

An Analysis of the Aristocratic Material Culture Described in the Old English Epic *Beowulf*

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Senior Honors Thesis
Bemidji State University
Professor Larry Swain, Ph.D
2015

Understanding the past creates a better understanding of the present, and those who study history act as the bridge between the past and the future, ensuring that knowledge of the past is considered in the action of the future. I study history because I have a need to understand the world from which I came, and I want to understand the world that existed before my own existence. Archaeology and the study of artifacts are key in the understanding of the past as they were often created to represent the world in which they were made. Literature is essentially archaeology preserved within words. It is an avenue that leads to a better understanding of history. Studying the words and descriptions within texts reveals a plethora of information to the historian studying the word. In turn, historians are able to develop a cultural history that surrounds any given artifact or text. This necessitates examination of historical communities and analysis of contemporary documents, considering in particular the intersection of the textual and the artifactual. Through a close analysis of the descriptive language within the Old English poem, *Beowulf*, it becomes clear that the poem's words surround the aristocratic material culture best aligns with artifacts of the sixth and seventh centuries. Make note that this paper was born within an arena of vexed scholarship. The *Beowulf* poem has unclear origins, setting, and date. Thus, scholars are left to determine the dating of the poem through analysis of the text and contextual clues. In turn, this has led to much debate in the world of *Beowulf* scholarship. This thesis argues that the aristocratic material culture, as described by the *Beowulf* poet, was meant to represent the sixth and seventh centuries of Northern Europe.

“Hwaet, we Gar-Dena in geardagum, þeodcýninga þrym gefrunon, hu ða æþelingas ellen fremedon” spoke the *Beowulf* scop, demanding the attention of his audience. “Listen! We have heard of the glory in bygone days of the folk-kings of the spear-Danes, how those noble lords did lofty deeds”.¹ These opening lines of the Old English epic, *Beowulf*, introduce the reader to an

essential character of the poem who is often overlooked, but without whom historians would have no record of the infamous epic - the poet. Both the *Beowulf* oral composer and the writer remain unknown. However, through a rich analysis of what we *do* have of the poem- the text - historians are able to extract real and necessary indications of when, in the evolution of the literary work, the aristocratic material culture is best associated.

The epic is set in sixth century Daneland (modern day Denmark), but was written into a singular manuscript in the late tenth - early eleventh century, making the manuscript (Cotton Vitellius A. XV) approximately a thousand years old. Due to the age of the poem and the late date of its composition into manuscript form, the poem most likely underwent significant alterations for several hundred years before it was physically documented. Prior to the literary tradition that overwhelmed the late early to high middle ages, oral story telling was the principal medium of entertainment and sharing stories. In fact the medieval scop, the oral poet in medieval society, was a vital component of society as he entertained warriors and the kingdom's royal family in the central gathering vessel of medieval culture, the hall. Luizza claims that the scop "would have worked from a collection of traditional stories improvised in performance from a repertoire of formulaic elements, groups of words that met the demands of meter and sense and could be used and reused according to the needs of the poem."² Thus, after centuries of sharing and re-telling, the medieval scop's poem would have been a work of constant change and modification, reflecting the culture that existed *throughout* its composition. The aristocratic material culture in the descriptive language of *Beowulf* best aligns with archaeological materials of the sixth and seventh centuries (the Late Migration period) from south and east Scandinavia.

Regardless of when the *Beowulf* poem was initially composed, it is important to recognize the culture that its words represent. Developing a tangible world around *Beowulf* is key to

understanding the culture that then existed and in turn is necessary to understanding the poem itself. The descriptions of the hall and helmet-art within the poem allow modern historians to compare relevant artifacts of the preceding and congruent periods. By comparing the descriptions of King Hrothgar's hall, Heorot, and the ceremonial helmet-ware within *Beowulf* to archaeological findings in the Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian worlds, it becomes clear that the poem's material culture is most appropriately matched with the era of Late Migration/Vendel periods. Luizza claims that the role of the medieval poet was to contextualize his performance and oral composition within a "world long vanished, imaginatively bringing its textures and values to life; his own complex sense of the past prevents us from reading his work either as a transhistorical and transcultural fragment of primordial myth or as a transparent window onto the cultural or material conditions of a lost heroic age".³ Instead, the reader must use the work's text to deduct the myths and realities therein. *Beowulf* is a fine representation of the worlds in which it was composed regardless of the fantastical elements it holds. To this day there is no physical evidence suggesting or proving that the *Beowulf* poem is true, but through extensive analysis of the poetic descriptions of the hall, funereal practices, and war-gear, the modern reader is able to visualize the material culture of the time period founded in concurrent archaeological findings.

The poem begins with an allusion to the founding of the Scylding dynasty and the mysterious origins of Scyld Shefing, the father of the Scyldings.

Syððan ærest wearð
 feasceaft funden, he þæs frofre gebad –
 weox under wolcnum weorðmyndum þah,
 oð þæt him æghwylc þara ymbsittendra
 ofer hronrade hyran scolde,
 gomban gyldan; þæt wæs god cyning.

