Separated by gender? A contribution to the debate on Roman Imperial Period burial grounds in northern Germany

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Rebecka Jonsson
Supervisor: Anders Carlsson
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Front page: Photo of an urn burial from the excavation of the burial ground in Hornbek, Schleswig-Holstein. ALM, Ortsakte Hornbek Nr. 50a-c. Edited by the author.
Abstract

This study concerns 28 Roman Iron Age Germanic burial grounds located in proximity to the river Elbe (dt. “Elbegermanen”). Situated in the northern German states Brandenburg, Hamburg, Lower Saxony, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Saxony-Anhalt, Schleswig-Holstein and dated 0-300 AD (Earlier Roman Imperial Period); the sites primarily consist of urn burials and have been interpreted as separated by gender. Although a debated issue in German archaeology, critical questions derived from theoretical problematization have usually been omitted from the discourse. This study aims to discuss gender theory to address this research gap. Geographical patterns have been explored through a spatial analysis and reconstruction of the Roman Imperial landscape. Two sites are compared in case studies and the end results connect the theoretical discussions and GIS-analysis. The results show that the combination of a large-scale regional analysis and small-scale analysis of specific sites is beneficial in order to acknowledge the varieties and move beyond the interpretations that dominate the prevalent discourse.

Key words: Elbe Germanic, Germanic people, Roman Imperial Period, burial grounds, genderscript, sex, gender, spatial analysis, GIS, intersectionality

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Research aim and disposition:

This explorative study aims to analyze the materializations of a selection of Elbe Germanic burial grounds in terms of geographical features and cultural enunciations. The chosen sites are situated in Brandenburg, Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Niedersachsen, Sachsen-Anhalt and Schleswig-Holstein and are primarily dated to the Earlier Roman Imperial Period (0-300 AD). Although extensive publications of specific burial grounds have been published within the federal states, there are few critical accounts and theoretical perspectives are often absent beyond the initial critique of perceived gender roles that a few researchers have pointed out (notably Breitsprecher 1987). As to why it is so important to investigate the question of gender concerning Elbe Germanic burials, the greatest argument is the inherent risks associated to categorizing particular object as female or male. These divisions lead to fixed views on what male or female objects are which can result in them being interpreted as manifestations of femininity of masculinity (Werbart 1991: 125). This research thereby addresses a real world problem; in terms of how gender has been perceived, constructed and has affected the research on Elbe Germanic burial grounds.

The study has two interconnected research aims, and first part will be a discussion of the research field and earlier interpretations with the use of theoretical perspectives and a critical literature review. The aim is to understand previous research and evaluate the prevalent discourses that influence present interpretations and derived knowledge about the sites. The aim of the first part of this thesis is to address this research gap and the discussion will be resumed in the concluding chapter in order to present examples of a new way of discussing the Elbe Germanic burial grounds. The second part will focus on moving beyond earlier research and the focus on gender relations. By studying the landscape at large and two sites in detail with the use of GIS (Geographical Information Systems) and horizontal stratigraphy, the results will be discussed in conjunction with the theoretical contexts from the first part. Urns without grave goods are often overlooked in discussions although they constitute a large part of most sites. To address this research gap, these graves will first be presented in a separate section and then in the case studies and concluding chapter. The results from the two case studies will be related to the other 26 sites and the representability of the estimated results will be discussed.

As the main structure of the thesis has been outlined above, the following section will provide further information about the particular chapters. Chapter 1 will address the research aim, research question, definitions, delimitations and methodology of the thesis. Chapter 2 provides a background for German archaeology with a special focus on mortuary analysis, its effects on the research field and a literature review of earlier research. Chapter 3 consists of a critical reading and a presentation of theoretical perspectives that enhances the possible understandings of the burial grounds. Genderscript and intersectionality are also explored. The landscape surrounding the sites and its changing dynamics will be discussed in chapter 4, and the question of settlements will be addressed to gain a more conclusive view of the Roman Imperial Period and the human impact of the landscape. Spatial patterns are also outlined. In chapter 5, the two case studies of the burial grounds Preetz and Hamburg-Marmstorf will be presented. Horizontal stratigraphy and patterns of burial practice will be interconnected with the theoretical discussion in chapter 3. Using ArcGIS, both sites have been mapped in order to look for patterns and new categories drawing on intersectionality and
an awareness of the gender script. The results from the previous chapters will be discussed in chapter 6, and summarized in chapter 7.

Research questions:

1. What discourses can be identified in the research context of Elbe Germanic people and how have these influenced previous interpretations concerning gender relations?
2. Can any spatial patterns of the Elbe Germanic burial grounds be found, and if so, which?
3. How can the burial practices from Elbe Germanic graves be interpreted?

Definitions

The people who inhabited the areas surrounding the river Elbe have been labelled both as large cultural groups, and tribes. According to Malcolm Todd, the Elbe Germanic burial grounds are the most extensively excavated and thoroughly published of all Germanic groups (Todd 1987: 53). The literature on the burial grounds in this study always refer to the buried individuals as “Elbegermanen” which I have chosen to translate as “Elbe Germanic” (after input by Christoph Eger, personal communication). As earlier research has focused substantially on dividing and categorizing different subgroupings ethnologically and through linguistic analysis of place names; these perspectives will not be examined at large in this study (see Krüger 1986; Beck & de Gruyter 1986). When referring to earlier research I will draw on their definitions and in some cases use “tribes” to attain the right context. The definition I have chosen to use at large is “Elbe Germanic people” as it shifts the focus from archaeologically defined cultural groups towards a more transparent view. It is important not to attribute too much importance to the establishment of cultural spheres for differing groups since these are interpretations by archaeologists. The context of what “Germanic” entails is quite complex, as there are no fixed archaeological criteria that corresponds to the philological evidence (see discussion in Dick 2008: 109 ff.). As German historian Jörg Jarnut states in his critique of the terms “Germanic” and “Germanen”, “there is not one convincing source during the eight hundred years we have looked, that demonstrates that the people we call “Germanen” actually themselves felt that they constituted such a unit” (Jarnut 2004: 111). Elbe Germanic people simply refers to the inhabitants of the Lower Elbe region during the Roman Imperial Period, and is not used to imply ethnographical traits of different groups.

Delimitations and methodology

Several delimitations have been established in order to avoid a voluminous descriptive study. These include the question of whether the “origin” of the Lombards (dt. Langobarden) can be found in the archaeological material connected to some of the Elbe Germanic tribes. This discussion has garnered great attention in research about the Lombards (see Pohl 2005, Voß 2008) but will be omitted here due to the limited range of this study. Ethno-archaeological perspectives are also excluded since these have been covered extensively in earlier research (see Derks 2012). Religious beliefs and aspects of the Elbe Germanic peoples have further been omitted from this study as these generally are not discussed in the excavation reports and other previous research (for research centered on “Germanic” religion, see Laur 2001;§ Ellis Davidson 1988). Although they likely affected the burial practice in some ways, it is not possible to ascertain how (Breitsprecher 1987: 226). Typological accounts of artefact types are also omitted, as several researchers have developed chronologies, using larger materials than is possible for this thesis. As there is much basic research done in the research field, this
The project will focus on aspects that have remained unaddressed, unquestioned and unchallenged, to gain new insights and knowledge that can enrich the context of Elbe Germanic burial grounds. The material in this study consists of excavation catalogues, larger publications on Elbe Germanic sites, journal articles and books about gender archaeology and gender research, geological data (such as soil maps, elevation values and hydrological maps), and GIS-data (created by the author after maps in Voß 2008 or the excavation reports from Wegewitz 1964 and Brandt 1960). Several photographs were taken in the archive and museum exhibitions at the Stiftung Schleswig-Holsteinische Landesmuseen Schloss Gottorf, Archäologisches Landesmuseum during a research visit in March 2016. The material has been selected to provide a good insight into the research field, and to address the research questions. The material has also been chosen depending on availability as several of the older publications that are mentioned in chapter 2, have been difficult to find.

The burial grounds chosen for this study do not represent the complete number of burial grounds attributed to this period or the Elbe Germanic people. The first delimitation of the study was the choice to specifically cover sites in Germany. It was necessary to make this distinction due to restrictions of time, knowledge of language and the availability of the necessary material. In the process of selection, sorting and collecting material, sites in Poland and the Czech Republic were excluded in order to focus on the German material. Sites in the eastern part of Germany and the federal state of Thüringen were also excluded since the central region for Elbe Germanic activity was the lower Elbe area.

The selected number of sites included in the study was initially 40 burial grounds and these were later reduced to 28 sites after an extensive literature review (see fig. 1.1.). The sites with the most published material were located and thereafter chosen, as the aim was to gather as much information as possible. A list of the mapped burial grounds in chapter 4 (see appendix) shows burial grounds where a majority of graves are dated to the Earlier Roman Imperial Period, or where the burial grounds have been studied as sites of specific importance to the period, though the majority of graves sometimes have been dated to earlier periods. Burial grounds with graves primarily dated to the Later Roman Imperial Period have generally been excluded, as the distinct burial practice discussed in this thesis is attributed to the earlier period. The selection is also dependent on the availability of the material as not all burial grounds are equally researched and discussed.

This thesis has a strong focus on developing a methodology for analyzing Elbe Germanic burial grounds. Literature reviews, archive studies and comparative analyzes have been combined with technical tools such as GIS (Geographical Information Systems). GIS has been used throughout the study in order to map and identify spatial patterns on both a large regional scale and specific sites. The specific methods used for every part of the study is presented in the introduction of every chapter and will therefore only be presented briefly here. The methodology for chapters 2 and 3 is mainly a critical reading drawing on earlier research and gender theory. Chapter 4 focuses on the landscape which was recreated through mapping and spatial analysis with GIS, discussions with quaternary geologist Jan Risberg, and evaluating earlier research. A large amount of geological data and elevation values was assessed in order to enable the work within GIS. A methodology for burial ground analysis (after an outline in Arnold 2002) was used as a point of departure for the two case studies in chapter 5. Comparative analysis and further analysis in GIS was used to find patterns in chapter 6. The results from the analyzes in chapters 3, 4 and 5 are also used in order to discuss new interpretations in chapter 6.
Chapter 2. Earlier research – understanding the context

German archaeology

A central critique identified in the research field of Elbe Germanic cultures is the lack of theorization – especially concerning gender. This appears as contradictory when balanced against the statement that “the question of female and male cemeteries has been mentioned in almost every published work about urn burial fields since the interpretation first emerged in 1821” (Articus 2004: 161). To understand this conflicting state it is necessary to discuss German archaeology as a discipline deeply influenced by ideology, political events and a strict research tradition. In order to address the first research question for this thesis which concerns identifiable discourses and previous interpretations, the main characteristics of the German archaeological discourse and its subsequent development in the 19th and 20th centuries will be discussed briefly. This evaluation of earlier research will continue in chapter 3 where gender in theory and practice will be discussed.

German archaeology is often mocked for its traditional focus on classification and lack of theoretical discussions; although often praised for the thorough knowledge of the source material researchers display (Bintliff 2011: 170). The main foundations of German archaeology have been spatial analysis and chronology since the late 19th century. Typological and chronological studies have been especially prevalent in Bronze and Iron Age research (even more so after the evolution of quantitative methods and computer applications after the 1970s) (Wolfram 2000: 182). A great shift from anthropological archaeology towards historicizing prehistory and settlement archaeology (dt. *Siedlungsarchäologie*, led by Gustaf Kossinna) occurred during the late 19th century (Wolfram 2000: 181; Gramsch & Sommer 2011: 13). This would mark the beginning of the interest in “prehistory of peoples” (a tribal-historical approach) where the archaeological material was interpreted and thereafter ascribed to ethnically divided cultures; a practice which culminated during the Nazi Era (Wolfram 2000: 181). South and western German archaeology with its strong focus on Roman remains has traditionally differed greatly from research in northern Germany. The Roman prevalence in the south created rather international networks where the Roman cultures rather than Germanic cultures were central (Fetten 2000: 149). Northern Germany, on the other hand, had a more nationalistic approach (sometimes called “Germanomania”). This caused conflicts between the different regions, as the southern “Romanophiles” were seen as “enemies against national prehistory” by some northern archaeologists (Fetten 2000: 149).

Chronological studies as well as ethnically based studies and interpretations flourished during the Nazi Era. Another significant shift took place after World War II (especially from the 1950s and onwards) when archaeology was to be separated and “cleared” of all ideology. In practice, this meant that empiricism and induction once again became the single most important aspects of archaeological research, and a new view on scientific procedures pervaded the discipline. The theoretical debate has declined severely after 1945, possibly as a result of a lack of critical self-analysis due to the “shock of the Nazi Era” (Wolfram 2000: 180; Haßmann 2000: 121). Another consequence of World War II was that German archaeology lost its leading position in European prehistoric archaeology (Härke 2000: 16). There was also a great difference between East German and West German archaeology after the partition in 1949. East German scholars were not able to travel and get access to international publications which meant that the academic exchange was severely affected (Gramsch & Sommer 2011: 15). The lack of theorization is therefore more distinct in Eastern German archaeology. Since the 1980s several attempts to create theoretical discussions have
been undertaken (Gramsch & Sommer 2011: 23). Presently, Eastern European archaeology is divided into two areas: the traditional German approach and a younger generation of researchers who are inspired by the Anglo-American approach (Härke 2000: 17).

**Material and earlier research**

The major point of departure is Torsten Capelle’s *Studien über elbgermanische Gräberfelder in der ausgehenden Latènezeit und der älteren römischen Kaiserzeit* (1971). Capelle discussed a total number of 42 sites in Germany. Another work of importance to this thesis is Ute Breitsprecher’s dissertation *Zum Problem der geschlechtsspezifischen Bestattungen in der Römischen Kaiserzeit: Ein Beitrag zur Forschungsgeschichte und Methode* (1987). Breitsprecher specifically chose burial grounds where the human remains had been analyzed, and extended the geographical area to include 228 sites in Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic and Norway.

The idea that Elbe Germanic burial grounds were separated as male and female was first brought forth in 1821. Prehistorical research and chronology was still under heavy development at this time and sufficient evidence could not be disclosed as more analyzes and excavations were needed (Capelle 1971: 111). The first monographic publication on an Elbe Germanic burial ground from the Earlier Roman Imperial Period was Christian Hostmann’s study about Darzau (*Der Urnenfriedhof bei Darzau in der Provinz Hannover*) from 1874. Darzau was excavated in 1871 as the first methodically examined burial ground from the Earlier Roman Imperial Period (specifically dated to the 1st to 2nd century AD) in the eastern part of the lower Elbe area (Wegewitz 1994: 20). Hostmann resumed and agreed with the hypothesis as the excavation of Darzau resulted in many finds of jewelry and no weapons (Capelle 1971: 111). Hostmann discussed that the “presupposed” high social status of women in Germanic societies warranted specific female burial grounds (dt. *Frauenfriedhöfen*) (Capelle 1971: 112).

Gustav Schwantes cautiously noticed in 1921 that female graves often included 2-3 fibulas made of bronze, iron or silver, while male graves only included one (Wegewitz 1994: 21). Schwantes seems to have become more inclined towards this idea and it has gained much attention (Capelle 1971: 113). Many archaeologists have been influenced by Schwantes theory, notable Willi Wegewitz (Capelle 1971: 113). Later research has showed that many female graves only contained one fibula, and female graves with 2 or 3 fibulas are seen as regional exceptions (Breitsprecher 1987: 32). The burial ground of Großromstedt in Thüringen was excavated between 1907 and 1913. As the site was interpreted as male, Schwantes concluded that the burial practice of male and female burial grounds even occurred south of the Niedereelbe area (Breitsprecher 1987: 13).

Gerhard Körner edited the publication of the urn burial ground in Rebenstorf (1939) and was not able to distinguish between male and female burial grounds, as “male” and “female” artefacts were found next to each other. What had been seen as female attributes – whorls and sewing needles – were in the same context as “beard pliers, a cube and fragments of drinking horns” (Capelle 1971: 112). Körner opposed Schwantes theory about the signifying number of fibulas as several cases showed a presence of multiple fibulas in “male” burials. Many of the burial grounds deemed female by researchers without hesitation (such as Tostedt-Wüstenhöfen, Hornbek, Preetz) only exhibited one fibula per grave (Capelle 1971: 113). Körner compared the archaeological finds from Rebenstorf (which was excavated during the 1860-1880s) to the material from Darzau in 1939. He thus managed to identify a materialized manifestation of the transition between the Earlier and Later Roman Imperial Periods around
the 3rd and 4th centuries AD, by the introduction of a new type of urn – a “bowl type” urn (dt. Schalenurne) (Wegewitz 1994: 23). Amongst others, Karl-Heinz Willroth has discussed that female and male burials have “gender-specific pottery” north of the river Elbe; the vessels are constituted by pots for women and tureens for men (Willroth 1998: 361). The question of separately shaped urns has been discussed several times, and examinations of the burial ground in Badow showed that it cannot be seen as valid (Breitsprecher 1987: 15).

Willi Wegewitz is notable for his extensive reports on sites in Niedersachsen and Hamburg and published an influential report on the big burial ground in Harsefeld in 1937. A large amount of weapons was found at the site in contrast to a smaller prevalence of jewelry. Wegewitz connected similarities in pottery, ornamentation and place names to the district of Bardengau (associated to the Lombards) in the east. Many researchers have criticised Wegewitz’s interconnection of the Elbe Germanic tribes and the Lombards (Christie 1995: 6-7). Wegewitz agrees with the thesis of divided burial grounds and states that mixed burial grounds indicated that practices may have changed over time (Wegewitz 1973).

