau	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN	1
Dalsheim I	510-670	4<	2
Darmstadt-Windmühle	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN	2
Gumbsheim	620-670	9<	2
Monsheim II	555-650	32	2
Planig	450-600	11	2
Rheinsheim	UNKNOWN	234<	2
Weinheim	UNKNOWN	52	2
Wiesbaden-Erbenheim	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN	2
Worms-Wiesoppenheim	530-730	40<	2
Gundersheim	510-670	201<	3
Landau III	580-710	66	3
Wonsheim	600-670	5<	3
Worms-Abenheim	510-670	23	3
Bad-Kreuznach I	500-700	45	4
Monsheim I	510-700	500	4
Westhofen I	510-725	173	4
Wiesbaden-Dotzheimer Strasse	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN	4
Rommersheim	UNKNOWN	113	5
Sprendlingen	500-700	95	7

Cemetery	Dating	Grave Count	Amulets
Wittislingen		UNKNOWN	1
München-Denning		72<	1
München-Englschalking		UNKNOWN	1
München-Giesing		65<	1
München-Sendling		51<	1
München-Aubing		161<	2
München-Kirchtrudering		52<	2
Ulm		UNKNOWN	3
Pfahlheim		9<	5
Nordendorf			18
Schretzheim	525-680	630	23

Note: Above is for research area 2, left is for research area 1.