(He first was found a waif, he awaited solace for that he grew under heaven and prospered in honor until every one of the encircling nations over the whale's-riding had to obey him, grant

him tribute. That was a good king!)⁴ After a few short lines of establishing Scyld's dominance over Daneland, the poet shifts to the funeral procession of this great king. The description of the ship-burial is indicative of a funereal custom of the sixth or seventh centuries in which the deceased was entombed with an outfitted ship. The ornate descriptions of the burial are also symptomatic with the importance of the Skylding dynasty as ship burials were often reserved for powerful individuals of strong dynasties. The poem then jumps forward to Hrothgar, the Danish King and descendent of Scyld Scefing. King Hrothgar is the chieftain of Daneland who erected and resides within Heorot, the horn-gabled hall that represented the most prestigious hall of the Scandinavian world. At line 86, the poem's main antagonist is presented. "Ða se ellengæst earfoðlice/ þrage gepolode, se þe in þystrum bad,"⁵ (A bold demon who waited in darkness, wretchedly suffered all the while).⁶ The monstrous Grendel, a descendent of Cain, has been terrorizing Heorot and severely disrupting the state of the Danish kingdom, causing the warriors and the royal family to avoid occupying Heorot for fear of death. By establishing Grendel as a descendent of Cain, the poet is referencing the biblical tale of Cain and Abel where Cain kills his brother Abel and as a consequence is banished from Heaven. Grendel is also said to have lived among the giants (jötnarr). The poem indicates that Grendel, being vexed by the "joyful din"⁷ of the great hall, would attack when it was occupied.

Upon hearing of the grim state in Daneland, Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow and a Geatish thane of King Hygelac, enters the epic. It is later revealed to the reader that Beowulf submerges himself in the conflict between Grendel and the Danes in efforts to fulfill the weregild of his father. He arrives in Daneland with a band of fourteen men. *Weregild* refers to the revenge cycle that was a common theme in medieval society and literature. Beowulf's father had an outstanding debt to King Hrothgar but died before he could fulfill his weregild. To repay the

Danish King and fulfill his honor, Beowulf decided to purify the Danish Kingdom of the adversary. “We synt gumcynnes geata leode ond Higelaces heorðgeneatas... Ic þæs Hroðgar mæg þurh rumn sefan ræd gelæran, hu he frond ond god feond oferswyðeþ” (We are men of the Geatish nation and Hygelac’s hearth companions... With generous spirit I can counsel Hrothgar, advise him how, wise old king, he may overcome this fiend).⁸ In acceptance of the weregild, King Hrothgar welcomes the Geatish assistance and upon the first night of Heorot’s Geatish occupation, an unsuspecting Grendel attacks the hall and is greeted by Beowulf. In a heroic demonstration, Beowulf chooses to fight the monster in the same way that the demon fights – without weaponry. The two fight and Beowulf manages to rip the arm off of the villain. Grendel then recedes to his lair and dies of the Beowulf-inflicted wound.

To award the brave deeds of Beowulf, King Hrothgar and his Queen, Wealtheow, present the hero with many gifts including the blade of Healfdene named Hrunting, a helmet and a byrnie.⁹ Wealtheow, further gifts Beowulf the Broisinga Necklace, said to have been worn by the Norse Goddess Freyja. However, as the Geats and Danes celebrate the victory over Grendel, another fate awaited them. Following the Germanic tradition of weregild, Grendel’s mother approached Heorot, where drunken thanes slept, and avenged her son. “Beorgan, þa heo ondunden wæs; hraðe heo æþelinga anne hæfde fæste befangen, þa heo to fenne gang” (She quickly seized, fast in her clutches, one nobleman when she went to the fens).¹⁰ It is often argued that Grendel’s mother poses a more competent and dangerous challenge to Beowulf than Grendel. Further, she may be the single character within *Beowulf* who fulfills the medieval heroic ethos completely.

As a result of Grendel’s mother’s revenge, both the Danish and Geatish thanes were distraught. Beowulf then vows to avenge the tragedy and seeks to find the lair of the monstrous

woman¹¹, which he and his thanes discover in a lake full of sea-monsters and sea-serpents. Beowulf geared-up in his boar-ornamented war-gear and swam, alone, to the underwater lair of Grendel's mother. There, he met the monstrous woman where, after Hrunting failed him he seized a large sword amongst other treasures in the lair and killed her. Again, Beowulf arose as the lone Geatish hero and was awarded many treasures from King Hrothgar and Queen Wealtheow, which he brought back to Geatland and presented to King Hygelac.

The epic then shifts to when Beowulf inherits the Geatish Kingdom and becomes King of the Geats. He has lived a successful and heroic life with a lifetime of brave deeds when a large dragon whose treasure hoard is disturbed by a greedy Geat attacks his kingdom. Beowulf, now in his old age, makes his final heroic vow to save his kingdom. In an act of vainglory, Beowulf seeks out and fights the dragon where he becomes wounded. In his time of need, he is abandoned by all of his thanes but one, called Wiglaf. Wiglaf and Beowulf defeat the dragon, and shortly thereafter Beowulf dies. In his death he is awarded a funeral pyre and is regarded as a great hero of the Geats.