The interpretation of a separate burial practice dependent on gender has faced severe critique. According to Capelle, the practice started to occur sporadically during the Late La Tène period (dt. Spätlatènezeit) (150 BC-0 AD) and thereafter spread in many areas of northern Germany during the first century AD (Capelle 1971: 116). This would mean that this specific practice was limited to the 1st to 4th centuries AD (as several researchers acknowledge the burial practice of the following periods as mixed). During the “taciteischer Zeit”, the time of Roman historian Tacitus (who lived around 56-117 AD); this practice was apparently widely spread, although only detectable as an exclusive burial form for the northwestern Elbe Germanic people. The profound question of why the practice of gender separation should have existed is also missing in many critical accounts. This question becomes especially important considering that a gender-separated burial practice has been interpreted to emerge and be abandoned within 300 years. Capelle states that it is without doubt that burial grounds are separated as female and male, although they are spatially close; sometimes only a few hundred meters apart (Capelle 1971: 115; Bantelmann 1971; Kiszely 1979; Collins 1984: 174; Todd 1987: 55). The burial grounds have sometimes been described as having different “sections” for men and women (Breitsprecher 1987: 16).

Still a widely debated question in the archaeology of Germanic people, there is a great need for an approach that not only mentions gender in the context of Elbe Germanic burial grounds, but actually integrates it. Christoph Eger has been mentioned as a significant researcher; whose publication Die jüngere vorrömische Eisen- und römische Kaiserzeit im Luhetal (Lüneburger Heide) from 1999 is an important contribution as it questions many earlier assumptions. Eger primarily draws on Willi Wegewitz results from the excavation of Putensen (Niedersachsen). Eger is critical of how archaeologists have used the osteological data, but also how physical anthropologists have allowed themselves to be “overruled” by archaeologists who wants to have their own interpretations reinforced (Eger 1999: 127). Several urn burials in Schleswig-Holstein have showed that the perceived-to-be-gender-separate burial grounds were actually mixed. Instead of a distinct division, it has been possible to acknowledge a majority of either female or male burials at several sites in northern Germany (Eger 1999: 138).

Eger’s primary arguments for his critique are centered on the narrow restriction of earlier interpretations – there are more local varieties and different types of burial grounds than what has been recognized. Another important question concerns burial grounds with a small number of actual weapons, where it is relevant to inquire after the other men – men who seem
to have been buried without weapons – and where they can be found. Eger’s third point is that a number of jewelry types which are seen as gender-specific also belongs to the jewelry and dress of the “other gender” (Eger 1999: 127). The archaeological criteria for male and female burials are different for the Pre-Roman Iron Age and the Earlier Roman Imperial Period. For the first, it is pottery and for the second; grave goods. Furthermore, many graves are completely without grave goods or only contain one or two artefacts of types that are not deemed specific to any gender. Many burial grounds also seem to be mixed and grave goods belonging to “the wrong gender” are common (Eger 1999: 128). Lastly, Eger concludes that the affected regions exhibit an uneven number of sites “per gender” (Eger 1999: 128).

**Mortuary analysis and osteological data**

As burial grounds are the topic of this study, some attention will be given to the development of mortuary analysis in Germany as this strongly influences interpretations and research questions. A “systematic concern” within German burial analysis emerged during the mid-1920s. A volume by Karl Schumacher from 1925 discussing the early Middle Ages in the Rhineland defined three possible inferences from graves of that period: “ethnic identification, religion (pagan or Christian) and social differences” (Härke 2000: 370). This model has been influential and continues to function as a three-part system that archaeologists examine grave goods by. Paul Reinecke argued in 1925 that grave goods were a “consequence of law, not religion” (Härke 2000: 370). Deceased people had lawful rights to be buried with their inalienable personal effects. Grave goods were divided into two categories; military equipment for men (dt. Hergewaete) and household tools and dress items for women (dt. Gerade). The idea of Hergewaete and Gerade lived on and persisted well into the 1960s. Although its origin as an attempt to shift perspectives away from religion, the legal and religious aspects became fused in some instances.

The graves on the Elbe Germanic burial grounds from the Roman Imperial Period consist almost exclusively on cremated remains placed in urns of varying sizes. There are also some occurrences of urns burials with fire beds (dt. Brandschüttung), cremation pits, mixed contexts of bone fragments and pottery sherds, cremation “layers” of bone fragments deposited without any traces of urns or pottery sherds (dt. Leichenbrandlager) and even one body grave (in Wahlitz) (Capelle 1971: 110; Eger 1999: 7 ff.). These less common types of burials have mainly been recovered in the eastern part of the Elbe area (Capelle 1971: 110). The grave goods have often been cremated alongside the deceased (Articus 2004: 6). This is perhaps most clearly evident from the many molten beads and metal fragments found in several urns. Cremation was a common funeral procedure from the middle of the Bronze Age until about 500 AD. The burial practice of urn graves changed during this period, from urns in mounds to “flat” burial grounds (Steuer 1982: 156). Around 30,000 graves are retrieved from burials comparing to circa 3000 body graves from this time period (Wurmb-Schwark et al. 2005: 2). The burning temperatures of the cremations were likely between 700-900° C which results in a fragmented bone material (Capelle 1971: 114). The total weight of cremated remains differs greatly between the graves, which indicates that only parts

*Fig. 2.1. Museum display of cremated remains from grave 654 in Hornbek. Photo by the author. Stiftung Schleswig-Holsteinische Landesmuseen Schloss Gottorf, Archäologisches Landesmuseum, Schleswig.*
of the total amount must have been deposited in several cases. Cremation was widely spread in the lower Elbe area during the Pre-Roman Iron Age as well as the following Roman Imperial Period (Wegewitz 1994: 23). Therefore, burned remains are often the only human material accessible for anthropological investigations.

Since the bone material is poorly preserved and thus unsuitable for osteological analysis; grave goods constitute the basis for gender identification (Saggau 1986: 114; Willroth 1998: 361). Osteological material has seldom been used systematically in German mortuary analysis (Härke 2000: 374). Osteological reports are often placed in the appendix and treated as separate parts of the results rather than used to thoroughly discuss the implications they provide for the graves (Breitsprecher 1987: 3). The complete amount of graves is seldom examined, as in Harsefeld where only 31 of 244 graves were analyzed by osteologists (Breitsprecher 1987: 23). In the cases where thorough osteological analysis could be implemented, objecting researchers note that the interpretation of grave goods is incompatible with the osteological material (Willroth 1998: 361; Eger 1999: 122). Rüdiger Articus stresses that burials deemed male by anthropological analysis are not recognized as such archaeologically (Articus 2004: 161). Results from two different analyzes of the site in Kasseedorf showed that the two osteologists’ sex determinations differed greatly (Brock 2004: 183). Capelle states that the “female” burial ground Preetz completely lacked male burials, as well as Hornbek where the osteological analysis declared that it was “highly likely that it is a matter of female graves throughout” (Capelle 1971: 114). Eger, on the other hand, has further written about the tendency of archaeologists to misinterpret osteological results in order to strengthen their own claims (Eger 1999: 122 ff.). Sex determinations have been discussed to be most reliable if multivariate methods are used, which requires well-preserved material and large samples (Whelan 1991: 24). This is clearly not the case for the Elbe Germanic material which further complicates the matter.

Although some of the Elbe Germanic burial grounds in this study were excavated as early as the 1830s, most were examined during the first half of the 20th century. Few excavations have taken place after 1970 (Hans-Jörg Nüsse, personal communication). Most excavation reports and catalogues were published before the 1980s, before the shift towards a more theoretical approach. Publications after 1980 are more entrenched in theory, providing comprehensive discussions and increased attention to the process of interpretation. Both Eger and Breitsprecher have specifically underlined that conservative gender roles have been applied to the prehistoric material (Breitsprecher 1987: 11; Eger 1999: 127-8). The importance of osteological analysis is also greatly emphasized in more recent research, and older results from anthropological examinations are often reevaluated. The overall development in the research field correlates to the general direction of German archaeology. Focus seems to have shifted over time, from “Germanomania”, tribal approaches and unquestioned gender roles, towards a more critical discourse where archaeological artefacts are reassessed from new perspectives.

The presentation of earlier research in this chapter has outlined the development of German archaeology at large, which provided a context for the specific research field of Elbe Germanic burial grounds. Mortuary analysis in German archaeology has further been discussed, with an emphasis on osteological analysis as the problems associated with the latter has had extensive effects on the research field. The discussion of different researchers’ conclusions and critiques is crucial in terms of understanding the complexity of this disputed subject. As several burial grounds have been interpreted as male or female on the basis of grave goods (with jewelry attributed to women and weapons to men), the question of why gender labels have been applied arises.
Chapter 3. Critical reading and theoretical perspectives

This chapter will disseminate several important perspectives that have influenced and formed the current discourse on Elbe Germanic burial grounds. Gender script and intersectionality are two important and valuable theoretical perspectives that have not previously been used to discuss the sites. Gender script addresses “engendered” artefacts and will be presented more comprehensively in the section “Gender script in practice – weapons, jewelry and beyond” below. Intersectionality addresses how different sociocultural categories are intersected, and will also be discussed further in the section “Intersectionality” below. Earlier studies have provided ethno-archaeological discussions (Derks 2012), international comparisons (Breitsprecher 1987) and thorough chronological discussions (Eger 1999, Articus 2004) but an intersectional outlook is a way to gain new knowledge and address questions that have not been addressed earlier. Discourse can be seen as a broad and general term for language which bears meaning, but also as a way of establishing individual discourses by looking at language produced “within power relations” (Mills 1997: 9). A common denominator for all definitions of discourse is that they are seen as centered on “practices of exclusion” (Mills 1997: 12). The emphasis on exclusion is important for this chapter, as it will explore and theorize what archaeologists have included and excluded. The discussion will draw on the connection between different statements made in the research field and the implications they have had.

Introducing theoretical perspectives

The primary concern for this chapter is questions relating to gender, since it is deeply engrained but yet comparatively unexplored in this research field. Diverse gender narratives are often lacking in archaeology. The notion of gender relations rather than gender roles will be emphasized in this discussion. Gender should furthermore not be equated and debated in terms of roles to assume or disrobe. Gender relations in archaeological contexts are important to ponder since the perception of them affects the way prehistory is viewed today. Gender relations are also influenced and maintained by the prevalent gender ideology in a society, which functions as a legitimizing power for the societal structure (Whelan 1991: 25). Archaeological representations of the past tend to lend “cultural legitimacy to contemporary social phenomena” by inflicting an illusion of time depth (Perry & Joyce 2005: 113). Stagnant views of gender relations, class and other intersections can therefore be reproduced and consciously or unconsciously reinforce conservative phenomenon in the present, which has often been the case in archaeological research. The emphasis on “male” versus “female” grave is one of the most obvious ways in which archaeologists have contributed to the understanding of gender as dual (male / female) (Hjørungdal 1994: 142). However, it is important to move beyond simply criticizing what has been omitted or accentuated in earlier research (mostly a male bias); “towards writing truly ‘engendered’ histories” (Boyd 1997: 26). It does not suffice to simply state the issues of perceived notions of gender and their influence on archaeology. To truly consider and acknowledge the once-living individuals and the physical traces that remain after them as having an agency beyond an ascribed gender-social-and age-related identity after modern criteria is of great importance.

Material culture has traditionally been viewed as “social residue”; a view that masked male bias and status quo, by the assumption that studies of societies and of large scales would equal gender neutrality (Lesick 1997: 32). Gender neutrality in archaeology is hard to achieve, as gender structures have strong impacts on virtually every discourse. Rather than aiming to maintain a gender neutrality; different aspects of what biological sex, gender, masculinity and femininity entail and how the definitions are used, should be prioritized. The challenge for
archaeologists working with gender, is not to find gender transformers in prehistorical societies (as they without a doubt existed in every culture) but to define which social conditions they will be reflected by archaeologically (Arnold 2002: 243). Gender archaeology can be difficult to address, since theorizations and actual practice can be far apart. Ascribing gender identities to fragmented prehistoric human remains and attributing labels of male and female should further be handled self-critically (Díaz-Andreu et al. 2005: 37). Bettina Arnold further strengthens this critique by stating that “ambiguous correlations between (biological/morphological) sex and (extrasomatic) gender in individual burials are more common in the archaeological record than is generally recognized or acknowledged” (Arnold 2002: 140).

Furthermore, archaeologists primarily focus on the differences between men and women, which reproduces the same structure that is critiqued (Andersson 1998: 184). Anna-Carin Andersson concludes that gender archaeology at large has failed to deconstruct a central and important aspect – “namely that there is a power-related, hierarchical difference between men and women” (Andersson 1998: 185). Andersson questions whether it is even possible to move beyond the male-female dichotomy, when all discussions seem to start with it (Andersson 1998: 186). Andersson’s article was published almost two decades ago, and several studies drawing on queer theory, interdisciplinary studies, and gender research has addressed these questions. The point is still valid and important to consider and the method she proposed is echoed by many – to deconstruct the dichotomy of men versus women in the archaeological record by including “forgotten” and socially oppressed groups in the concept of gender (Andersson 1998: 186). If the male-female dichotomy would be abandoned, it is crucial to ponder what might emerge. Andersson means that the overlooked groups are defined by their “otherness” and that an extreme dichotomy of normal-abnormal might develop (Andersson 1998: 188). The solution to normalize these groups would be to deconstruct the prevalent dichotomy and start addressing social constitutions as “non-sex” (Andersson 1998: 188).

**Gender archaeology in Germany**

The presentation of German archaeology and its history in the previous chapter has made clear that theorizations, albeit much less than desirable, are included. A relevant further question concerning the idea of Elbe Germanic burial grounds interpreted as separated by gender, is the role of gender perspectives in German archaeology. Tove Hjørungdal discussed how gender and burials should be studied in her article “Poles Apart. Have There Been Any Male and Female Graves?” and traced the origin of the bipolarity to 1830s Mecklenburg (Hjørungdal 1994: 143). The discourse encompassing the Elbe Germanic burial grounds clearly show how this early theme (notably shortly after the first discussions of a burial practice separated by gender, which emerged in 1821) has remained firm within German archaeology. It is interesting that an extensive review of this research field has showed that the bipolar interpretations from the 19th century and today are largely the same; and still based on the much too simplistic explanation of weapons as male and jewelry as female. The fact that “gender-specific” objects often are only found in around 20 percent of the graves on a burial ground, further calls to question why they are ascribed so much importance (Hofmann 2013: 278).

The debate of gender questions first began with the student strikes in 1988/1989 in West Germany, after which gender studies started to gain recognition (Karlisch et al. 2000: 285). The first German conference about gender was held in 1991, but the research field is still underdeveloped and outside the academic context, usually undertaken at leisure by students
and young academics (Karlisch et al. 2000: 285). This failure to gain momentum within the
discipline is often explained as a result of androcentric and sexist structures in the German
academia and society at large (Karlisch et al. 2000: 292).

The discussion on the differences between “sex” and “gender” has not made any substantial
impact on German archaeology. Researchers are still focused on “sexual differences” and
“deriving social ‘facts’ about men and women from such ‘differences’ “(Karlisch et al. 2000:
290). This is problematic, as the culturally shared assumptions about what is male and female,
natural and given, are blinding even those conscious of gender inequalities (Oudshoorn et al.
2002: 471). Gender-conservative discourses in modern science have been used “to legitimize
social hierarchies, power differentials and in/exclusions” (Lykke 2010: 36). Archaeologists
who are researching gender relations in past societies often avoid addressing theoretical
discussions on the difference between sex and gender, which furthers an overall unwillingness
towards in-depth analysis (Karlisch et al. 2000: 290). As a consequence, contemporary gender
relations and family structures are projected on past individuals, conveying the same ideas
until the discussion stagnates. The lack of theory is therefore intricately connected to the
underdevelopment of gender archaeology.

Female burials were included in more analysis from the 1970s and onwards with the specific
purpose to incorporate more artefact types. It is clear that the bias towards what has been seen
as “male” artefacts has been heavily engrained in German archaeology. However, there is a
risk that gender archaeology enhances men and women as two opposing groups, when the
pursuit to correct the androcentric bias results in great pursuits to make women more visible
in the archaeological records (Lesick 1997: 33). Achim Leube comments that it is difficult to
anthropologically distinguish “gracile” men from “robust” women (Leube 1978: 32-3). Leube
has brought attention to an important circumstance that has already been established in this
chapter - individual traits distinguishing actual humans with different bodies, lives and lived
experiences. Brock has discussed similar questions in his report on the remains from
Kasseedorf; and questions whether there is a difference in grave goods for “robust” or
“gracile” women, or if the difference is that married women are buried with grave goods
while graves without jewelry which have been considered as male; belonged to maids (Brock
2004: 188). Although neither author has elaborated these ideas further, it is evident that
several categorizations that control the burial context, outside the gender-dichotomy of male
and female; can be suggested.

The shift from artefacts to the burial ritual itself has become a recent research theme in
German mortuary analysis (Härke 2000: 376). It is likely that this shift might prove beneficial
when approaching the archaeological material, as a great problem is that artefacts are
approached in the traditional way of the gender-dichotomy during field work, despite efforts
to address bias in research (Boyd 1997: 28). An important first step to address this problem is
to investigate gender and sex as separate categories (Whelan 1991: 22).