After establishing the line of dynasties in the poem, the *Beowulf* author presents the conflict between the Scyldings and the monster, Grendel. From the reader's perspective, Grendel's attacks on Heorot were unprovoked and brute. "When night descended he went to seek out the high house, to see how the Ring-Danes had bedded down after their beer-drinking... The unholy creature grim and ravenous, was ready at once, ruthless and cruel, and took from their rest thirty thanes."¹² During the late Germanic Iron Age, halls were considered the center of the universe to those who surrounded them.¹³ In the Christian world, churches and cathedrals were considered to be central to the worshippers; the hall would have acted as similar place of communion in Northern Europe and medieval Scandinavia. "A central place with sacred

functions represents the whole universe in symbolic form; it is deliberately constructed as the centre of the universe.”¹⁴ In Iron Age Scandinavia where the hall was the heart of medieval culture, it would serve as a sacred component to the society to which it belonged. Attacks on the hall or home were thus one of the highest insults to Iron Age Scandinavian society,¹⁵ which is why they frequently appear in the world of sagas and story telling. The inclusion of the cultural taboo in the sagas and epics indicates the importance of maintaining an ordered society, free of attacks on the center of their universe. In *Beowulf*, Grendel’s attack on Heorot represents the severest form of disrespect and dishonor to the world for which the poem was written.

The majority of the *Beowulf* poem was set in the land of the Danes in Hrothgar’s hall Heorot.

Him on mod bearn
 ðæt healreced atan wolde,
 meodoærn micel men gewyrcean
 ðone ylðo bearn æfre gefrunon
 one þær on innan eall gedælan
 geogum one ealdum, swylc him God seald,
 buton folcscare one feorum gumena...
 scop him Heort naman.

(It came to his mind that she should order a hall-building, have men make a great mead-house which the sons of men should remember forever, and there within he would share everything with young and old that God have given him, except for the common land and the lives of men...he gave it the name “Heorot.”)¹⁶ Many medieval scholars believe that the great site of Heorot existed in Lejre, Zealand; an island in East Denmark that was the home of the Skjöldung Dynasty. Hrothgar, the Danish king in *Beowulf*, is the grandson of, Scyld Scefing who was the founder of the Scyldings. The Skjöldings and the Scefings are universally acknowledged as equivalents¹⁷ and though Lejre is not *explicitly* mentioned in *Beowulf*, the apparent similarity between the dynasties suggests that the site is an adequate stage to set the *Beowulf* poem. The

etymology of both dynasties can be traced back to meaning, “shield,” and both are understood to have miraculous origin. In the introduction of the Penguin Classic, *The Saga of Hrolf Kraki*, Dr. Jesse Byock, professor of Viking Studies at the University of California: Los Angeles, further encourages the equivalency of the Skjöldungs and Scefings by claiming that “the differing medieval interpretations of the origin of the family are [merely] evidence of embryonic national sentiment.” Hrolf Kraki was a Skjöldung. The differing pronunciations are the result of geographic location and telephone effect due to the original oral nature of the legend. Before the action of *Beowulf* begins, the royal Danish line is established; In *Beowulf and Lejre*, John D. Niles describes these as “consist[ing] of Scyld Scefing (Skjold) and Healfdene (Half-dan), together with their sons Hrothgar (Roar) and Halga (Helge)...the similarity in names among the kings of Lejre mentioned in the Danish chronicles, the Scyldings of *Beowulf*, and the Hunnish kings of the Age of Migrations is striking.”

The descriptive language surrounding Heorot in *Beowulf* reveals that this aspect of the poem is most closely associated with halls of the Germanic Iron Age. These halls were wooden, called long-houses, and housed local dynasties while simultaneously serving as a place of great feasts, parties, and business. The hall was an integral part of the heroic society that existed in Scandinavia during the Germanic Iron Age, Iron Age Scandinavia, the Migration Period, and even through the Viking periods as it acted as the central gathering vessel within society. Viewing the descriptions of the hall reveals the *Beowulf* poet’s intent for the audience to understand Heorot as part of the long tradition of Germanic Age Halls.

In regards to the archaeological discovery of remains of a sixth century hall at Lejre, *Beowulf* scholar John D. Niles claims:

The discovery, as a result of excavations undertaken in 1986-1988 and 2004-2005, of the remains of a succession of at least three great halls at Lejre dating from the mid-sixth

century to the late tenth century A.D. provided hard evidence that the *Beowulf* poet's narrative, however fanciful it may be, is indeed grounded in that locale.¹⁸

Further, the discovery of a tenth century hall proved to be an interesting find in the world of *Beowulf* scholarship - not wholly compatible due to its late date – whereas the unearthing of the second hall, built circa 550 C.E. is more congruent to the setting of the *Beowulf* poem. However,