**Genderscript in practice – weapons, jewelry and beyond**

The Dutch gender researcher Nelly Oudshoorn has written about the concept of “*gender
script*”; a term useful to address “engendered” artefacts (Oudshoorn et al. 2002: 473).
Artefacts are gendered either by specific aims during production, where they are created in a
specific way to fit social beliefs about the gender of the potential users, or because they
incorporate a gender script that “shape and define the agency of men and women”
(Oudshoorn et al. 2002: 473). Gender is interchangeable and does not have a fixed meaning
that is independent of its context (Oudshoorn et al. 2002: 475). Although Oudshoorn et al.
primarily uses the term to discuss technical artefacts in a modern context, its implication applies well to the discourse on Elbe Germanic burial grounds. The engendering of artefacts – the genderscript – influences the maintenance of gender relations. Oudshoorn et al. emphasize that the effects of genderscript especially applies to relations of power (Oudshoorn et al. 2002: 472). It is important to question what is often discussed as an almost linear and static enunciation of women versus men with distinctive grave goods. Especially as the practices and performances associated to a certain gender significantly changes both within and cross-culturally (Perry & Joyce 2005: 117). Assigning modern gender roles to prehistoric societies and discussing them as obvious and invariable denies this cross-cultural and temporal diversity (Whelan 1991: 24).

Two artefact categories have received more attention than other in this research field; jewelry (belonging to the costume) and weapons (dt. Tracht, Bewaffnung) (Capelle 1971: 3). These categories have generally become increasingly used as criteria for either female or male identity in archaeology (Hjørungdal 1994: 144). An important question to ponder in this chapter is whether the two categories have been valued the same. Hjørungdal’s interesting remark that graves without weapons have very well been identified as female; while graves without needles (a category typically attributed to women) never seem to be interpreted as male – indicates that the answer to the aforementioned question, is no (Hjørungdal 1994: 144). Examples of artefact categories shared by both female and male burials at Kasseedorf includes wooden buckets with metal detailing, collars, belts, tinderboxes, combs and straight knives (Articus 2004: 161). Why are these artefacts seen as gender-neutral when weapons and jewelry are interpreted as such binary opposing distinctions? Breitsprecher particularly questioned how artefacts that are not included in the categories “weapons” and “jewelry” – such as household items and tools (knives, scissors, keys, etc.) have been interpreted (Breitsprecher 1987: 11). These artefacts; often categorized as household tools, are found on both female and male sites and seem to transgress the distinct dichotomies. It is unfortunately difficult to discuss the meaning of these artefacts as they are usually summarized in short sections, as opposed to jewelry and pottery, which receive much wider attention in excavation reports (Breitsprecher 1987: 63).

Fig. 3.1. Female and male finds on display, in order to establish the difference in grave goods. The female objects (left) include bone needles, a whorl, a fibula, a metal needle and a crescent blade. The male objects (right) include a shield buckle, and lances. Photo by the author. Stiftung Schleswig-Holsteinische Landesmuseen Schloss Gottorf, Archäologisches Landesmuseum, Schleswig.

Heiko Steuer’s critic article “Zur Bewaffnung und Sozialstruktur der Merowingerzeit” from 1968 left a great impression on German archaeology by urging the discipline to stop searching for legally defined classes (Härke 2000: 372). Yet, Steuer – like all researchers before him – focused solely on male burials (i.e. weapons), as female burials have often been dismissed as “more complex” than male. This perceived complexity is in stark contrast to Rüdiger Articus’ listing of the female burials at the burial ground Kasseedorf. Articus states that female burials are much easier to establish than male, as they contain more “characterizing” artefacts (Articus 2004: 161). The remark is likely due to the criteria for female graves being much
more diverse than those of male graves. Just the category of jewelry includes several objects, such as fibulas, arm rings, beads, pendants, and chains. Fibulas are one of the most important find categories; prevalent in 32 percent of all burials (both male and female) (Capelle 1971: 126). Overall, the female costume (dt. Tracht) has been shown to be much more elaborate than its male equivalent (Gebühr 1976: 60). Household tools such as needles of different kinds, spinning whorls, keys, scissors, and knives are also often ascribed to females, although they also occur on “male” sites. Knives and daggers are an exception from the fact that weapons exclusively occur within male burials, according to Capelle; as these types have been found in abundance on “female” burial grounds as Hornbek (Capelle 1971: 112). Needles are one of the objects that have been deemed exclusively female, although they been found amongst burials with shields, swords and lances in the burial ground Großromstedt in Thüringen (Capelle 1971: 112). This wide diversity of artefacts has made female graves “easier to establish” (Breitsprecher 1987: 26).

The criteria for male graves are comparatively sparse: weapons, spurs and razor blades. Weapons include swords, lances, shields, spears and chain mail, some researchers also include awls in this category, although there is an ongoing discussion of whether awls are weapons or tools (Breitsprecher 1987: 27). An interesting observation by Breitsprecher is that razors from male graves are called razors (dt. Rasiermesser), and razors in female graves are called “crescent knives” (dt. sichelförmige Messer) (Breitsprecher 1987: 30). Whetstones, fire steel, drinking horns and belt parts are sometimes also attributed as male, but to a limited extent (Breitsprecher 1987: 30). Belt parts are often found in female graves, and drinking horns regularly appear in rich female graves (Breitsprecher 1987: 31). The difference in scale for criteria used for categorizing female or male graves might explain why 10 of 28 sites in this study have been widely interpreted as female, whereas only 3 as male. Why are weapons seen as defining male artefacts, and why are so few other objects engendered as male and so many as female? The focus has often been on criteria for female graves, and these criteria have also varied more frequently than criteria for male graves (Hjørungdal 1994: 146). This further shows that female criteria have been treated more inclusively; thus resulting in a large number of female sites and graves. Since male criteria are so limited and discussed as more static and settled, male sites and graves seem to be scarce. The inherent genderscript of these engendered object categories clearly show that the gender relations expressed (or attributed) to the Elbe Germanic burial grounds need to be problematized further.

Weapons became more prevalent in Elbe Germanic graves around the end of the La Tène period (around 150 BC- 0 AD), but are often scarce even on “male” burial grounds (Bräunig 2014: 85; Leube 1978: 31). Graves with weapons are also unevenly spread over northern Germany and there are no common factors that applies to all (Weski 1982: 207). In Schleswig-Holstein, they continue to occur relatively rarely in graves from the Later Roman Imperial Period and the Migration Period (Genrich: 1954: 13). The literature review has not shown this situation to be different for other states during the Roman Imperial Period. It is thereby likely that weapons remained relatively rare compared to the male population at large. Von Carnap-Bornheim states that it is “obvious that war and armed conflicts were an essential engine of societal development” which can be deduced both from “contemporary historical sources and archaeological records” (von Carnap-Bornheim 2008: 77). It should be noted here that the historical records that mentions the Elbe Germanic peoples are written by authors connected to ancient Greece or the Roman Empire; thus from a context quite detached from the people they wrote of. As a result; these accounts often characterized by “otherness” and the difference between the writer’s cultural context and the Elbe Germanic peoples (Dick 2008: 43-4). The “countless weapon graves” von Carnap-Bornheim mentioned, are seen as an expression of a highly militarized society, where the burial pattern of grave goods with
swords, shields, lances and spears are constant over time (von Carnap-Bornheim 2008: 77). Von Carnap-Bornheim further claims that weapons were an important part of the male life sphere and a manifestation of conflicts within Germanic groups and the Roman Imperial power (von Carnap-Bornheim 2008: 77). These statements stand in stark contrast to those made by Eger, who rather emphasizes the relatively low number of weapon graves.

Weapons have been found on 8 of the sites in this study. With the exception of Ehestorf-Vahrenendorf, where the percentage of weapons is 64 percent, and Wahlitz where the same number is 4 percent (percentage of graves from the Earlier Roman Imperial Period with weapons), the average amount of weapons per burial ground is around 25-30 percent (after Weski 1982). Wolf-Dieter Steinmetz is also skeptical of the importance of military endeavors, and notes that Germanic peoples primarily occupied themselves with agriculture and had little to do with war (Steinmetz 2013: 142). Körner interpreted the weapons to be an expression of the wars against the Roman Empire, stating that the low number of weapons during the Roman Imperial Period was due to the withdrawal of the Romans and the beginning of a trade between Germanic peoples and Romans (Breitsprecher 1987: 13). The low incidence of weapons has also been discussed to be an enunciation of a peaceful lifestyle; an interpretation which researchers such as C. Redlich agreed with (1967) and lasted well into the 20th century (Capelle 1971: 112; Breitsprecher 1987: 21). Distinctions were made between burial grounds for warriors, and burial grounds for farmers (Breitsprecher 1987: 22).

Rüdiger Articus stresses that it is better to label the so-called “male” burial grounds as sites with high incidences of weapons (dt. Waffenführende) and “female” burial grounds as sites with low incidences of weapons (Articus 2004: 162). It is notable that weapons (an artefact category seen as male) here function as a more important category than jewelry; as it is the presence or lack of weapons that affects the linguistic definition. The labels might as well be switched to “low or high incidence of jewelry” but the fact that it is not – is important as it shows how language affect the discursive meaning. The emphasis of the masculine categories can be traced further in interpretations; with discussions of the cemeteries as having “a masculinity index that deviate either upwards or downwards” (Eger 1999: 138). The artefacts found in Elbe Germanic burials are “often not possible” to determine by gender (Völling
Thomas Völling means that the perception of gender as the only distinguishing feature of burial grounds is too weak. He is advocating a greater consideration of temporal aspects – for example, when the practice of weapons in burials became prevailing in the Niederelbe area (Völling 2005: 47). Like Articus, Völling criticizes the prominence given to gender in interpretations, yet emphasizes the weapons as the important and defining artefact category. Although both researchers have advocated the praxis of defining the burial grounds after find categories (as mentioned in the concluding discussion in chapter 2); weapons are included even though they are comparatively scarce; whereas jewelry is excluded – although the latter has been found on far numerous sites and number of burials.

The examples in this section clearly show how different artefacts have been subjected to genderscript. It is not possible to establish that the artefacts were gendered by specific aims during production, as the production of the artefacts is hard to distinguish from their functions as grave goods. Were the urns specifically produced to be grave goods? Several hypotheses about distinct differences in male and female artefacts (such as tureens for men, pots for women or the number of fibulas in male or female graves – see chapter 2) have been refuted. Another important note is that the production stage of an artefact does not necessarily have to correspond with its function in the grave. An artefact might rather have been produced with a certain individual in mind, or to address different societal groups or occupations. The latter is in line with Eger’s interpretation of the burial practice at the extensive site in Putensen, as being highly conservative and collective with few individual or personal artefacts (Eger 1999: 138). The archaeological interpretations of the artefacts clearly show that perceive inherent gender values have been assigned to them. If certain object categories continue to be ascribed to men or women, although numeral contradictions have been found; the objects will influence the acknowledged agency of men and women in Elbe Germanic societies. As the objects are genderscripted, the Elbe Germanic peoples will be genderscripted by extension.

When both “female” and “male” artefacts have been found together, it has sometimes been assumed that these individuals possessed an affinity towards the behaviors of the “other” gender’s role (Gebühr et al. 1989: 89). This is said to be “counted on during all time periods” but is not the same as “cultural-historical gender diagnosis” (Gebühr et al. 1989: 89). This statement was probably formulated to explain what would otherwise be perceived as anomalies in the archaeological material. The dichotomy male/female implies a normative view of sex and gender where individuals “outside the norm” are viewed as anomalies or excluded. Binary “shifters” such as transsexuality, different modes of homosexuality, gender crossing and so on are often obscured from archaeological interpretations (Lesick 1997: 36). The relationship between gender identity (emic and subjectively defined) and gender attribution (etic, dependent on and defined by social context) is tense in all societies, although to varying degrees (Arnold 2002: 242). Since gender categories are social cultural constructions, they differ in terms of attributes and behaviors in every culture (Whelan 1991: 24). It is evident that these aspects of gender identity remain unaddressed within the research field of Elbe Germanic burial grounds. By acknowledging different levels of binary shifts or gender transcendence, divergent femininities and masculinities can be introduced as tools to understand burial practices and grave goods.

**Intersectionality**

Gender Studies researcher Nina Lykke has stressed that both gender and sex have to be understood as intersectional; “… it should always be considered in relation to its intersections with constructions of other sociocultural categories such as race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, age, dis/ability, nationality and so on.” (Lykke 2010: 50). Intersectionality can be seen as both
a theoretical and methodological tool that aims to recognize normativities and power differentials (Lykke 2010: 50-ff.). Examining interwoven categories can lead to new knowledge and understandings of how social relations are constructed and upheld. The importance of acknowledging the actual lived lives of the Elbe Germanic peoples have been stressed earlier in this chapter.

Focusing on categories might then seem counterproductive as it can lead to a view of people as static within the categories. To counteract this, it is important to consider the categories as constructions rather than natural and unopposable certainties (Lykke 2010: 74). Initially, it might seem disadvantageous to discuss Elbe Germanic graves in terms of intersectionality, as many categories – such as disabilities, race, and nationality – are impossible to infer from the fragmented cremated remains, or the grave goods. The strength of intersectionality lies in its ability to address the categories that do not seem obvious (Lykke 2010: 82). Thus, the aim is to discuss patterns and categories that might emerge from an intersectional perspective to move beyond earlier scripts of gender (and the relations associated to it) and explore whether any new categories can be found. The research field of Elbe Germanic burial grounds is highly characterized by the importance placed on gender, but as an explanation for burial practices, it should rather be viewed as one of several potential reasons (Whelan 1991: 24).

The incorporation of intersectionality in this study, is greatly influenced by Whelan’s attempt to analyze burial remains from a Dakota cemetery in Minnesota by moving beyond sex-to-artefact correlations looking for other important categories; thus concluding that age-specific categories could be found (Whelan 1991: 17). She further stressed the great potential of burial data beyond osteological analysis; as artefact clusters and facets of burial practices can be linked to specific individuals (regardless of sex) (Whelan 1991: 24). Whelan’s study benefited from well-preserved remains and historical source material. As neither body graves nor reliable historical sources are attainable for the Elbe Germanic burials, the same type of straight-forward analysis cannot be conducted, but Whelan’s work and focus on including several categories has served as an inspiration for the two case studies in chapter 5.

A critical reading of the previous research has showed that dominating discourses can be identified in the research context of Elbe Germanic people. The power of the discursive language is palpable – by continuously discussing gender as either male and female – gender has become something static and apparent – the burial grounds have thus become either male or female in interpretations. Even though several sites have been considered as “mixed” sites – either by the presence of both “female” and “male” graves or by the lack of distinctive objects (weapons, jewelry); these are subordinate to the idea of a distinct separate burial practice. Gender has thereby become the most distinctive feature in the discourse and is always included in the interpretations; whether it is in order to dismiss or reinforce the idea. The underlying problem is that, although the question of gender is debated, the practices of exclusion versus inclusion that permeate the interpretations are often not. This chapter has discussed how the binary of male-female excludes other categories. The gender script of the grave objects and the interpretations of them further shows that certain types of masculinities (warriors; an association to both a profession and a societal role) and femininities (the women laden with jewelry – powerful figures in the household or less adorned household workers) prevail in archaeological publications. It is also evident that the artefacts associated with men – weapon – are ascribed more importance than the artefacts associated with women. The development of German archaeology during the 20th century and the fact that gender perspectives have struggled to gain momentum, has paradoxically resulted in a large importance being attributed to gender while it yet remains largely unexplored.
Chapter 4. Recreating the landscape

This chapter attempts to answer the second research question, which addresses whether any spatial patterns of the Elbe Germanic burial grounds can be identified. The landscape of northern Germany in the Roman Imperial Period is crucial to assess, in order to provide a more comprehensive background to the Elbe Germanic sites and serves as a background for the case studies in chapter 5. The main part of the chapter will present and discuss earlier research, in order to provide a background for the analysis. Geological factors that influenced the Elbe Germanic peoples, as well as the question of settlements, will be presented. One section outlines the spatial chronology and previous time periods and maps made by using GIS serve to analyze and distinguish regional patterns of burial practice.

Northern Germany during the Roman Imperial Period

The geology of the area is a crucial factor for prehistoric settlement patterns. The lower part of Elbe and the river outlet is called Niederelbe; a term which serves as an important distinction for the region. It is evident that Elbe was a central element of the landscape during all periods of prehistoric settlement in the area. The river is of vital importance for the formation of the landscape in the region, especially as its inflows form a type of “settlement-chambers” (dt. Siedlungskammern). These types of chambers are usually naturally defined and delimited (Voß 2008:36), and likely results of meander formation (Jan Risberg, personal communication). The many backfilled palaeochannels (dt. Urstromtäler) in the area also reinforce this interpretation. Prehistoric settlements were probably more affected by meanders than present day societies because of extensive dam constructions in historical and modern periods (Jan Risberg, personal communication). River bends were coveted areas to establish settlements in since they form a natural frontier as well as direct access to water.