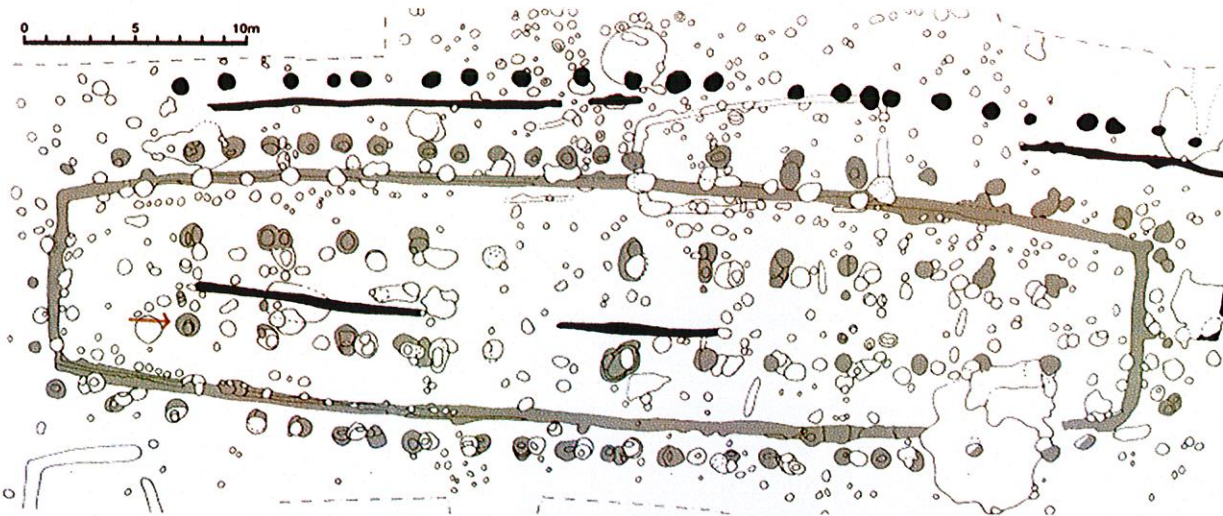


Figure 1- A topical site plan of the Lejre, both halls are similar in construction, even though they have been separated by several centuries. Remains of the ninth century Viking Age site are depicted in grey, whereas the earlier seventh century hall sits below and is indicated in black.

when, as we reconstruct the physical evidence, it can be seen that the physicality of both halls match the descriptive language of the *Beowulf* text. Figure 1 depicts a topical site plan of the Lejre, and though archaeologists have only well preserved in the later hall, we must assume that both halls possessed exterior walls. The row following the red arrow represents pillars that were used in the construction of both the sixth and tenth century halls. The development of two halls is compatible with the *Beowulf* poem as the text references the eventual destruction of Heorot.

Sele hlifade,
 heah ond horngeap, heaðowylma bad,
 laðan liges; ne wæs hit lenge þa gen,
 þæt se [e]cghete aþumsw[eor]um,

æfter wælniðe wæcnan scolde.

(The hall towered high and horn-gabled – it awaited hostile fires, the surges of war; the time was not yet at hand when the sword-hate of sworn in-laws should arise after ruthless violence).¹⁹ The construction of a second hall in the same locale as the sixth century hall indicates the possibility of the destruction or disintegration of the first, an implication that coincides with the *Beowulf* text. Scholar John D. Niles states that “when the *Beowulf* poet alludes to the future destruction of the Scylding’s hall as a result of the feud involving Hrothgar’s son-in-law Ingeld, he does so in an oblique manner that suggests that his audience was already familiar with the gist of this feud.”²⁰ The author, via the text, assumes that the audience is familiar with the Ingeld episode, which further strengthens the poem’s original compatibility with a sixth or seventh century, Germanic Iron Age date, but by the time it was written into manuscript form the author wrote in commemoration of Heorot’s greatness to a knowledgeable audience. Further, the Old English poem *Widsith*, found in the tenth century Exeter Book, also mentions the tragic fate of Hrothgar and his hall. “Hrothulf and Hrothgar held peace together for a long time, uncle and nephew, after they had driven off the race of Vikings and humbled Ingeld’s battle-array, hacked down at Heorot the pride of the Heathobards.”²¹ Ingeld was a Heathobard (i.e. Heaðobard), and also the son-in-law of Hrothgar. The Ingeld episode in *Beowulf*, and the mentioning of the fall of Heorot acts as foreshadowing. Thus, the audience’s assumed familiarity with the Skjölding Dynasty and the mentioning of Heorot’s downfall in *Beowulf* and the *Widsith* poem strengthens the possibility that the *Beowulf* poem was set in Leijre, Zealand. It also enhances the assumption that the Scylding and Skjöldung dynasties are one in the same.

From the twelfth century forward, historians have identified Hleidr with the village of Leijre, a site that is surrounded with Stone and Bronze Age mounds with indications of Iron Age

habitation. Dr. Jesse Byock refers to Hleidr as the location of the *Beowulf* poem.²² “There is little doubt that in the early Middle Ages Hleidr was a centre of power, and, although there is no sure proof, it has often been surmised that it was the site of Heorot, the Danish Hall to which Beowulf came.”²³ When comparing the two halls found at Lejre, the viewer will find that both halls are similar in construction, even though they have been separated by several centuries. The original hall that was erected in the sixth century Germanic tradition had exterior walls that warrior men would have placed their war-gear against upon waiting for entrance into the hall.

Setto sæmeþe side scyldas,
 ronda regnbearde wið þæ recedes weal;
 bugon þa to bence – byran hringdon
 guðsearo gumena; garas stodon,
 sænabba searo samod ætgædere,
 æscholt ufan græg; wæse irenþreat
 wæpnum gewurþad

(Sea-weary, they set their broad shields, wonderously-hard boards, against the buildin’s wall; they sat on a bench – their byrnies rand out, their soldiers’ war-gear; their spears stood, the gear of the seamen all together, a gray forest of ash. That iron troop was worthy of its weapons.)²⁴

Inside the hall, there would be a central hearth with sporadic benches, some serving as places of seating and some equipped with pillows and mattresses for sleeping.²⁵ Though the *Beowulf* poet hardly uses a diagrammatic approach, it can be deduced that Heorot – as described in the poem – was most likely an Iron Age hall built in the Germanic tradition, that is much similar to archaeological discoveries of Germanic Iron Age halls, including the halls excavated at the Lejre site.²⁶ As often found, the ninth century hall used some of the foundational framework of the seventh century hall.

In *Beowulf* the greatness of Heorot is made abundantly clear. “The jewel-adorned hall”²⁷ “the timbered hall, splendid and gold-adorned – the most famous building among men under the

heavens – where the high king waited; its light shone over many lands.”²⁸ Heorot would have made an impression to any onlooker, for not only would it have been massive in size, but it was also “high and horn-gabled,”²⁹ described a literally shining with gold. The poem describes Heorot as “...men’s golden house, finely adorned...[with a] steep roof plated with gold.”³⁰ Due to the poorly preserved state in which the Lejres halls were found, it is difficult to tell whether the hall would have been painted or accurately gold-adorned. A virtual reconstruction of the



*Figure 2 - The virtual reconstruction of what the hall at Lejre would have looked like in the 6th century C.E. The coloring of the below image, found in Niles’ *Beowulf and Lejre*, was a highly controversial issue throughout the process of virtual reconstruction.*

Lejre hall (see Figure 2) reveals the golden attributes that Heorot would have had.

The Descriptive language within *Beowulf* heavily references the gold adorned quality that the sixth century Danish Kingdom possessed. Thus, Heorot may have been more ornately decorated with gold than this reconstruction suggests. However, the golden door and entrance undoubtedly represent the prestige that this location held during its occupation.

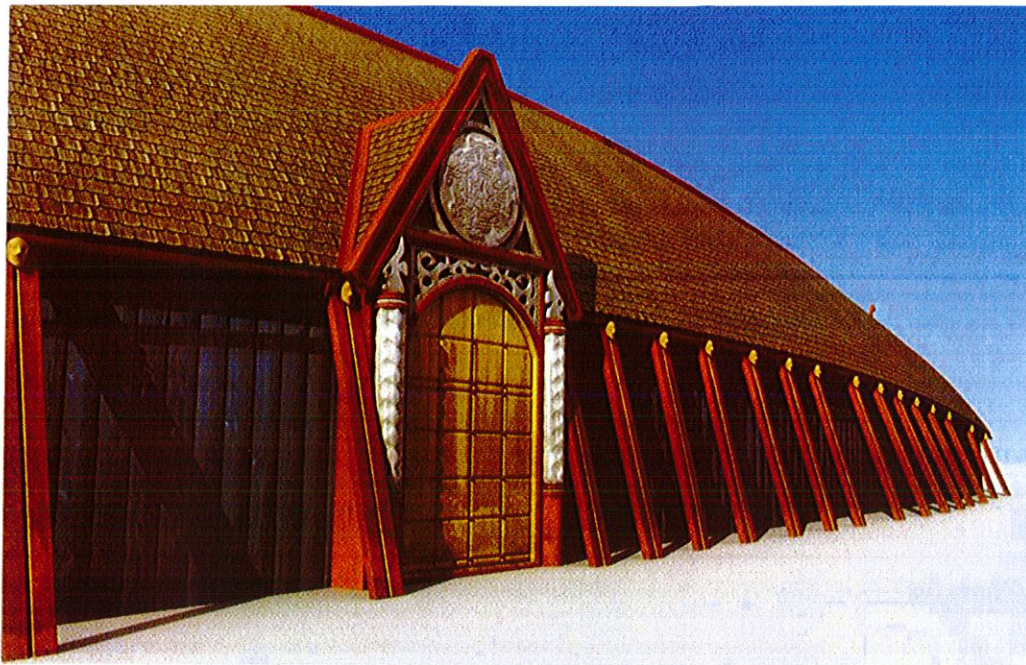


Figure 3 - Digital reconstruction of the tenth century hall at Lejre.

The rhetoric describing Heorot in *Beowulf* supports this supposition by describing the great hall as the finest hall in middle-earth and any great structure would have been decorated ornately and to the standards of the time period. Rosemary Cramp (Professor of Archaeology at Durham University in England) states that given the fine nature of gold and its ability to be beaten into extreme thinness, supplies that it is not impossible that “the timbered hall, splendid and gold adorned...”³¹ could have been embellished in such a way, decorated extensively, or covered with, gold.