It is apparent that the burials are distributed over a wide geographical area. The northern geographical region of Germany is called the North German Plain and consists of lowlands. The highest elevation points are around 200 meters and with no significant land uplift since the beginning of the 1st millennia AD. Northern Germany is dominated by basic and terminal till with fertile, heavy and sandy clay (Schach Dörges 1970: 9). As well as river dynamics, dune formation (hills of sand created by wind of water flow), were also of great significance to the prehistoric settlements. According to Hans-Ulrich Voß, two distinct regions can be construed. Voß identifies these regions by examining the “economy-transport-and communication-sphere”. The first region is south of the Niederelbe area, and the second is north of the Elbe; including the Hagenow-Wittenburger plateau (Voß 2008:38). The occupation of the burial grounds in these regions lasted until 160/180-200 AD (Voß 2008:38). Thomas Völling on the other hand, means that the whole Niederelbe area should be perceived as a culturally unified entity during the Pre-Roman Iron Age and subsequent Earlier Roman Imperial Period (Völling 2005: 47). Völling bases his interpretation on predominant similarities in the funeral practice – urn burials, similar jewelry types and weapons. However,
there are many local differences, especially concerning pottery (Völling 2005: 47). The area around and north of the Harz mountain range on the border between Niedersachsen and Sachsen-Anhalt, have been seen as a transition zone between two distinct cultural territories. The “Rhein-Weser-Germanic culture” dominated the western sphere and the “Elbe Germanic culture” covered a notably bigger area in the eastern part, with the river Elbe as the main communication line (Nüsse 2013: 131). The different interpretations presented by Voß, Völling and Nüsse show the complexity of the large region.

A number of researchers mention that Elbe Germanic tribes abruptly left settlements and burial grounds (Schach-Dörges 1970; Voß 2008); a development often attributed to religious or social-economic factors. These interpretations probably originate from the abandonment of burial grounds (Elbe Germanic burial grounds generally do not include graves dated later than the Migration Period), but it seems unlikely that all settlements would be abandoned simultaneously as the cemeteries. These interpretations are influenced by the well-established idea of large-scale migrations out of Germany during the Migration Period. Reconstructing past landscapes and ecosystems is necessary to analyze and evaluate human impact and modifications applied to time and space (Damm et al. 2010: 1). To distinguish between anthropogenically induced landscape-changes versus climatic changes is more complex in a geographically restricted area than in a supraregional setting. Prehistoric cultures are comparatively regional and can usually be traced to lowland areas, as is the case of the Northern German Plain (Behre 1988: 634).

A suitable method for reconstructing prehistoric landscapes is to analyze soil erosion by water. The process of soil erosion is facilitated on slopes and usually caused by agriculture and woodland clearings, therefore a relevant process to consider when studying human impact (Dreibrodt et al. 2010: 80). It is also important to look beyond historical sources and archaeological information while examining land-use patterns; since these are still limited in their spatial coverage (Boardman & Poesen 2006: 468). A study undertaken to estimate the historical soil erosion in Germany during the Holocene has used dated slope deposits, alluvial sediments and lake sediments to calculate the human impact on German landscapes (Dreibrodt et al. 2010: 80). A surprising result showed that the Roman Imperial Period displayed a decreasing number of recorded soil sediments (Dreibrodt et al. 2010: 80). The previous periods of Late Bronze Age and Pre-Roman Iron Age (1600 BC -1 AD) exhibited a great increase in soil erosion which was repeated during Medieval times (1000-1350 AD). The decrease during the Roman Imperial Period applies to both north and southern Germany; even though southern Germany was occupied by the Romans and the recorded sediment data from southern and northern Germany greatly differ. It is unlikely that agriculture and woodland clearing should decrease drastically between Pre-Roman Iron Age and the Roman Imperial Period since these are so closely connected in time. The decrease also does not correspond to archaeological estimations of population density (Dreibrodt et al. 2010: 89).

The results of the aforementioned study contrasts sharply with vegetation history from pollen diagrams. Anthropogenic indicators in pollen diagrams from a German and Polish co-study in 1982, show that the level of human impact on the landscape during the Roman Period was severe (Behre 1988: 646). The contrasting results from the studies of soil erosion and pollen diagrams show that it is difficult to reach any conclusions concerning the land use during the Roman Imperial Period. It is evident, however, that the end of the Roman Imperial Period and beginning of the Migration Period marks a change for the use of the burial sites as they do not include graves dated later than early Migration Period.
Fig. 4.2. Elevation map (numerical values in meter) of the area combined with soil data. The soil types shown on the map have been deemed as relevant for the time period (with help from quaternary geologist Jan Risberg). The older and younger areas dominated by till (Altmorängebiet, Jungmorängebiet) are the most evident features. Notice how the Elbe cuts through the landscape flanked by protruding palaeochannels (Urstromtäler). Data sources: Eurostat DEM, Capelle 1971, Voß 2008, Archäologisches Museum Hamburg Bodendenkmalpflege, Archäologisches Dokumentationszentrum Dez, Archäologische Dienste Brandenburgisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege und Archäologisches Landesmuseum, Archäologisches Landesamt Schleswig-Holstein, Bundesamt für Kartographie und Geodäsie, Bundesanstalt für Geowissenschaften und Rohstoffe.
Spatial traces of burial grounds – chronology and continuity

The burial grounds in this study have been discussed as primarily from the Roman Imperial Period in earlier research. The question of chronology is however important to elaborate, as burial grounds, especially from the Earlier Roman Imperial Period, are characterized by their affinity to older graves. The different periods have been identified through typological analysis of the artefacts. Burials from earlier periods ranging from the Bronze Age (2200-800 BC) to Spätlatènezeit (150 BC-0 AD) have often been found immediately adjacent the graves (Capelle 1971: 104). It is hereby beyond doubt that people inhabiting the Elbe Valley during the Roman Imperial Period related to the older graves. A row of 13 hearths were found on the extensive burial ground in Badow (Schmidt 1999: 28). They were overlapped by Iron Age graves, and C14 datings from 1983 dated them to the Late Bronze Age (Schmidt 1999: 29). A total of 24 hearths were found in Hamburg-Marmstorf. Eight hearths were dated to the Late Stone Age and 13 to the Late Bronze Age. The burial ground in Tostedt-Wüstenhöfen is situated within a larger area of Bronze Age mounds (dt. Hügelgräber) and three mounds immediately surround the site (Capelle 1971: 104). A mound is also situated in vicinity to the burial ground in Hornbek and Klein Kreutz, and Bronze Age graves have also been found next to Fohrde and Hohenferchesar (Capelle 1971: 106). The mounds are still clearly visible in the landscape. The use of mounds could have continued into the Roman Imperial Period but to a limited extent. Wegewitz, for instance, believed that the richly adorned Grave 26 from Harsefeld was covered by a soil mound (Capelle 1971: 108).

It is important to outline the chronology in terms of previous periods, and as researchers use different terms for the periods, it is crucial to present what these entail. Some sites (such as Hamburg-Marmstorf, Harsefeld and Zahna) include graves from the Iron Age Jastorf culture (named after the burial ground in Jastorf, after Gustav Schwantes) (Buck & Gustavs 1994: 59). Jastorf finds are divided into Jastorf A (600-500 BC), Jastorf B (500-400 BC) and Jastorf C (400-350 BC). The La Tène Period is used as an equivalent to the Late Iron Age (500 BC-0 AD) by most archaeologists in Central Europe, while Pre-Roman Iron Age is more often used in northern Europe (Müller 1985: 15). The La Tène Period is parallel to the two periods following Jastorf in northern Germany; Ripdorf (350-120 BC) and Seedorf (120 BC-0 AD). The Jastorf period is sometimes used as a synonym for the Pre-Roman Iron Age while the Late La Tène is called the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age (Müller 1985: 15). Graves dated to Seedorf were found in Tostedt-Wüstenhöfen and Harsefeld but graves listed as dating to Ripdorf have not been found. This could be explained by the fact that several researchers rather refer to the different La Tène periods.

The question of Elbe Germanic settlements

Although burial grounds are the physical sites that constitute the study, it is important to briefly outline the research on Elbe Germanic settlements. It is questionable whether a burial sites provide representative knowledge about the actual lives of deceased people inhabiting the region; as they perhaps rather function as providers of certain denominators that were engrained in the contemporary societies. Settlement remains constitute another fragment of experiences and conditions of life during the Roman Imperial Period.

Northern Germany faced an increased level of inhabitation during the 1st century AD. Discussions of Germanic settlements (comprising the Pre Roman Iron Age, Roman Imperial Period and Migration Period) have resulted in the definition of three settlement types, often influenced by historical Roman sources and archaeological remains. These are villages,
settlements, and single farmsteads (van Ossel 2008: 74). In Johanna Brabandt’s study from 1993; Hausbefunde der römischen Kaiserzeit im freien Germanien: Ein Forschungsstand, all known finds of house structures from the Roman Imperial Period (the structures could not be dated more exactly) have been compiled. A thorough reading of Brabandt’s catalogue (only counting sites within the states included in this study) shows that 43 sites have been found in Niedersachsen, 15 in Schleswig-Holstein, six in Hamburg, two in Brandenburg, and one in Sachsen-Anhalt (Brabandt 1993: 86 ff.). Amongst the numerous sites in Niedersachsen, Feddersen Wierde and Flögeln especially stand out; with the former consisting of 206 structures and the latter 77 (Brabandt 1993: 86 ff.). The northwestern part of the Elbe region seems to have been more densely inhabited than the northeastern area, following Brabandt’s compilation and the nine burial grounds in this study. A source critical aspect is that the area around northern Niedersachsen and Hamburg is highly developed, which means that infrastructural projects could have been the cause for many of these discoveries. Similar to the burial grounds, Elbe Germanic settlements have not left visible traces above ground. The archaeological materials from the settlements usually consist of singular shards of pottery, burned clay or colorations in the soil. House structures are usually identified by postholes, drainage ditches or fire pits (Brabandt 1993: 17).

Mapping with GIS – acquisition of data and limitations

Geographical information systems (GIS) are useful for various types of spatial analysis (Conolly & Lake 2006). Coordinates, attributes and other data for ten burial grounds were acquired from three archaeological departments in northern Germany. As mentioned above, the complete extent of the burial grounds is often unknown. The burial grounds were symbolized by point features, meaning that a site is symbolized by one value while mapping. Another problem was the lack of other available spatial data for the burial grounds. Reasons for the shortage was due to state level GIS-datasets being under construction or nonexistent. Georeferencing burial grounds as points from printed maps was therefore undertaken. Using printed maps from Capelle 1971, and Voß 2008, the remaining burial grounds were georeferenced using ArcMap in ArcGIS 10.2.2. Due to restrictions (undefined delimitations and site boundaries) in excavation reports and printed maps (lacking scale bars and legends) it is crucial to regard the overview of the 28 sites as an outline rather than detailed descriptions of every site.

Open source soil maps, topography, elevation data and other geographical and geological data have been acquired from ESRI, the German Federal Office for Cartography and Geodesy (Bundesamt für Kartographie und Geodäsie), Eurostat and other mapping services. The complete number of burial grounds dating to the Roman Imperial Period have been examined, and the burial grounds used during the earlier period (0-300 AD) were labelled in a table (see appendix). Categorizations were made using different variables, such as the complete number of individual burials that was identified during the excavations (using Capelle 1971, LR 2008 etcetera). This type of categorization allows an easily comprehensive overview showing how burials of different numeral ranges are distributed in the landscape. Another crucial type of categorization relates to the question of gender distinction, based on previous gender interpretations of the burial grounds (using Capelle 1971; LR 2008; Wegewitz 1973; Bemmann 1999; Eger 1999). The main categories are “Female” and “Male” (burial grounds interpreted to consist of either completely female or male burials), and “Uninterpreted”. The last category includes burial grounds interpreted to encompass both male and female burials.
Fig. 4.3. Map showing the burial grounds as categorized by interpretations of gender attributed by archaeologists. The river Elbe intersects the landscape. Data sources: ESRI ArcGIS Online, Capelle 1971, Voß 2008, Archäologisches Museum Hamburg Bodendenkmalpflege, Archäologisches Dokumentationszentrum Dez, Archäologische Dienste Brandenburgisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege und Archäologisches Landesmuseum, Archäologisches Landesamt Schleswig-Holstein, Bundesamt für Kartographie und Geodäsie, Bundesanstalt für Geowissenschaften und Rohstoffe.
Spatial patterns

To recreate the prehistoric landscape, present day soil types and sediments have been dissected to establish whether they were prevalent during the Roman Imperial Period. The dominant soil types were established with the help of quaternary geologist Jan Risberg. These consist of older and younger till, as well as riverbed sediments and palaeochannels. These results correlate well to earlier research and re-establishes the influence of soil types and geological elements connected to bodies of water (primarily Elbe). The so-called “settlement chambers” and presence of palaeochannels confirm the impact of the river’s flow and expansion for human impact and prehistoric land use.

Several spatial patterns have been identified by mapping in ArcGIS. Categories such as placement of urns (in rows or groups), number of excavated graves, distribution of older and younger graves, gender attributions, occurrence of Roman Import and relations to sites from earlier periods were created in a table and thereafter mapped in order to reveal any possible patterns. The 28 burial grounds in the study should be seen as a fairly representative number of sites for this spatial analysis.

The observed spatial patterns are:

1. The majority of the sites are situated in northeastern Niedersachsen, around Hamburg and in the western part of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. This area can be viewed as the “center” of Elbe Germanic activity during the early Roman Imperial Period, especially when Brabandt’s compilation of settlement finds (concentrated to Niedersachsen) is taken account. It is yet important to consider the source critical notion that this area has been highly developed in modern times which might explain the many finds (see the section on settlements). A second “cluster” is found in western Brandenburg and eastern Sachsen-Anhalt. Both areas are connected to the estuary areas, lowlands and palaeochannels of the river Elbe.

2. Roman Import goods have been found on 21 burial grounds, evenly distributed over the area (see appendix). “Roman Import” is defined as artefacts that were manufactured within the Roman Empire, and have been found in different parts of Europe (Becker 2011: 51). Imported Roman goods placed in graves on the Elbe Germanic burial grounds primarily consists of bronze vessels, glass vessels, glass or faience beads, or arm rings (Becker 2006; Erdrich 2002/2004; Laser 1994; Voß 1998). Bronze vessels of Roman origin are increasingly frequent in the burial material from the end of the Pre-Roman Iron Age and onwards (Bräunig 2014: 85; Eger 1999: 146). Eger has stated that the choice to use a bronze vessel instead of regular urns of pottery, was an enunciation of the status and “personal character” of the deceased (Eger 1999: 152). Bronze artefacts (almost exclusively bronze vessels used as grave urns) are concentrated to the western region (primarily in Niedersachsen), while jewelry (primarily beads, but also pendants, fibulas and fragments) are scattered over the whole area.

Fig. 4.4. Urn with stone placed on top. From Hornbek. Stiftung Schleswig-Holsteinische Landesmuseen Schloss Gottorf, Archäologisches Landesmuseum, Schleswig, Ortsakte Hornbek 50.

Fig. 4.5. Urn covered by a flat stone and surrounded by smaller stones. From Hornbek. Stiftung Schleswig-Holsteinische Landesmuseen Schloss Gottorf, Archäologisches Landesmuseum, Schleswig, Ortsakte Hornbek 50.
3. The placement of the three burial grounds which have been interpreted as male by the occurrence of weapons in graves (Ehestorf-Vahrendorf, Hamburg-Marmstorf, Harsefeld). All other gender categories are evenly dispersed on both sides of Elbe, but the sites in this category are all south of the river’s west bank (in Niedersachsen). As two sites in the category “Uninterpreted” (Hamburg-Langenbek and Putensen) and the “female” site Tostedt-Wüstenhöfen are in the same area, this might be a coincidence. As this area corresponds to a concentration of Roman bronze vessels used as burial urns and is one of two concentrated areas where weapons were deposited as grave goods (the second area comprises the two “mixed” sites Fohrde and Hohenferchesar in Brandenburg) it is clear that this section represents a different burial practice than other regions. Hamburg-Marmstorf constitutes one of the two sites chosen for the case studies in chapter 5 which means that this pattern will be addressed further.

4. The placement of urns in separate and elaborate rows is concentrated to the area around western Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (Camin, Granzin, Jamel, Döbbersen) and northeastern Niedersachsen (Darzau). It is not found south of Darzau and might therefore represent a separate burial practice than other areas. Several archaeologists have noted earlier that grave urns have sometimes been found placed in rows. C. Hostmann who managed the excavation of Darzau noted that the urns were placed approximately 0,9 m apart, in rows that were circa 1,2 m apart (Capelle 1971: 106-7). Other sites like Harsefeld and Tostedt-Wüstenhöfen include rows with shorter distances between the urns. Capelle has commented that this might be due to the early excavation methods where long and narrow shafts were dug, but it seems unlikely that this should be the case for all five sites (which were excavated during century-long the period 1837-1938). An examination of the map of excavated sections in Hamburg-Marmstorf (Wegewitz 1964) analyzed in GIS contradicts Capelle’s critique as small rows (of maximum five graves) can be distinguished not depending on the excavation method. The clusters of graves that are visible on excavation maps have been discussed as family groups (Capelle 1971: 107).

5. The practice of placing small stones around or on top of the urns (probably as protection so they would stand upright) and/or flat stones on top of the urns as cover, is widely spread over the northern area (described above), but could not be noted for the second area (Brandenburg, Sachsen-Anhalt).