Additionally, it is imperative to consider the large amount of gold in circulation throughout and around Scandinavia during the fifth and sixth centuries C.E. and that the nature of using gold for displaying wealth was expected and utilized in the decoration of both society and material culture. The circulation of gold plate in medieval Scandinavia is witnessed in the extensive amount of artifacts that were plated with gold. The *Beowulf* poem does not describe any such ornate physical details in regards to Heorot nor was any gold discovered at the Lejre site, but due to the significance of the Scylding dynasty in Heorot *would* surely have been

lavishly decorated, corroborating its descriptions in the poem and the Lejre halls. Beyond their impressive cultural history, the halls at Lejre are striking in their size standing at 47 meters and 48.5 meters in length.³² When looking at Germanic Iron and Viking Age Halls, archaeologists have found several halls that are comparable both to Lejre and to *Beowulf*.

Two impressive comparisons near Denmark are the halls of Gudme on the Island of Funen, approximately 47 meters in length, and the great hall of Tissø, near the west coast of Zealand, circa 48 meters in length. Though the hall of Gudme is dated to 350 – 500 C.E. and Tissø is dated to the tenth century, these impressive halls are excellent comparisons to Heorot as they are large in size and housed powerful regional dynasties.

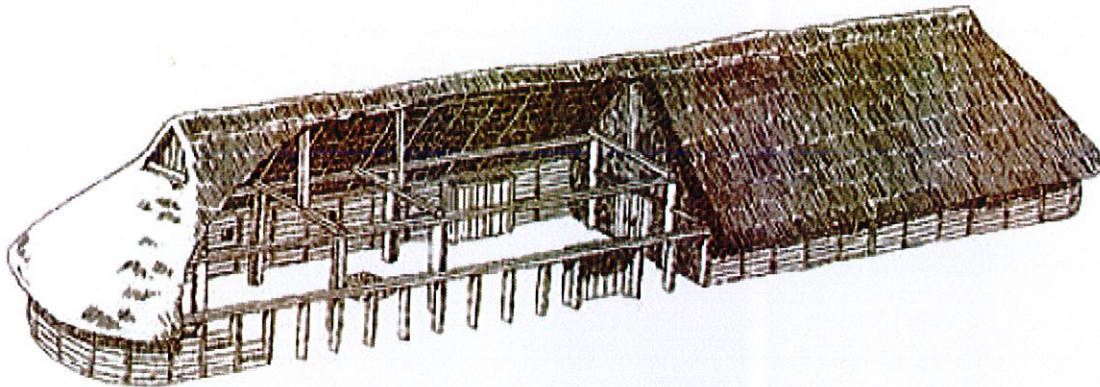


Figure 4 – Cut away reconstruction of Gudme Hall

The *Beowulf* text describes Heorot as “the biggest of halls”³³, “the high house”,³⁴ “the best of halls”³⁵ and “one that the children of men have heard of ever since.”³⁶ It is safe to assume that these words would have resonated some truth with the *Beowulf* audience. Thus, there are several eminent Germanic Iron Age halls in Scandinavia that should be noted as contemporary and comparable to Heorot in *Beowulf*. Though the halls at Lejre, with their history of Skjölding occupation, are often considered more appropriately homologous to the *Beowulf* poem, the descriptions of Heorot within the text *generally* describe a Germanic Iron Age hall and thus

cannot solidly place Heorot in one locale.