6. Several burial grounds include remains of monuments from earlier periods. Seven of the burial grounds have been established in close relation to Bronze Age mounds (tumuli) and two sites were established over Bronze Age hearths (Badow and Hamburg-Marmstorf) (see fig. 4.7). The burial grounds are either right next to the mounds (such as in Tostedt-Wüstenhöfen), in the middle of a Bronze Age burial ground (like Klein Kreutz), or in close proximity (like Putensen, Fohrde and Hohenferchesar). It has not been possible to find a continuous uninterrupted use from the Bronze Age onwards on these sites, and it is therefore likely that they were established several centuries after the mounds were created, in order to connect the urn burials to visible elements in the landscapes or earlier burial practices. Urn burials from the younger Roman Imperial Period and Migration Period follow this tradition of placing burials in proximity to older mounds (Genrich 1954: 32).

7. Obvious separations of older (dated to Jastorf, La Tène) and younger graves (Roman Imperial Period) have been observed in Preetz, Hornbek, Tostedt-Wüstenhöfen and Blievenstorf.

Fig 4.6. Urn with stones placed around and on top. From Hornbek. Stiftung Schleswig-Holsteinische Landesmuseen Schloss Gottorf, Archäologisches Landesmuseum, Schleswig, Ortsakte Hornbek 50.
Older graves were placed in the northern part of the burial grounds (with younger graves in the southern part) in Preetz and Tostedt-Wüstenhöfen. Older graves were situated on a hill in Blievenstorff, while younger graves were situated on the slope. In Hornbek, the older graves were distributed over the eastern part of the site, while the younger graves were found in the western part. These sites have all been interpreted as female and exhibit a large percentage of graves with graves goods (Preetz 81, Hornbek 74, Tostedt-Wüstenhöfen 62, and Blievenstorff with 42 percent). As they are spread over a large area (especially Preetz in Schleswig-Holstein) and the distributions differ amongst them, it is not likely that this pattern is of importance. As discussed in chapter 3, a larger number of artefact types are attributed to female than male graves, thus resulting in an imbalance where the female burial grounds are much more prevalent. When this factor is taken account, it seems improbable that this pattern should be attributed as a feature of female sites. It should rather be viewed as reinforcing the idea that the graves must have been marked above ground (see chapter 5), as younger graves would have overlapped the older graves otherwise.

The recreation of the landscape during the Roman Imperial Period and the spatial features of the burial grounds in this chapter, has shown the complexity of the large region. The research question addressed in this chapter considered whether any spatial patterns could be distinguished. The assessment of earlier research and the mapping in GIS enabled this inquiry. The sites shared some general features; such as the soil type they were situated on, that most were found on sandy hills, and numerous sites are in close proximity to Bronze Age mounds. Several more local patterns were also found. However, the most important results of this analysis are the difficulties of distinguishing traces of the Elbe Germanic peoples in the landscape.

Fig. 4.7. Map showing the burial ground connected to Late Bronze Age monuments. Data sources: ESRI ArcGIS Online, Capelle 1971, Voß 2008, Archäologisches Museum Hamburg Bodendenkmalpflege, Archäologisches Dokumentationszentrum Dez, Archäologische Dienste Brandenburgisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege und Archäologisches Landesmuseum, Archäologisches Landesamt Schleswig-Holstein, Bundesamt für Kartographie und Geodäsie, Bundesanstalt für Geowissenschaften und Rohstoffe.
Chapter 5. Burial ground analysis: Two case studies

The third research question, which concerns how the burial practices of Elbe Germanic graves can be understood; will be addressed in this chapter. The first two sections present a background to Elbe Germanic urn burials and graves without grave goods, as the latter will be discussed further in chapter 6. The main part of chapter 5 consists of two in-depth case studies of the two burial grounds Hamburg-Marmstorf and Preetz which are analyzed in chapter 6.

The urns and their placements

The urns were placed on foliage and in few cases small heaps of stone, but otherwise unprotected (Capelle 1971: 108). Earthen vessels were primarily used, and the vessels were probably produced with a specific aim to function as funeral vessels. In few cases such as Putensen, Harsefeld and Wiebendorf, bronze vessels have been used as burial urns. As Capelle notes, the urns are well preserved, but the use of other vessels cannot be excluded as they might have been of organic material and therefore not preserved (Capelle 1971: 109). It is possible that some grave goods were placed on the pyre together with the deceased (most probably goods of organic material, such as cloth or wooden artefacts) and thereafter placed in the urn. Other artefacts seem to have been placed upon the cremated remains in the urns, if too large, they were placed or buried next to the urn (Capelle 1971: 109-110). There does not seem to be any difference between cremation pits and so forth, concerning grave goods. The few body graves found on Elbe Germanic sites have been seen as anomalies; who represent another societal status, especially as they are all lavishly adorned (Capelle 1971: 111).

The graves have not left durably visible traces above ground (Wegewitz 1994: 8). Urn burial grounds are often situated on heights, and very seldom found at ground level or in valleys (Schach Dörge 1970: 34). Capelle claims that they are situated on sandy hills, almost without exception (Capelle 1971: 104). There are no obvious patterns for the placement of graves within burial grounds, according to Capelle (Capelle 1971: 106). One interesting aspect is that the graves within the burial grounds (for example at Tostedt-Wüstenhöfen and Ehestorf-Vahrendorf) do not seem to overlap neither older nor contemporary graves (as noticed from maps by Wegewitz 1994: 25, 208). Over all, overlapping is only apparent in very few cases. This indicates that most graves were visible at ground level (Capelle 1971: 107), as they would otherwise overlap each other more often by default– as the majority of the burial grounds consist of a large number of urns, thus clarifying that although not visible above ground today; the burials must have been marked in some way during the Roman Imperial Period. The urns are often found around 50-70 cm under ground level.

In some cases, (such as in Putensen), the urn graves have been covered by stones (Wegewitz 1994: 8). A circular stone formation with a middle cross was found in Preetz, possibly dating to the Pre-Roman Iron Age (Capelle 1971: 106). Other stone formations have been found next to the burial grounds, for instance the small stone pyramids at Blievenstor, consisting of sharpened stones about 30 cm long (Capelle 1971: 108). Some stones that could have been used as grave stones have also been retrieved in Wahlitz. With the exception of the aforementioned sites, few stones or other “grave markers” likely to have been seen above ground level, have been found (Capelle 1971: 108). It is not possible to establish whether every single grave was marked, or if the practice was so systematic that all people knew the approximate distance between urns and therefore avoided to overlap burials. As it seems unlikely to adhere to the exact same burial practice for several centuries; it is hereby suggested that every grave was marked, but perhaps with different features. They were also likely marked with objects made of organic material or smaller assemblages of stones, as they
have not been recovered in modern day. Archaeologists have looked for postholes on the burial grounds without finding any, thus further complicating the question of how the graves were marked (Capelle 1971: 108). It is possible that some graves were more permanently marked than others and the burial grounds should probably be viewed as having pronounced point features.

**Graves without grave goods**

The individuals buried on the Elbe Germanic sites have been analyzed and categorized after gender (using grave goods, in some cases after osteological analyses) and age (by osteological analysis). Distinguishing male or female graves (and assigning as many graves as possible to either of those two categories) has been described as one of the traditional goals of archaeologists faced with mortuary analysis (Hjørungdal 1994: 143). Few individuals per examined Elbe Germanic site have been established as either, but there is also a large amount of burials where it has not been possible to conclude any of those factors. The graves without any grave goods other than the urns the cremated remains were placed in (or without any artefacts at all, as in the case of cremation pit graves); the “unsexed graves” are seen as “poor” and are often overlooked in publications. As they do not contain the typical artefacts used for chronologies (primarily fibulas) other than the pottery, they are discussed almost as a matrix material, and assigned to the dominant “gender” of the graves with grave goods. Hjørungdal notes that only individuals with “elaborate burials” are assigned gender identities when traditional methods of sexing burials are used; thus leading to a discrimination of both gender and the social groups which lack grave goods (Hjørundal 1994: 147).

The question of whether the grave goods can be seen as representative of the deceased is difficult to address. Werbart states that the grave material can have a significant symbolic value rather than being evidence of practices with which the deceased was involved (Werbart 1991: 123). As it is impossible to confirm how the grave goods correspond to the deceased’s actual life, it is more important to acknowledge that a lack of grave goods might not mean that a person was excluded from the practices that the objects represent.

There is also a consistent bias towards identifying ambiguous graves as male which has led to a warped view of social relationships in the past (Arnold 2002: 240). Female skeletal remains further often tend to be misinterpreted (Whelan 1991: 24). Breitsprecher states that around 35-45 percent of the graves on any site from the Roman Imperial Period can be expected to be without grave goods, regardless of the size of the burial ground itself (Breitsprecher 1987: 43). This estimation is essentially correct, although some sites deviate rather greatly (notably Preetz where only around 20 percent of the graves were without grave goods, and Speuß where the same number is 90 percent). The percentage of graves without any grave goods is also significantly higher on the “male” sites (Derks 2012: 19). Derks mentions that several critical researchers explain the many “empty” graves as indicators of gender groups that are
underrepresented in the material; but questions how they have failed to address why men have been buried without grave goods in some instances, and women without some ditto in other cases (Derks 2012: 19). Some researchers have tried to explain the “unaccompanied” graves as those of children or slaves (Christie 1995: 7). This suggestion leads to several questions – what would the estimation of children versus slaves be? Did children have the same mortuary status as slaves in Elbe Germanic societies? Christie’s speculation is not only unfounded, but is also a much too simplified attempt to solve the question of graves without grave goods. By attributing them to complete sections of the population (children/slaves); he thus also fails to acknowledge perspectives that intersects these population categories. The percentage of graves with grave goods has been possible to acquire and assess from 19 of the 28 sites in this study.

![Percentage of graves with grave goods per site](image)

*Fig. 5.3. Table showing the percentage of grave goods per burial ground (Capelle 1971).*

**Two case studies – introduction and methodology**

Could the practice of separate burial grounds be based – not exclusively on gender – but by other distinctions (social status, class, and etcetera) – which could vary depending on the local context? Why would people continue to use the same burial grounds (as is evident from the many graves from the periods ranging from Jastorf to the La Tène-Period, on the sites) – but drastically change their burial practice and shift from a mixed burial pattern towards a strictly gendered? Can the material from two burial grounds be reanalyzed and compared in order to address these questions? These complex questions arose during the initial stages of this study, and constitute the background for the case studies. The two chosen sites are Hamburg-Marmstorf in Hamburg, and Preetz in Schleswig-Holstein. The first has been widely interpreted as a male site, due to the occurrence of weapons, while the latter has been construed as female due to the many finds of jewelry. Both sites were excavated during the 20th century (Hamburg-Marmstorf in 1931 and 1954 by Willi Wegewitz, and Preetz in 1951-2 by Johanna Brandt) and have been published with conclusive find listings. Another common factor is that neither site belongs to the widely discussed sites in the overall discourse of the Elbe Germanic burial grounds.

Arnold writes that an archaeologist should follow the order of first identifying patterns where morphologically identifiable sex and material expressions of gender correlates, before trying to arrange possible social categories (Arnold 2002: 244; Whelan 1991: 24). This approach is dependent on an idea of what “material expressions of gender” means in a specific mortuary context. Although this study aims to move beyond the prevalent focus on gender through an intersectional perspective, it is still important to consider the genderscripted categories
outlined in chapter 3 (specifically jewelry and weapons) as these have been seen as the “material expressions of gender” in earlier research. The aim is yet to examine other material expressions in the graves and what these might represent. Arnold’s and Whelan’s approaches will be used as guidelines for the following analyzes where osteological results (if available) are compared to the grave goods.

The first step in the process of analyzing the two case studies was to categorize and map the burial ground data. The complete number of graves from both sites was used, which means that the database for Hamburg-Jastorf contained graves from the Jastorf period (Pre-Roman Iron Age) and the Earlier Roman Imperial Period as they are from to the same site. In contrast, all graves from Preetz were dated to the Roman Imperial Period. Separate databases were initially constructed using Microsoft Access 2013 and these were thereafter linked to maps in ArcMap (ArcGIS 10.2.2.). The categories for the 210 graves in Preetz were: 1. ID, 2. GIS-ID (necessary for the second step in the workflow) 3. Grave number (after the list of finds from the excavation reports) 4. Grave type (urn) 5. Urn type (classifications of vessel types) 6. Occurrence of grave goods 7. Jewelry – beads 8. Jewelry – fibulas. 9. Jewelry – other. 10. Combs. 11. Knives. 12. Needles 13. Tools and other. 14. Osteological analysis (outlining whether the remains from the specific graves have been examined) 15. Weight of cremated remains (grams) 16. Age determination. 17. Sex determination. 18. Other (additional comments).


The large number of categorizations were decided by the dominant find categories, in order to avoid large strings of data in fewer categories as that would complicate the workflow in ArcGIS. Using several categories also allowed for more exact multi-variate analysis in ArcMap. The categories also reflect the differences between the documentations by Brandt and Wegewitz. Wegewitz documentations are more detailed in terms of grave contexts and discussions of the vessel types. It is possible that the extensive amount of finds from Preetz have affected Brandt’s published documentation in terms of which details have been included in the find listings.

The second step of the workflow was to create data in ArcMap. A rectangular polygon of the location of the site in Hamburg-Marmstorf was provided by the Archäologisches Museum Hamburg Bodendenkmalpflege. The polygon did not, however, contain data outlining the excavated sections. The excavation plan from the last excavation in 1954 (which showed all finds from the excavations 1931-1950 and 1954) subsequently had to be georeferenced. The site in Preetz; as opposed to Hamburg-Marmstorf, had only been digitalized as a point value (gained from the Archäologisches Landesamt Schleswig-Holstein). Using the original
sketches and hand-drawn maps from the excavations in 1951-52, it was possible to georeference the excavated sections and create polygon features. The next step of georeferencing the printed and hand-drawn excavation plans was to create point values for every grave. The pits and other features of the sites were referenced and visualized as polygons. Every grave was then mapped as a point feature, since they have been mapped as identical dots on the excavation plans. The results were two separate map projects with new digitalized spatial data.

The third important step in the workflow was to integrate the databases to the shapes in ArcMap, in order to combine the textual information from the database with the spatial information from the new digital features. The databases created for each site were connected to the features in ArcMap by linking the field “GIS-ID”. The following analysis and studies of each site have been made in ArcMap after the construction of these datasets. Different categories of finds have been symbolized and analyzed by creating separate layers in ArcMap in order to find patterns. Working with Microsoft Access and ArcGIS was extremely useful for managing large amounts of data.

1. Hamburg-Marmstorf

Like the burial grounds in Harsefeld and Rieste, the site in Hamburg-Marmstorf was situated on the southern slope of a hill – the 36 meter high Krönenberg. Wegewitz describes a stream that supposedly intersected the landscape south of the burial ground, culminating in moorland. The southernmost part of the burial ground could only be partially excavated due to the presence of fruit trees. The map from 1893 (fig. 5.5) shows an elevated area approximately 1.5 km north of the burial ground. It is possible that the settlement connected to the burial site was situated in this area. The large lake north of the site, the Außenmühlenteich, is an artificial lake from the 16th century which complicates a potential estimation of the settlement structures in the area. According to Wegewitz, one urn from the Late Bronze Age and three urns from the Late Iron Age were found in this area, but these have not been shown on any plans and are therefore not possible to map in this study.

The burial ground in Hamburg-Marmstorf was first discovered when the Ernst Bergeest, the owner of the property, found shards of pottery, two lance heads, one sword and two shield buckles while ploughing (Wegewitz 1994: 237). The area was used as farmland during historical and modern time periods which has affected the state of the graves, with many urns being described as “disrupted by farming” in the excavation report (Wegewitz 1964). Bergeest submitted the finds to the local school in Marmstorf and they

Fig. 5.4. The excavation plan of Hamburg-Marmstorf shown over a modern orthophoto. The dark red points represent the excavated graves. Data sources: ESRI ArcGIS Online, Wegewitz 1964, Archäologisches Museum Hamburg Bodendenkmalpflege.
were subsequently brought to the attention of members of the museum association in Harburg, who started a small excavation in 1911. The finds from the earliest excavations have not been mapped in any publication and therefore regrettably have to be omitted from this case study. A table listing the finds from the excavation in 1911 have been placed in the appendix. Members from the museum in Helms together with Wegewitz and Gerhard Körner, instigated an excavation in 1931 when the property was to be divided into separate estate plots. Pottery from the Jastorf period was found and the site was classified as belonging to the Pre-Roman Iron Age. The construction work on the neighborhood block “Fernblick” started in 1932 and the workers discovered stone packings and urns. 55 graves from the Jastorf period had been found by 1934 (Wegewitz 1994: 239). The building of a fence in 1942 led to the further finds of four urns. The surrounding area was disrupted by a bomb crater in 1944 and the effects of the Second World War are evident in the excavation reports, specified as “disrupted due to effects of war”. By 1944, Wegewitz estimated that the more finds from the Jastorf and La Tène periods were to be expected (Wegewitz 1994: 239).

The property owner sold the area in 1954 and excavations started the same year. The aim was to examine the entire site and a total area of 3400 m² was investigated (Wegewitz 1994: 240). The large majority of the graves in Hamburg-Marmstorf were found during this excavation, as well as the 24 pits dating between Late Stone Age and Late Bronze Age, similar to the burial ground in Badow. Wegewitz also mentions that four urns dated to the Late Bronze Age, although it is unclear which urns he refers to (Wegewitz 1964: 10). The site was interpreted to consist of two separate and overlaying burial grounds. The older of these two burial grounds was dated to the Jastorf period (with a total of 259 graves), while other finds from the following periods were deemed as late La Tène and from the Earlier Roman Imperial Period (which would amount to 84 graves in this study if Wegewitz account of 259 graves from the Jastorf period is to be followed, but a total of around 100 graves including the earliest finds) (Wegewitz 1994: 240). The graves from the Jastorf period are scarce in comparison to other Jastorf cemeteries and Wegewitz especially mentions the lack of small iron belt hooks which are interpreted as a part of the female costume during the Pre-Roman Iron Age (Wegewitz 1964: 15). It is also interesting that no finds from the following Ripdorf period have been found, which indicates that the burial ground was abandoned during Jastorf C (400-350 BC) (Wegewitz 1994: 241). The finds from the Earlier Roman Imperial Period indicate that the site was used again during 50-200 AD. Wegewitz describes this second burial ground as a “small, disrupted, poor, Type Rieste” burial ground with several finds of weapons, especially in contrast to Ehestorf-Vahrendorf (Wegewitz 1994: 241).
graves in total had objects classified as weapons (lance heads, shields and shield buckles, spear heads and swords), not including knives.

69 find posts are listed as “not possible to ascribe to a fixed context”. They primarily consist of concentrations of pottery shards (with eight mentions of Jastorf type pottery), lance heads and shield buckles, and their distribution and numbers are largely consistent with the other find categories on the site. If Wegewitz estimation of the two separate burial grounds is correct, it indicates a shift in burial practice during the beginning of the Roman Imperial Period. Hamburg-Marmstorf then constitutes an interesting case study as it provides opportunities to clearly contrast the burial practice of earlier periods with the specific practice ascribed to the Roman Imperial Period. If around 100 graves date to the Roman Imperial Period and 28 of those include weapons, this places Hamburg-Marmstorf within the overall pattern of a low amount of weapons on Elbe Germanic burial grounds. An important critical aspect brought to attention by Eger was presented in chapter 2. Eger comments that the archaeological criteria for male and female burials are different for the Pre-Roman Iron Age and the Earlier Roman Imperial Period; the former is dependent on pottery and the second on grave goods. This means that female and male categories could differ from the Jastorf period and the Earlier Roman Imperial Period, and has to be taken into account. Only 66 graves of the 343 in this study, and the eight additional contexts (from the list of finds with uncertain contexts) with Jastorf pottery are specifically listed as containing pottery from the Jastorf period. Eight of the 66 graves with Jastorf pottery includes any grave goods. Grave 227 is the only Jastorf grave which includes weapons (lance, spear, sword, shield parts). Grave 225 includes a fibula, one small bronze bracket, one round iron buckle, bronze fragments, a crescent blade, one bow blade, fragments of a “knob needle” (dt. Knopfnadel) and one bronze belt part. As mentioned above, iron belt hooks are often interpreted as part of the female costume during the Pre-Roman Iron Age. Graves 227 and 225 clearly show the variety of grave goods that could be expected in Jastorf graves. The remaining six graves with grave goods from this period contains knob needles and additional vessels. The objects in these graves are genderscripted as male (grave 227) and female (grave 225) which would mean that the burial practice of the Jastorf period was mixed. This corresponds to the estimation that gender separation was not in practice during this period. It is, however, interesting that similar patterns can be found for the Roman Imperial Period graves, as the practice of graves separated by gender is believed to be used from the Late La Tène and onwards.

The excavation report gives no further information about how a total of 259 graves were dated to this period. 131 graves are also listed as disrupted due to farming or the effects of World War II and it is therefore relevant to question Wegewitz strict division of the burial ground. Only nine of the 66 graves with Jastorf-pottery included grave goods. The total number of graves with grave goods for the entire site is 100, which leaves 243 graves without grave goods. 85 of the graves with grave goods contained one-three objects, while 15 had four or more (only one had over ten objects; grave 251 which contained 15 items). The urns in Hamburg-Marmstorf were often covered or surrounded by stone packings (118 graves) or what Wegewitz refers to as “standing stones” (dt. Standstein), most likely larger erect stones. 56 of the 118 graves with stone packings also had standing stones, and 29 graves only had standing stones. Covering stones – large flat stones covering the top of the urns – were noted for 12 graves. The grave goods were frequently placed outside the urns or next to them, a practice which recurred in Putensen (Wegewitz 1994: 248). As mentioned in chapter 4, urns placed in close density have been interpreted as family members (Wegewitz 1994: 241,
Capelle 1971: 107). As the graves were not overlapped, it is highly likely that the earlier graves from the Jastorf period were marked. No osteological report is included and the only information about the human remains is the weight of the bone fragments (noted for every grave) and the mention that of “child graves”. Wegewitz comments that important parts of the weapon equipment and personal possessions were missing. Razors and scissors are notably missing according to Wegewitz; and no grave had a “complete male equipment”, but the grave goods “illustrate the contemporary equipment for men of social standing” (Wegewitz 1994: 246). Another observation was that the practice of using bronze vessels as urns (which was concentrated to the area around Niedersachsen, see chapter 4) which was utilized in Harsefeld and Ehestorf-Vahrendorf does not occur (Wegewitz 1994: 250). Roman Import finds have not been identified with any certainty, except from a fibula described as of a “provincial Roman type” found in one of the 69 find posts without certain context.

The most common grave object types in Hamburg-Marmstorf were: “knob needles” (dt. Knopfnadeln) and nails (in 34 graves), additional vessels (in 32 graves), shield parts such as shield buckles (in 21 graves), fibulas (in 20 graves) knives (in 17 graves), different types of jewelry (in 17 graves), lance heads (in 16 graves), and blades (in 14 graves). Less common were spear heads (in five graves), swords (in five graves), and metal fragments (possibly of keys, pincers etcetera). Weski notes that the swords from Hamburg-Marmstorf never appear alone as they are accompanied by three other weapon types (Weski 1982: 74). The graves with swords also contained lance heads, spear heads and shield buckles, fibulas (graves 216 and 265), buckles and belt parts (graves 242, 251 and 265), knives (graves 227, 251 and 265), crescent blades (graves 251 and 265) and shards from additional vessels (grave 216). Graves 227 and 265 consisted of an “urn and weapon layer” where the larger weapons were placed outside the urns. The larger amount of weaponry found in the five graves with swords likely indicate that these individuals belonged to a separate social group, while the finds of knives, crescent blades and additional vessels are shared with graves with lesser amounts or a complete lack of weapons. Lances are amongst the most frequent weapon types in the lower Elbe area. It has been observed that primarily juveniles were buried with these, indicating that this was an important part of the burial practice (Eger 1999: 144). Steuer writes that lances were carried by juveniles while older individuals transitioned to using swords, which was connected to a higher status acquired by age and forming a family (Steuer 1982: 238). This interpretation is not possible to confirm in the list of finds from Hamburg-Marmstorf since the age was not determined for any of the individuals in the graves with lances.

Wegewitz concluded that the burial ground in Hamburg-Marmstorf belonged to a small settlement (Wegewitz 1994: 253). Capelle considered the burial site in Fuhlsbüttel (Hamburg) to be a female cemetery connected to the same settlement as Hamburg-Marmstorf due to the fact that the percentage of fibulas were the same for both sites (Capelle 1971: 127). It is evident by the pits dating to the Late Stone Age and Late Bronze Age, that the site had a long continuity before the establishment of the Jastorf period burials. The majority of the graves did not contain any grave goods, and only eleven of the 343 graves included more than five grave goods. The comparatively low number of fibulas, the lack of Roman Import and “high-status” goods indicate that the site was not as prosperous as other sites in the same region. Hamburg-Marmstorf is relatively closely situated to the burial grounds in Ehestorf-Vahrendorf, Harsefeld, Tostedt-Wüstenhöfen and Putensen which are all counted as “wealthy” Elbe Germanic sites. This case study has shown that Hamburg-Marmstorf should be discussed as a site with a long continuity which allows for interesting observations over time, rather than as one of the ”richer” Elbe Germanic burial grounds.

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Fig. 5.7. The excavation plan of Hamburg-Marmstorf, showing the distribution of graves with and without grave goods, finds listed as having unknown contexts, graves with Jastorf pottery, pits and polygons marked here as “unknown” which were not labelled in the excavation report. Data sources: Wegewitz 1964, Archäologisches Museum Hamburg Bodendenkmalpflege.
Fig. 5.8. The excavation plan of Hamburg-Marmstorf, showing the number of grave goods for every grave. Data sources: Wegewitz 1964, Archäologisches Museum Hamburg Bodendenkmalpflege.
2. Preetz

The area where the burial ground in Preetz (Schleswig-Holstein) was situated, was used as farmland during historic and modern periods. The site is approximately three kilometers northeast of the lake Postsee. It was first discovered during the construction of two road blocks during the summer of 1951. Pottery shards and stone packings were noticed and the construction work threatened what was early concluded to be a prehistoric burial site. The street west of the site consequently came to be named “Urnenweg” (urn road) (Brandt 1960: 9). Workers from the city of Preetz, volunteers and 30 school children investigated the area and found colorations in the soil, remains of hearths and separate graves. The circular stone formation pictured in the first section of this chapter gained much attention, although no burial remains were found within it. Unfortunately, the specific location of the stone formation has not been mapped in the excavation report and has subsequently been left out of this analysis. Brandt mentions finds close to the surface from Middle to Late Stone Age as well as Medieval finds which showed that the area was continually used as a settlement during prehistoric periods (Brandt 1960: 9). It is unclear what these finds actually consist of, as they are not mentioned further in the report.

When a gravel pit was constructed on the southern slope of a sandy hill within the area, workers found three vessels by late November 1951. More objects were found in December, and an extensive excavation was carried out since the construction work had continued and six more graves were disrupted. 150 graves had been found by the end of 1951. This large excavated complex on the southern end of the area was divided from the northern area where the initial finds had been made, by a 25-meter broad section without any graves (Brandt 1960: 9). The excavation started again in March 1952, but problems with a local landowner restricted the spatial limits of the excavation. Around one hundred more graves were found in total, although only 210 are mapped and listed as part of the Roman Imperial Period burial ground.

Like the graves in Hamburg-Marmstorf, it is likely that the graves in Preetz were marked above ground, although no visible traces are left today. The graves were placed approximately one to two meters apart. In contrast to the earliest finds in the northern part of the area, the graves within the main complex did not contain any stone packings. A concentration of charcoal and stones in the western part of the burial ground was interpreted as the remains of a pyre (Brandt 1960: 10). The graves 194-209 were unfortunately not labelled individually on the excavation plan and it was therefore not possible to map them in ArcGIS although they were included in the database. Nine of the 16 graves contain grave goods, such as beads (in seven graves), fibulas (in three graves), other jewelry (in two graves) and one grave included a knife.

The pottery was divided into eleven types and a spatial chronology was deduced through the distribution of urn types. Brandt created a horizontal stratigraphy for Preetz and tried to connect it to the burial ground in Fuhlsbüttel (Hamburg) which proves problematic as Brandt did not question the datings from Fuhlsbüttel and used them without examining them further (Schulte 2011: 28). The oldest graves in Preetz (zone 1) were dated to 200 AD were situated in the northern part while the youngest (zone 6), dating to 375 AD, were situated on the southern slope (Brandt 1960: 61). 95 of the total number of graves have been dated to the earlier Roman Imperial Period. The majority of graves primarily date to the transition between the Earlier and Later Roman Imperial Period. Brandt has discussed the abandonment of Preetz as a result of Elbe Germanic migrations, an interpretation which has often been used
in German archaeology in order to reinforce the idea of large-scale migrations during the Migration Period (as mentioned in chapter 4). Preetz has been considered a quintessential female site, although the practice or burial grounds separated by gender is considered to have been abandoned by the 4th century (see chapter 2). Brandt writes that “all finds were small tools which implies that it was a female burial ground” and the lack of weapons and the results from the osteological analysis strengthened her thesis (Brandt 1960: 63).

Preetz constitutes the site with the second highest percentage of graves with grave goods in the study; 81 percent. 169 graves contained grave goods and 39 did not contain any (the occurrence of grave goods is unknown for two graves). The most common grave objects in Preetz were knives (in 77 graves), needles (in 76 graves), fibulas (in 65 graves), beads (in 63 graves) and scissors (in 51 graves). Combs, different types of jewelry such as pendants and rings, and additional vessels are other common, but less frequently occurring categories. Whorls and keys, which occur frequently on Elbe Germanic burial grounds, are notably scarce. Only three whorls (in graves

Fig. 5.9. The excavation plan of Preetz shown over a modern ortophoto. The dark red points represent the excavated graves and the blue points represent graves 194-209 which were not mapped in the excavation report. Data sources: ESRI ArcGIS Online, Brandt 1960.

Fig. 5.10. Map from 1925 showing Preetz. The beige polygon and blue point (marked by a red circle) represents the burial ground. The map clearly shows that the area was used as farmland. Data sources: Landesamt für Vermessung und Geoinformation Schleswig-Holstein (Preetz Blatt 1727), Brandt 1960.
10, 23 and 33) and one key was found (in the “child grave” 123). The many beads were interpreted as evidence of a provincial Roman trading place in the Preetz area and several bronze fragments were believed to originate from Roman bronze vessels (Brandt 1960: 64).

The results from the excavation of Preetz led by Johanna Brandt, received much attention after 29 burials were analyzed and the results showed that “only women and children” had been buried on the site. 24 graves are listed in the osteological analysis in the excavation report, and these have been categorized by gender and age. 20 graves are listed as “female” and Brandt further notes that the corresponding “male burial ground” has not been found (Brandt 1960: 63-4). Some researchers have interpreted that the burial sites had separate sections for female and male burials. The distribution of graves estimated as female (see fig. 5.12) shows that this pattern is not noticeable for Preetz. One of the main critiques brought forth by Eger and discussed in chapter 2, was that osteologists have allowed themselves to be “overruled” by the archaeologists who want their own interpretations of the graves to be reinforced. It is not possible to establish whether this is true for the documentation of Preetz, but it should be noted that all the graves which were analyzed contained grave goods, including fibulas, needles and scissors – artefact types which are gender scripted as female. However, as the osteological report from Preetz is is the only account that specifically lists sex and age categories (as opposed to Hamburg-Marmstorf where only child graves were determined) it will be necessary to consider these in the discussion in chapter 6.

Double burials are not common on the Elbe Germanic burial grounds (Breitsprecher 1987: 44). Four graves from the burial ground in Preetz contained fragmented bones from more than one individual (graves 9, 96, 110, 117). Two of these graves seem to contain deliberate double burials, whereas the remaining two urns might be random occurrences (Brandt 1960: 109-110). Grave 6 is situated in the northern part of the burial ground and was interpreted as “likely female with one male indicator”. Graves 96, 110 and 117 are all situated in the east central part of the burial ground, and all three have been estimated as “more likely female then male” (Brandt 1960). Graves 96 and 110 are only around two meters apart and approximately four meters apart from grave 117. This small cluster of three graves containing remains from two individuals might indicate a specific practice within the general context of the site. 15 of the deceased individuals in the analyzed graves are listed as “adult”, three as child graves (Infans I-II), five “mature adults” and three juveniles. Brandt does not specify how Infans I and II have been defined but Kraus states that osteologists often define Infans I as ranging from ages 0-7, while Infans II is defined as the ages between 6-14 (Kraus 2006: 7).

Preetz stands in stark contrast to Hamburg-Marmstorf, most notably by the large difference in the number of graves with grave goods. Although Brandt mentioned finds from older periods, all graves date to the Roman Imperial Period, as the burial site was used from 200 AD to the end of 300 AD. The many finds of jewelry and Roman Import (mostly beads, fragments of glass vessels, and bronze fragments) led to the interpretation of Preetz as an influential area for a metal industry. Brandt estimated that a settlement belonging to the burial site was situated around 100 meters north of the site (Brandt 1960: 64). The map from 1925 (fig. 5.9) shows a large elevated area north of the burial site (similar to the Hamburg-Marmstorf) which likely corresponds to the settlement estimated by Brandt. The lack of weapons was interpreted by Brandt as evidence of a peaceful lifestyle focused on trade (Brandt 1960: 64-5). The undertaken analysis in this second case study shows that Preetz was a site where different artefact categories were represented in several graves. Jewelry, needles, knives and other tools and additional vessels frequently occurred in the graves. The clusters showing the number of grave goods in every grave (see fig. 5.10.) are evenly distributed over the site.
Fig. 5.11. Upper map: The excavation plan of Preetz, showing the distribution of graves with and without grave goods, graves 194-209 which were not numbered in the excavation plan, one uncertain context, and a concentration of charcoal and stones marked by Brandt. Lower map: the number of grave goods per grave. Data sources: Brandt 1960.
Fig. 5.12. The results from the osteological analysis of the remains from Preetz. The point values are labelled with the weight of the cremated remains (in grams). Data sources: Brandt 1960.
Chapter 6. Conclusion

This chapter will address the third research question for this thesis; aiming to find new ways to interpret the Elbe Germanic burial grounds. The results from the previous chapter are discussed under different sections in order to acknowledge important aspects that have largely been overlooked in the research field. The following sections focus on the occurrence or absence of grave goods in the graves, the object categories that are common denominators for both sites, the question of child burials and a final section which uses the theoretical discussion in chapter 3 in order to move forward.