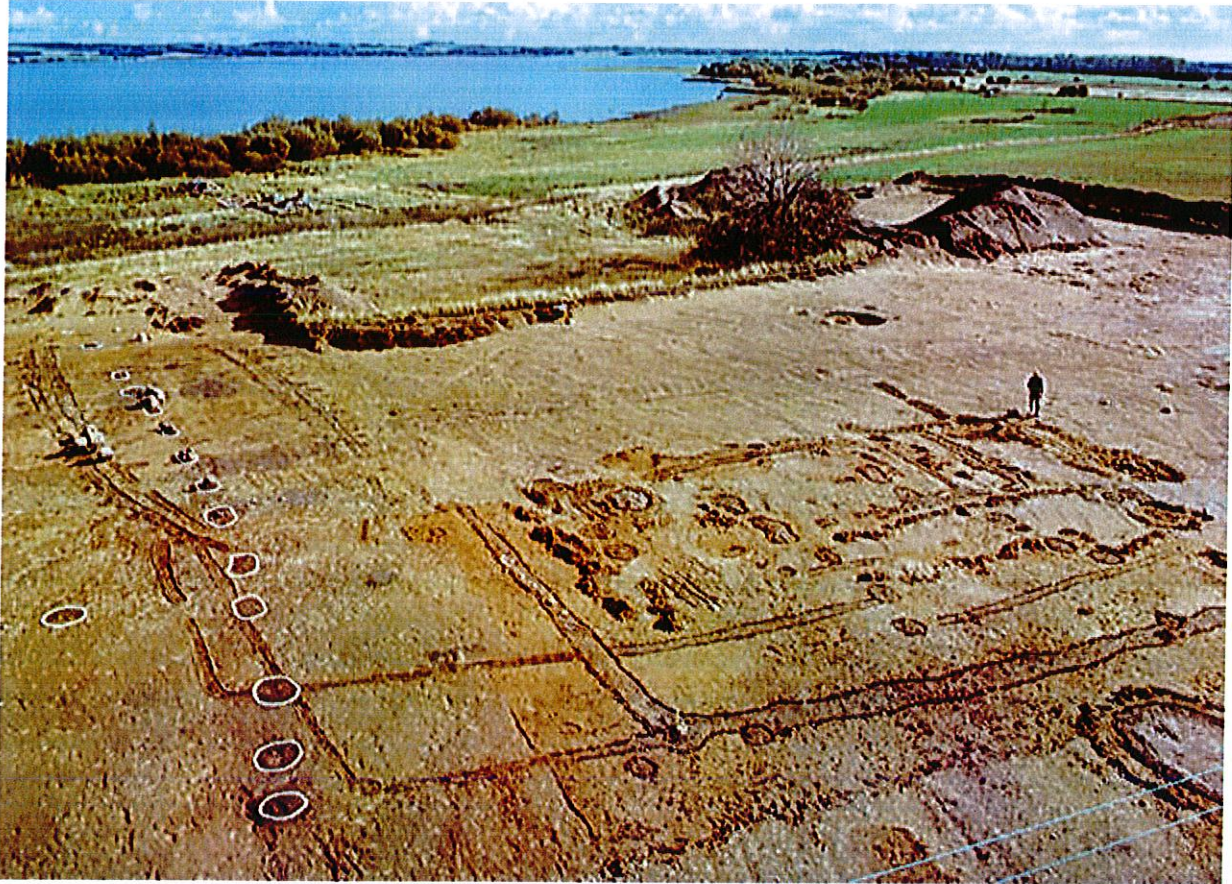


Figure 5 – Excavations at Tissø

Due to its descriptions in the poem, the audience of *Beowulf* would have been familiar with the location of Heorot amidst a warren of kingdoms throughout medieval Scandinavia. Further, the builders of great halls would have aspired to meet the ideals of the legendary ones. Thus, the audiences of the *Beowulf* work would continue to identify with the ideals within the poem. The Danish halls uncovered at Gudme and Tissø are fine examples of great Germanic Iron Age halls and comparable to Heorot both in size and recognition. By comparing the halls found at Gudme and Tissø to Heorot, the reader is able to witness the enduring form of the Germanic Hall throughout Medieval Scandinavia as Gudme is a Migration Period hall that represents an earlier form of the Germanic Iron Age hall where Tissø is a later, Viking Age hall that also

represents elements of the Germanic tradition. The purpose of this thesis is not to determine the locale of the *Beowulf* work, but rather to show the audience artifacts that assist in lodging the poem in the most appropriate century. Perhaps the most notable comparison to Lejre is the archaeological excavations of two Germanic Iron Age halls located in Denmark's Scandinavian sister-country, Norway. These are the halls of Börg on the Lofoten Island of Vestvågøy, a northern island off the Norwegian coast discovered in 1981. In fact, the great hall at Börg was discovered by accident while a Norwegian farmer was tilling his land; little did historians know that this discovery would prove to be one of the most impressive Iron Age discoveries of the twentieth century. From 1986-89, a Nordic research project was launched and conducted by the Institute of Archaeology at the University of Tromsø and the Tromsø University Museum.

Through extensive research it was discovered that the layout of the Borg site was similar to the discoveries made at Lejre in Denmark – exhibiting one hall built atop the other, separated by only a few centuries. Figure 6 layers the archeological comparisons of the two halls uncovered at Börg. The earlier Börg hall was erected in the fifth - sixth centuries of the Common Era and stood at 67 meters in length. Archaeologists discovered that in the eighth century, the early Börg hall was redeveloped to harbor a larger, 83 meters long by 9.5 meters wide hall. In its earliest construction, the 67 meter-long hall at Börg significantly out-sized all of its contemporary Iron-Age halls discovered to this day, making the second construction a significant development in medieval Norway and was thus was a substantial discovery in the world of medieval archaeology.

Through archaeological excavations it became clear that Börg is not only the largest Scandinavian Germanic Iron-Age hall but was also a location of great wealth and importance as

it accommodated for a complete renovation in the duration of its occupation.