Occurrence of grave goods

Graves without grave goods have often been assigned the same gender as the dominant “gender” of the graves with grave goods (see chapter 5). Approximately 70 percent of the graves in Hamburg-Marmstorf and a corresponding number of around 20 percent from Preetz were found without any preserved grave goods. The maps showing clusters of grave goods (fig. 5.7. and 5.10.) show that the graves with a high number of objects were concentrated to the northern, central and western parts of Hamburg-Marmstorf, while they were evenly distributed over the area in Preetz. The large numbers of graves without grave goods are evenly distributed over the burial ground in Hamburg-Marmstorf and no apparent patterns are visible. The percentage of graves with grave goods is around 30 percent. The closest numbers for the other burial grounds are 32 percent in the small burial ground in Granzin (interpreted as a female site) and 39 percent in Ehestorf-Vahrendorf (interpreted as a male site). It has been noted that the number of graves without grave goods are often higher on “male” sites, which corresponds to the result from Hamburg-Marmstorf.

The closest graves in Hamburg-Marmstorf are only circa 0.4 meters apart (for example graves 71 and 72, with 8 and 6 objects each) and the similarities in the combination of grave goods – fibula, knife, lance head and shield buckle – indicates that the graves belong to the same social context. One interesting observation was made for the graves 241, 251 and 252 which are also 0.4 meters apart. Grave 251 is situated between the other two and contains 15 objects from every artefact category besides fibulas and needles. Grave 241 contains one shield buckle and one small bronze plate, while grave 252 includes fragments of one knob needle and one additional vessel. Graves 242, 260 and 261 are situated 1.1-1.5 meters north of these three graves and contain objects such as blades, jewelry and weapons. Following the general interpretation of adjacent clusters as family members; it is likely that the concentration of graves shows that they are interconnected and represent kinship or a shared social status. While grave 251 might represent a distinctive symbolical role of the deceased due to the large number of grave goods; the different types of objects and combinations of grave goods found in this cluster shows a diverse burial practice. Wegewitz summarized Hamburg-Marmstorf as a “poor” site, due to the large number of graves without grave goods. Ehestorf-Vahrendorf and Harsefeld are situated in the same region but differ from Hamburg-Marmstorf as they display Roman Import goods and a higher percentage of graves with grave goods. However, if the fact that the site contains graves from both Jastorf, Late La Tène and Earlier Roman Imperial Period is considered, it is not necessarily “poor” in comparison to other Elbe Germanic burial grounds. The occurrence of weapons does not exhibit any distinctive patterns and it is evident that objects such as needles and additional vessels were far more common than weapons.
The 81 percent of graves with grave goods in Preetz can be compared to the burial grounds in Hohenferchesar (78 percent) and Hornbek (74 percent). Hornbek shares many similarities with Preetz, as both sites in Schleswig-Holstein have been deemed “female” rich sites and were used during the 2nd-4th centuries AD. Hohenferchesar in Brandenburg has been interpreted as a “mixed” site, due to the occurrence of both jewelry and weapons. A few small clusters were found amongst the 39 graves without grave goods in Preetz. The majority of the graves are listed as constituted by shards rather than whole urns, or vessels of unknown types. Graves 102 and 106 did not contain any cremated remains but no other similarities could be found. Several large clusters of graves with a large number of grave goods (between five and 21 objects) were found to be spread over the site. Grave 45 is the grave with the highest number of grave goods (21) and contains objects from all categories besides fibulas. Like grave 251 from Hamburg-Marmstorf, it is surrounded by graves with a lower number of objects (5-8 objects); approximately 1,5-2 meters apart. Grave 45 could also represent a certain societal role. It is interesting that both sites have been used during the Roman Imperial Period and both display one grave each equipped with notably more grave goods. The individuals in these graves could have had leading roles in the local settlements or be part of a religious practice where individuals were appointed to a special role on the burial grounds. Brandt interpreted the large number of grave goods in Preetz as an enunciation of a central area concerned with trade and involved with a local metal industry. The large number of graves with grave goods indicate that a majority of the society participated in a similar burial practice during the three centuries the site was used. The graves without grave goods are difficult to place in this context, although it is simplistic to try to attribute one specific part of the population – such as slaves – to them.

The case study of Hamburg-Marmstorf clearly shows that it is problematic to interpret the entire site as “male” when the material is diverse and objects which are also found on “female” sites (such as needles and additional vessels) are excluded from the general discussion. Although no weapons were found in Preetz, it is not possible to confirm whether the site was exclusively female or mixed. One example of the uncertainties is grave 166 in Preetz, which contains one knife and one pair of scissors – types of grave goods that also
occur in Hamburg-Marmstorf. An interesting parallel can be drawn to the burial ground in Neubrandenburg (in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, not included in the 28 sites studied in this thesis) which has been interpreted as a “female” burial ground with one grave with weapons. Osteological analyzes estimated several graves as male, though the grave goods gave a “predominantly female impression”. The final estimations deemed 75 graves as female and 42 as male (Gebühr et al. 1989: 87 ff.). Although osteological analyzes of urn burials are always difficult to evaluate; the results from Neubrandenburg show the uncertainties associated with equating genderscripted grave goods and sex estimations. This also corresponds to the interpretation brought forth by several critical researchers; i.e. that some sites are mixed with a majority of the graves being either female or male.

**Common denominators – knives, needles, fibulas and additional vessels**

Bozena Werbart, discusses Iron Age graves in Scandinavia and calls objects like “knives, combs, fibulae and pottery” “genderless” as these are found in both male and female graves (Werbart 1991: 125). Knives, needles, fibulas and additional vessels are the four categories of grave goods that occurs in both Preetz and Hamburg-Marmstorf. They are categorized as either tools or parts of the costume and constitute the most common grave goods. Tools are often overlooked in the research field of Elbe Germanic burial grounds, as weapons and jewelry (Hergewaete and Gerade in chapter 2) gain more attention. This focus is symptomatic of the general practice to emphasize the objects that are perceived as separating men and women, while objects that are common for all sites are understated. The four categories in this section are discussed below in order to address this imbalance and highlight the common denominators for both sites. Possible patterns concerning sex and age are also explored.

Knives were found in 17 graves in Hamburg-Marmstorf and 77 graves in Preetz. They were all made of iron and several knives from Preetz had fragmented wooded handles, while the knives from Hamburg-Marmstorf were more fragmented overall (likely due to the effects of war Wegewitz noted for many graves). The knives were found in both miniature and regular sizes. The large amount of knives in Preetz can be compared to the burial ground Camin in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern which was characterized by the large amount of knives (in circa 41 percent of the graves) and has not been interpreted as either male or female, due to the occurrence of both jewelry and weapons. The graves from Preetz and Hamburg-Marmstorf primarily contain one knife each, with the exception of grave 84 in Hamburg-Marmstorf and graves 11, 98, 150, 161 and 163 from Preetz which all contained two knives. The only grave with a larger number of knives is grave 45 in Preetz where three knives were found.

Iron “blades” interpreted to be razors were also found in 14 graves in Hamburg-Marmstorf (five graves had both knives and blades). Twelve blades were listed as “crescent blades”, four as “bow blades” and two were simply listed as “blades”. Blades were not listed in the excavation report from Preetz, although a “S-shaped curved knife” was found in grave 36. This knife is likely a razor (see fig. 6.2.). Breitsprecher’s observation that razors from male graves are called razors (dt. Rasiermesser), and razors in female graves are called “crescent knives” (dt. sichelförmige Messer) was mentioned in chapter 3 (Breitsprecher 1987: 30). It is interesting that Brandt listed the find from grave 36 as a curved knife rather than a razor. However, since Wegewitz listed the razors he found as primarily “crescent blades” it is not possible to relate to Breitsprecher’s perception. Neither knives nor blades were found in graves that were estimated as child graves in Hamburg-Marmstorf. The remains from 16 of the 77 graves with knives in Preetz were analyzed by an osteologists. 13 of them were estimated as female. The majority of the graves were estimated as belonging to adults (nine
graves) although all age categories from Infans I to mature adults are represented. Knives were obviously a more common object to deposit in Preetz than in Hamburg-Marmstorf - especially for adults - but there are no visible patterns in the horizontal stratigraphy for either site. The case studies and earlier research show that the choice of depositing knives or razors in graves depends on local practice rather than gender. Knives and razors both constitute tools and might have been deposited as a symbol for the household where these tools were used in an everyday life.

38 of the fibulas found in Preetz were dated by Brandt using Almgren’s typology. 37 were dated to Almgren VII and one to Almgren VI (Brandt 1960). Almgren VI represents the first part of the Earlier Roman Imperial Period while Almgren VII represents the latter part (Almgren 1897: 82 ff). Fibulas were found in eleven of the 20 graves where human remains were estimated as female. Nine of the 15 fibulas in these graves were dated to Almgren VII. Two of the graves included more than one fibula; graves 110 and 150. As two individuals were buried in grave 110, it is likely that the two fibulas in the grave were deposited so each individual would have a fibula. Grave 150 included three fibulas, which is unusual as only eight graves from the entire site had three fibulas and only two graves (grave 26 and 77) included four fibulas. With the exception of graves 110 and 150, the graves with more than two fibulas have not been examined osteologically. There is also no correlation between the number of fibulas and the age of the deceased, as the graves with fibulas have been attributed to several age groups; from Infans II to mature adults. The only age category not represented is Infans I, but this observation has to be tested on more sites in order to confirm whether it holds any importance for the burial practice of small children.

Ten of the fibulas in Hamburg-Marmstorf were dated by Wegewitz. Three fibulas were dated to Almgren I (late La Tène, earliest phase of the Roman Imperial period) and one was dated to Almgren II (directly following Almgren I). The remaining six datable fibulas were defined as “late La Tène” (Wegewitz 1964). One of the 20 graves with fibulas included more than one copy; grave 71 where two fibulas of type Almgren I were found. As none of the graves from Hamburg-Marmstorf were examined in order to determine sex or age (except from separating children), it is not possible to make further comparisons of the number of fibulas and gender. The comparisons of the fibulas from both Preetz and Hamburg-Marmstorf has shown the difficulty of establishing whether gender and age influenced the burial practice concerning fibulas. Schwantes’ theory where graves with two or more fibulas were deemed female (see chapter 2) has often been used as a rule to determine gender, although it has been criticized as a result of regional exceptions (Breitsprecher 1987: 32). While a larger number of graves with several fibulas were found in Preetz, this is likely a result of the characteristics of the sites rather than gender, as Preetz has an overall larger amount of graves with grave goods and number of grave goods per grave. The results from the case studies further show that Schwantes’ theory cannot be used in order to attribute sites as female or male.

Needles were found in 76 graves in Preetz and 34 graves in Hamburg-Marmstorf (five of these graves included Jastorf pottery). Needles used as jewelry (dt. Schmucknadeln) are one of the most prominent artefact types in the Lower Elbe area (Capelle 1971: 131). The needles
from Preetz were divided into different categories by Brandt; sewing needles, bone needles, metal needles and needles used as hair ornaments. 19 of the 20 graves where the human remains were analyzed contained needles. 17 of the 19 graves were estimated as female and 14 of amongst them were estimated as belonging to adults while the remaining five comprised the age groups from Infans I to mature adults. Wegewitz attributed both needles and additional vessels from Hamburg-Marmstorf to the “Jastorf cemetery” and did not discuss them in any detail. Two of the needles from Hamburg-Marmstorf were found in child graves. One interesting pattern is that the graves with needles do not contain any lance heads or other weapons. Wegewitz report focuses on pottery, weapons and fibulas, so interpretations of the other object categories are limited. It is unclear why all the needles were dated to the Jastorf period as the large majority of them were not found in graves with Jastorf pottery. It is possible that they were attributed to the older period, as the interpretation of burial grounds separated by gender was the dominant theory in the research field.

Needles are generally seen as female markers so their presence on a “male” site would contradict the interpretation of a burial practice separated by gender from the Late La Tène onwards. It is not possible to determine the absolute dating of the needles as Wegewitz left them out of his discussion, but it is important to question whether they really indicate a mixed burial practice during the Jastorf period, and then disappear in conjunction to the emergence of weapon graves. There is an inherent danger of unconsciously reinforcing the genderscript of needles as female objects, when using them to question whether a burial ground such as Hamburg-Marmstorf was actually exclusively male. The endeavors of challenging how gender has been viewed in Elbe Germanic contexts would be contradicted by the continuing genderscript. As the aim for this project is to address and move beyond interpretations concerning gender, objects like needles which occur on both sites should rather be acknowledged as a common denominator that indicate mixed burial grounds.

Additional vessels are elusive in terms of earlier research. One additional vessel each was found in 32 graves in Hamburg-Marmstorf and two of the graves were estimated to be child burials. The vessels were found in 22 graves in Preetz and five of those contained two copies while the rest included one additional vessel each (Brandt 1960: 34). Similar to the burial urns, the additional vessels varied in shapes for both sites (Brandt 1960: 34; Wegewitz 1964: 14). Brandt dated the vessels from Preetz to zones 2-5. Zone 2 is contemporary to Almgren VII and zone 5 marks the “beginning of the abandonment of the site” with less grave goods (Brandt 1960: 47 ff.). She noted that soil samples were necessary to determine the function of the additional vessels, however it remains uncertain whether any sampling was conducted (Brandt 1960: 34). Wegewitz mentioned that some additional vessels from Hamburg-Marmstorf had an unusual shape with a round body and a standing foot (dt. Standfußgefäß). A vessel of this type from grave 17 was examined and interpreted to be a lamp when remains of grease were found inside (Wegewitz 1964: 15). Wegewitz interpreted the additional vessels to belong to the Jastorf cemetery. It is possible that the additional vessels were used to store organic materials that have not been preserved. Fragments of mushrooms were for example found in graves 13, 35 and 37 at the burial ground in Wahlitz (Capelle 1971: 110). While it is difficult to determine the function of the additional vessels, they belong to the category of household objects that are usually ascribed to females, even though they clearly belong to the group of common denominators for sites that have been interpreted as male and female.

**Children**

Child graves were found in both Hamburg-Marmstorf and Preetz (see fig. 6. 3.). The question of child burials on Elbe Germanic burial grounds is difficult to disseminate as few remains
have been identified as belonging to children (Hässler 1977: 102). Kraus notes that child burials connected to urns can only be distinguished if the cremated remains are complete and belongs to one individual child (Kraus 2006: 6). The relationship between grave goods and age has often been overlooked (Eger 1999: 139). It has been observed that smaller urns have been used for child graves than for adults. The burial ground in Putensen, for instance, exhibited a pattern of urns with a height of up to 15 centimeters primarily used for children and juveniles (Eger 1999: 140). Miniature objects in the graves have often been attributed to children (Breitsprecher 1987: 67). Yet, small objects could have been deposited in the graves as symbolic tokens, rather than toys. However, the interpretation that miniature objects equal toys and thereby children, is not enough to establish that the deceased actually was a child (Kraus 2006: 6). The fact that several graves including miniature objects also include objects of average sizes further contradicts this interpretation. If average sized objects are exclusively deposited with adults and vice versa, the interpretations of the graves depend on which objects are studied.

The number of estimated child burials is remarkably low (three in Preetz, nine in Hamburg-Marmstorf). All three graves in Preetz included grave goods. Graves 141 and 147 included four and three objects, while grave 123 has one of the highest number of grave goods for the site with a total of 14 objects. Two of the nine child graves in Hamburg-Marmstorf included grave goods (graves 157 and 184) and knob needles were the common denominators. There are five graves with small scissors in Preetz, as well as three graves with small knives and one grave with a small additional vessel in Preetz. Grave 161 included one small knife and was estimated as female, while grave 147 was estimated as a child (Infans II). The remains from the other seven graves were not examined. A complete number of twelve graves from Hamburg-Marmstorf included small objects. Four included small additional vessels, and five included small lance heads which are the most common category of small objects for this site. Grave 71 included a small ring, a small spear head and one small lance head, and grave 72 included a small lance head and a small knife. Grave 157 included the only small knob needle on the site and a small vessel, and grave 202 included the only small blade. Grave 157 is also the only of these 12 graves that has been estimated as a child burial.

Estimations of burial patterns dependent on age have been made for some sites, for example in Kasseedorf (interpreted as mixed). Objects connected to craft activities, such as eyelet-needles, were exclusive to adults and parts of the costume including metal needles and fibulas seldom appeared with children or juveniles (Brock 2004: 185). Belt parts were further rarely found with adults, which is an interesting observation that could not be found on any other site during the literature review. Combs, knives and bone needles were sometimes found with “older” children (Infans II) but seldom in graves belonging to younger children (likely Infans I) (Brock 2004: 185). When Brocks’ account of the graves in Kasseedorf is compared to the graves with age estimations from Hamburg-Marmstorf and Preetz, no similarities can be found. Eger’s discussion of the finds from Putensen concludes that occurrence of artefacts belonging to the costume, weapons or tools are dependent on the age of the individual (Eger 1999: 139). Fibulas were principally found with adults such as in Kasseedorf, while the only belt parts were found with older adults. The five examined graves with swords belonged to individuals ranging from Infans II to “senile” (Eger 1999: 141). This contradicts Steuer’s interpretation where the transition from youth to adulthood marked the change in weapons from lances to swords. No objects that are exclusive for either children, juveniles, adults, or seniors can be determined for all the 28 sites.
Fig. 6.3. Maps showing the distribution of "small objects", child burials, and the other graves at Preetz and Hamburg-Marmstorf. Data sources: Wegewitz 1964, Archäologisches Museum Hamburg Bodendenkmalpflege, Brandt 1960.
To thoroughly address the question of child burials on Elbe Germanic burial grounds, it would be necessary to conduct these analyzes on all sites. The results from the case studies in chapter 5, and accounts from earlier research shows that the burial practice in regards to children probably differed locally. While some settlements could have marked the child graves by using smaller urns, such as in Putensen; it is likely that children were buried with the same types of grave goods as adults, thus making them hard to distinguish. Children are largely overlooked in this research field and future research dedicated to comparing the composition of graves where the remains have been determined as belonging to children on several sites would therefore be an interesting and valuable approach to discuss the mortuary contexts of the Elbe Germanic peoples.

**Genderscript, intersectionality and moving forward**

This section will reconnect to the theoretical discussions concerning genderscript and intersectionality presented in chapter 3. Jewelry and weapons are revisited briefly and the discussion thereafter center on intersecting social categories in order to address the third research question; i.e. how the Elbe Germanic burial grounds can be interpreted. The difficulty of discussing social categories in this context is evident, as neither race, sexuality nor disability can be deduced. It is, however, important to acknowledge social categories as a significant factor concerning the burial grounds. It is also of crucial importance to consider how these intersect (Arnold 2002: 251). The characteristics of the burial grounds are related to the social context of the settlements connected with them (Breitsprecher 1987: 226). The primary social categories that can be discussed are age, gender and social status.

The analyzes that have been carried out in chapters 4 and 5 show that it is problematic to attribute all the graves on a site to a specific gender, as it is difficult to determine the sex of the deceased. Extensive studies show that these problems persist when a larger geographical area is studied. Breitsprecher’s evaluation of the osteological analyzes and comparison to the interpretations made by archaeologists showed that a burial practice separated by gender for the Roman Imperial Period was not possible to identify (Breitsprecher 1987: 222). The variations of typical “male” and “female” burials were deemed too large and too many uncertainties appeared when the material was assessed on a large scale (Breitsprecher 1987: 222). The importance attributed to gender as a defining category for burial practice was found to be greatly overrated (Breitsprecher 1987: 224).

The only objects which Breitsprecher identifies as exclusively male are weapons, while whorls are deemed as exclusively female (Breitsprecher 1987: 223). Weapons are generally scarce (as discussed in chapter 3), while the results from Preetz show that a site widely considered as “female” can have a low occurrence of whorls. The large amount of jewelry in Preetz has evidently been attributed to female graves. However, it is problematic to discuss all the different objects categorized as jewelry as belonging to one gender, when it has been shown that objects such as pendants and belt parts belonged to both men and women (Capelle 1971: 129). There are furthermore problems associated with determining whether some types of jewelry are more characteristic for either gender; as comparisons with Scandinavian and Baltic material shows that objects like metal neck rings, bracelets and dress pins occur in male and female graves alike (Werbart 1991: 127-8). One object category that can be used to illustrate this situation is combs; which were found in 31 graves in Preetz but did not occur in Hamburg-Marmstorf. They are often attributed to women, although they for instance have been found in “male” graves in Großromstedt (Capelle 1971: 132). Rustoiu and Berecki discuss weapon graves in Transylvania with comparisons to a broader European Late Iron
Age context, and present how weapons had an important symbolic value within several communities (Rustoiu & Berecki 2015: 128). The specific social practice associated with weapons and their place in the burial context were coded and indicated the status and identity of the deceased individuals (Rustoiu & Berecki 2015: 128). Steuer notes that the deposition of weapons in male graves during the Roman Imperial Period was “first and foremost a ritual act” (Steuer 1982: 186). This emphasis on the ritual aspects of weapons has been echoed by Werbart, who notes that “weapons need not always be taken as indisputable evidence of a “warrior”, but may instead be an expression of prestige, symbolism or identity” (Werbart 1991: 125). It is, however, difficult to distinguish a social structure through graves with weapons, although several attempts have been made, often by categorizing the combination of swords, shields and lances as an enunciation of “nobles”; lances and shields as “wealthy landowners”, lances as belonging to “free farmers” and shields as belonging to the “semi-free” (Weski 1982: 196). If the number of graves with the combination of sword-lance-shield is low, the social rank of the deceased is considered higher (Steuer 1982: 195). Five graves (216, 227, 242, 251 and 265) from Hamburg-Marmstorf contain this combination which represents circa 1,5 percent of the total number of graves.

Willroth states that especially “female” burial grounds exhibit a pattern of grave goods seemingly more dependent on a social funeral codex rather than gender (Willroth 1998: 361). This is probably a comment on the broad range of objects found on these sites; ranging from jewelry to tools such as scissors and whorls. Although “male” sites are similarly diverse; the importance given to the weapon graves and the occurrence of Roman Import goods, creates a divide between “rich warriors” and “the other men”. Perry and Joyce state that the practices and performances associated to a certain gender significantly changes both within and cross-culturally (see discussion in chapter 3). The presence of common denominators in Hamburg-Marmstorf and Preetz - additional vessels, needles, knives and fibulas; show that the same type of objects occur on sites deemed as typically “male” or “female”. Gender transcendence was discussed in chapter 3. Arnold emphasizes that gender transmutation is “unlikely to leave archaeological traces” which means that “the absence of evidence for gender transforming in burial ritual may mask occasional cross-dressing behavior practiced by certain individuals at specifically regulated times” (Arnold 2002: 252). This is an important point to consider for the Elbe Germanic burial grounds as the varieties of what is “male” and “female” greatly differ and there are many local practices that are not found when looking for larger regional patterns. It is important to acknowledge the varieties and possible gender transmutations without depicting individuals as sexually deviant, as the focus is to challenge the presumptions about the static state of gender relations in the past.

Arnold emphasizes kinship, sex and gender as the main structures of prehistoric civilizations (Arnold 2002: 253). The best way to explore kinship structures would be to conduct DNA-analysis, which unfortunately is not possible due to the poor preservation and state of the human remains. Sex has been completely equated to gender in this research field; a problem which is associated to the fact that this discussion has failed to gain attention in German archaeology (see chapter 3). As the excavation reports and material used in this thesis follow this structure, it has been difficult to disregard the connections made between estimated sex and interpretations concerning gender. The lack of a large systematic number of multi-variate osteological analysis of the human remains found on the 28 sites makes it impossible to establish the sex of the deceased individuals. It is however important to acknowledge that a sex estimation does not have to be paralleled to the gender of the deceased. Gender has been discussed throughout this thesis as it is crucial to address in this context and age has been addressed in the previous sections on common denominators and child graves.
Addressing social status is a complex problem; primarily due to the large risk of generalizations and reinforcing predominant ideas of distribution of power. The lack of historical sources from the Elbe Germanic peoples themselves further complicates the endeavor. The large differences between the number of graves per site (see appendix) indicates that sites like Putensen, Badow and Hornbek were connected to large settlements, while some of the smaller sites such as Döbbersen and Klein Kreutz likely belonged to smaller villages. Figure 5.3 shows that the percentage of graves with grave goods per site varies between eight and 92 percent which indicates that different areas either had different practices concerning the amount of grave goods placed in the graves; or that the sites were linked to settlements of varying size and economic importance in the region. Some sites can be understood as belonging to settlements of minor economic importance in the larger region – notably Hamburg-Marmstorf, but also Granzin, Döbbersen and Speuß. Other sites – such as Preetz, Klein Kreutz, Jamel and Hornbek – likely belong to another context; centered on trade and with notably extensive finds of Roman Import Goods.

Steuer has summarized several earlier interpretations of Elbe Germanic social structures and these will be presented briefly. One of the earlier interpretations come from Hachmann, who in 1956 wrote about the burial ground in Großromstedt that grave goods indicated different “groups of warriors”, “warrior classes” or “warrior ranks” where graves with complete equipment (swords, lances, spears, shield buckles), fibulas of precious metals and Roman Import goods equaled the highest rank and graves with only shields belonged to the lowest rank (Steuer 1982: 184). The principle outline of the societies entailed “warrior ranks and community groups”. The leading members of the “community groups” were distinguished by their “rich” grave goods which lacked weapons. This interpretation has faced severe critique; especially since the occurrence of weapons is much higher in Großromstedt than on other sites in the Lower Elbe area (Steuer 1982: 184-5).

Another interpretation by Häusler in 1975 tried to recreate a social structure based on the interpretation of burial grounds separated by gender. The local crafts production was divided by different “clans” and men and women thereafter lived separately in different houses, which led to separate burial grounds (Steuer 1982: 192). Other interpretations are centered on a type of male groups (dt. Männerbünde) which caused the burial practice to become separated. Redlich tried to explain the many graves which “lacked weapons” as an expression of a societal structure where only the leading members of the societies always carried weapons. The followers had to return their weapons to the leaders after the end of a military campaign and when they died (Steuer 1982: 197). Similar interpretations focus on the composition or lack of weapons as a means to understand the deceased’s relationship to the latest military campaign (Steuer 1982: 207). These interpretations have been criticized, since children and juveniles have been found on the “male sites” and also the low number of grave goods attributed to men (Steuer 1982: 192).

A crucial observation can be made when previous interpretations concerning the social structure of the Elbe Germanic societies are evaluated. All interpretations are based on weapons or a burial practice separated by gender, which the low occurrence of weapons and the differences between the burial sites, inevitably questions. The discussion in chapter 3 clearly outlined the large bias in favor of weapons, by extension leading to a larger focus on male objects. As weapons are believed to emerge in mortuary contexts by the Late La Tène, they are often attributed great importance in terms of what they meant for the contemporary world, i.e. military activity. It is yet perplexing how they have been ascribed such importance when other grave goods categories – such as jewelry and tools – occurs much more often and
in larger quantities. The interpretations of social structures all center on warriors or male groups and it is telling that no researchers have written about “jewelry-wearers”, “tool makers” or female groups. Steuer states that weapons are taken for granted; they are seen as such obvious grave goods that the lack of weapons in graves is perceived as an anomaly (Steuer 1982: 197). The unwillingness to demote weapons as the most influential objects in the burial practices and societies; when they should rather be viewed as one of the less common categories, is highly problematic. Steuer advocated a more cautious interpretation where the stratification of the society took place within the large families and did not extend beyond them. The families all had different ranks in relation to each other although they belonged to the same stratifications, as a society of distinct classes had not yet been established (Steuer 1982: 208, 257). The simplicity of Steuer’s interpretation constitutes its greatest advantage, as it steers away from explicit notions of gender, weapons and war, and class labels which are not relevant for a prehistoric context.

The results discussed in this chapter have shown that the interpretation of Elbe Germanic burial grounds as separated by gender cannot be seen as valid when burial sites are studied in detail and compared. The occurrence of grave goods has been analyzed, and four types of grave goods which occurred in both case studies were discussed with a focus on the problems of genderscript. The question of child burials was brought forth and the theory that children can be identified by miniature grave goods was contested. The final section of this chapter discussed gender, sex, kinship, age and social structures in order to move beyond earlier interpretations. The results further show that it is problematic to script artefacts, graves and sites as belonging to either gender; thus reinforcing a dual notion of static gender relations. Engendering artefacts also reinforces relations of power. The research field of Elbe Germanic burial grounds has had a pronounced bias towards artefacts genderscripted as male, thereby reinforcing the view of masculinity during the Roman Imperial Period as highly dependent on warfare. Although more artefact types are genderscripted as female, researchers discuss burial grounds in regards to the occurrence of weapons. As the labelling of occurrences as “male” or “female” has a great influence on the interpretation of prehistory and gender relations in a contemporary context, it is important to continually evaluate generalizations and dominant discourses.

The results demonstrate that tools and parts of the costume were the most common grave goods. This is likely a reflection of Elbe Germanic societies which have to be interpreted without the previous dependence of weapons as the most significant grave goods. It is not possible to ascertain any distinct social groups due to the large diversity, although the percentage of grave goods and number of graves gives an indication of the associated settlements. Steuer’s interpretation of a society stratified within family groups rather than social classes is a probable interpretation of the social structure. The emphasis on families as the most prominent social structure further reinforces the local varieties enunciated in the burial practice. Roman import goods and objects made of precious metals provide insight to the material riches of the period, while miniature objects, jewelry and weapons could have held symbolic meanings. The graves without grave goods are difficult to interpret, although it is too simplistic to dismiss them as insignificant. The burial grounds were not separated by gender and should be understood as different sites where local practices affected the deposition of grave goods. This theory is further strengthened by the spatial analysis and the intersectional approach for the case studies, as constant patterns concerning sex or age were not possible to establish. The critical reading and landscape analysis where features of all sites were considered enables the results from the case studies to be extrapolated and contextualized in a larger framework. Conducting thorough case studies using GIS on all 28
sites in this study would be highly desirable for the future in order to test the results further and address a greater representability. In the future, it would also be important to compare the results to other contexts, both within Germany and internationally, to further discuss the results and interpretations presented here. Finally, this study contributes to a wider research context in several instances. It stresses the importance of questioning how gender is interpreted and established by modern interpretations of the past. Gender has been used to understand a society on the basis of genderscripted objects where some are valued higher than others. The common denominators are generally overlooked while the objects interpreted to signify a separation between genders are accentuated; a clear example of the dualistic view of binary genders that suppresses prehistoric society structures. It is important to continually evaluate archaeological research and the use of digital methods is advantageous in this endeavor.

Chapter 7. Summary

This thesis is a contribution to the debate on burial grounds from the Roman Imperial Period (0-300 AD) in northern Germany. The particular sites are attributed to the Elbe Germanic peoples (dt. Elbegermanen) and consist of urn burials with poorly preserved fragmented human remains. Archaeologists have interpreted the burial grounds to be separated by gender, based on the grave goods which have been scripted as either male or male; primarily jewelry as female and weapons as male. The interpretation has been contested and the debate in German archaeology has become polarized. There are yet far too few theoretical discussions of why gender would hold this distinguishing position concerning the burial practice, and it is necessary to re-evaluate earlier research.

This thesis has two interconnected research aims and uses 28 sites from the German states of Brandenburg, Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Niedersachsen, Sachsen-Anhalt and Schleswig-Holstein in order to explore the Elbe Germanic burial practice. The first research aim concerns chapters 1-3 and addresses earlier research and how the development of German archaeology has influenced the prevalent discourses. It further introduced gender theoretical perspectives; specifically, genderscript and intersectionality. Several discourses could be identified in the research context, most notably the large and unproblematized use of gender, and the bias towards weapons which by extension leads to a male bias and an unequal power balance between how men and women are valued in the mortuary contexts.

The second research aim was addressed in chapters 4-6 and entails the use of GIS (Geographical Information Systems) to recreate the landscape during the Roman Imperial Period and explore two case studies of the burial grounds in Hamburg-Marmstorf (Hamburg) and Preetz (Schleswig-Holstein). The landscape was discussed through quaternary geology and earlier archaeological research. Elbe Germanic settlements, continuity and chronology were discussed and several spatial patterns such as the relationship with older monuments (mainly Bronze Age mounds), the occurrence of Roman Import goods, and the placement of urns etcetera – were all discussed. The burial grounds in Hamburg-Marmstorf and Preetz were chosen as case studies in order to analyze one site each that has been interpreted as male or female. The list of finds from both sites were digitalized in separate databases and the excavation plans were georeferenced and digitalize using GIS.

The results were discussed with a focus on occurrence of grave goods, artefact categories that were common denominators for both sites, child burials and a concluding section which contextualized the theoretical perspectives. The case studies were compared to the remaining
26 sites in the study and showed that the Elbe Germanic burial grounds were not separated by gender, although some sites might have had a majority of female or male burials. The many local varieties that were found in the second part of the thesis showed that the grave goods mainly consisted of tools and that the significance of weapons have been greatly overrated. To understand the Elbe Germanic burial grounds, it is necessary to consider intersecting social categories and societal structures. Intersectional perspectives enable a shifting focus and interpretations that move beyond gender, in order to acknowledge that social categories always intersect and create contexts dependent on several variables. Additional in-depth studies on all sites are necessary in order to further understand the sites.

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Risberg, J. Department of Physical Geography, Stockholm University. (Personal communication). 2015-12-14.
## Appendix

### Overview of the 28 sites in the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bundesland (state)</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Municipal area</th>
<th>Excavated in (year)</th>
<th>Complete number of excavated graves (all periods)</th>
<th>Gender interpretation</th>
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<td>Blievenhorst</td>
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<td>Schleswig-Holstein</td>
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<td>Herzogtum Lauenburg</td>
<td>Hornbek</td>
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Table showing the featured burial grounds categorized by state, district, municipal area, the period of excavation, the total number of individual burials within every site and gender interpretation (after Capelle 1971, Eger 1999).
# The finds from the excavation in Hamburg-Marmstorf 1911

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Find nr.</th>
<th>Grave type or object</th>
<th>Circumstance</th>
<th>Urn type</th>
<th>Occurence of grave goods</th>
<th>Jewelry - Fibulas</th>
<th>Swords</th>
<th>Lance</th>
<th>Spear</th>
<th>Shield buckle</th>
<th>Tools and other</th>
<th>Cremated remains weight (g)</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Urn</td>
<td>Lightly dented, covered by a flat stone</td>
<td>Wide orifice pot</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Possible fragment from 1 fibula (iron)</td>
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</table>

*Table showing the list of finds from the excavation in Hamburg-Marmstorf 1911 (Wegewitz 1964).*