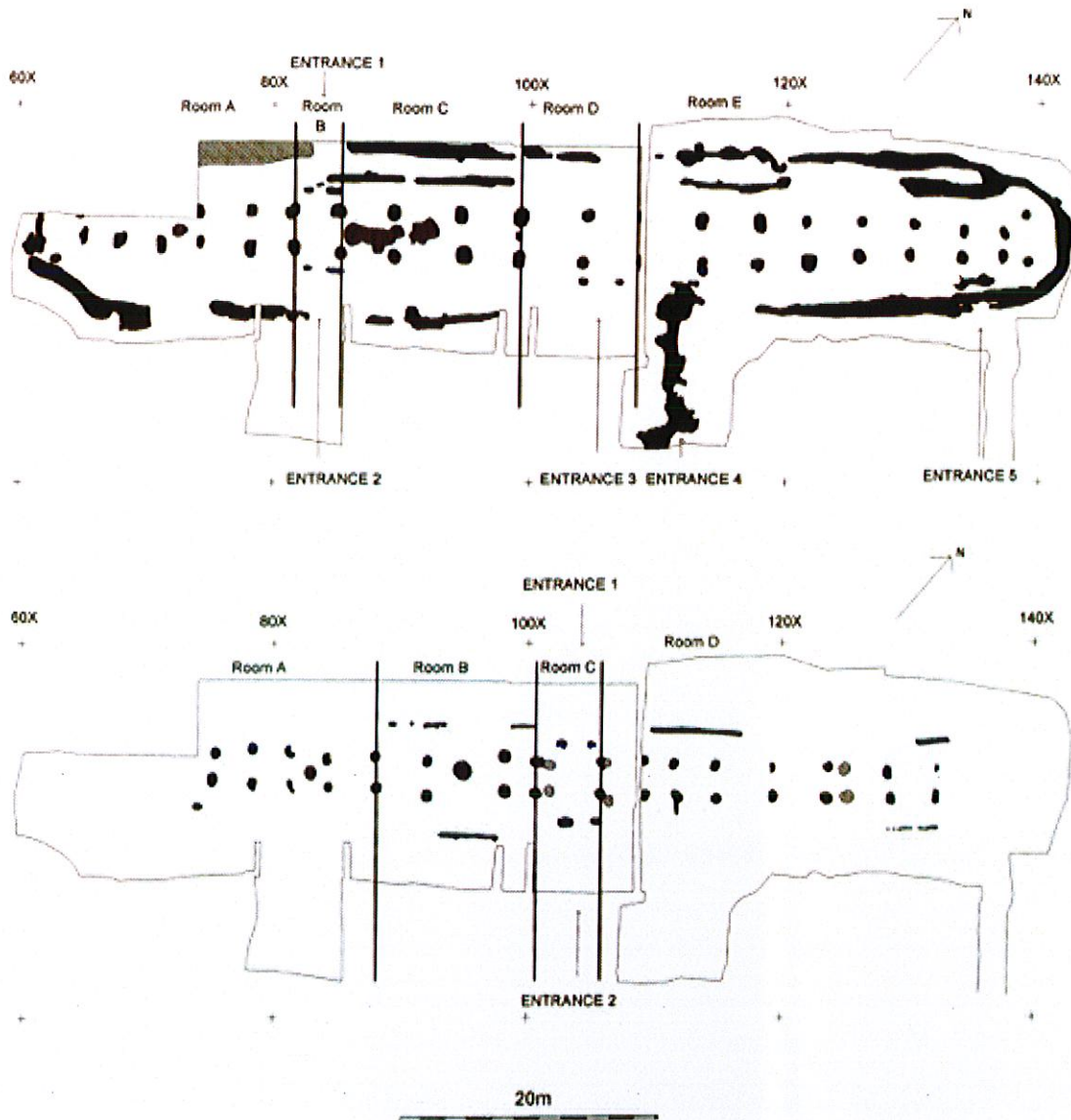


Figure 6 – Excavation plans at Börg, the oldest hall is located below the earlier hall.

Due to the great wealth that was poured into the development of the halls at Börg, it is clear that the occupying dynasty was important. According to the *Látnámabok*, a chieftain at Börg was Olav Tvennumbruni, of the Lofotr dynasty. Olav Tvennumbruni is specifically connected to Lofotr.

Ólafur tvennumbrúni hét maður; hann fór af Lófót til Íslands; hann nam Skeið öll milli Þjorsár (og Hvítár og) til Sandlækjar. (There was a man named Olav Tvennumbruni. He travelled from Lofotr to Iceland. He took the whole area of Skeid between Tjorsá to Sandlækjar.)³⁷ Through the unknown authorship and unclear conception of the *Látnámabok*, connecting Börg to *Beowulf* through the Lofotr dynasty is built on a loose foundation, but the possibility of planting the *Beowulf* poem in this locale via the *Látnámabok* is noteworthy. Icelandic settlement began in the late ninth – early tenth centuries and was partially sparked by religious conflict in Norway. The *Látnámabok* does not detail the motivation behind Olav Tvennumbruni's travel to Iceland, but religious pressure is one theory that is evidenced by the lack of Christian paraphernalia at Börg.³⁸ "It is not believed that the people at Börg were Christians. On the other hand, they would certainly have been acquainted with Christian culture, which they would have encountered through their long-distance connections."³⁹ This aspect of the remains uncovered at Börg is compatible with the *Beowulf* poem as it is unclear whether the scop was Christian or pagan, as the epic contains elements of both.

Figure 7 is an on-site reconstructed hall that now houses the Lofotr Museum. It was built to accurately represent the eighth century Börg Hall. Though *Beowulf* is set in sixth century Denmark and is thus more obviously attributable to earlier excavations, it is important to understand the Nordic culture in which it was orally transmitted, formally documented, and culturally set. Save for the golden adornment and stylistic coloring of the Lejre reconstruction, the two halls are very similar in construction.

As mentioned, the Germanic hall tradition was consistent both before and after the period in which the *Beowulf* epic is thought to be set. The descriptive language within the poem generally describes that of a Germanic hall and thus comparing various Scandinavian halls is

necessary to understanding the *Beowulf* as a whole. The great hall discovery at Börg serves as a prime comparison to Heorot, as it is the largest Iron Age hall in Scandinavia that exists to this day. Börg would have held the same esteem in the sixth century that Heorot would have held not only to its viewers but also to any who would have heard of its size.

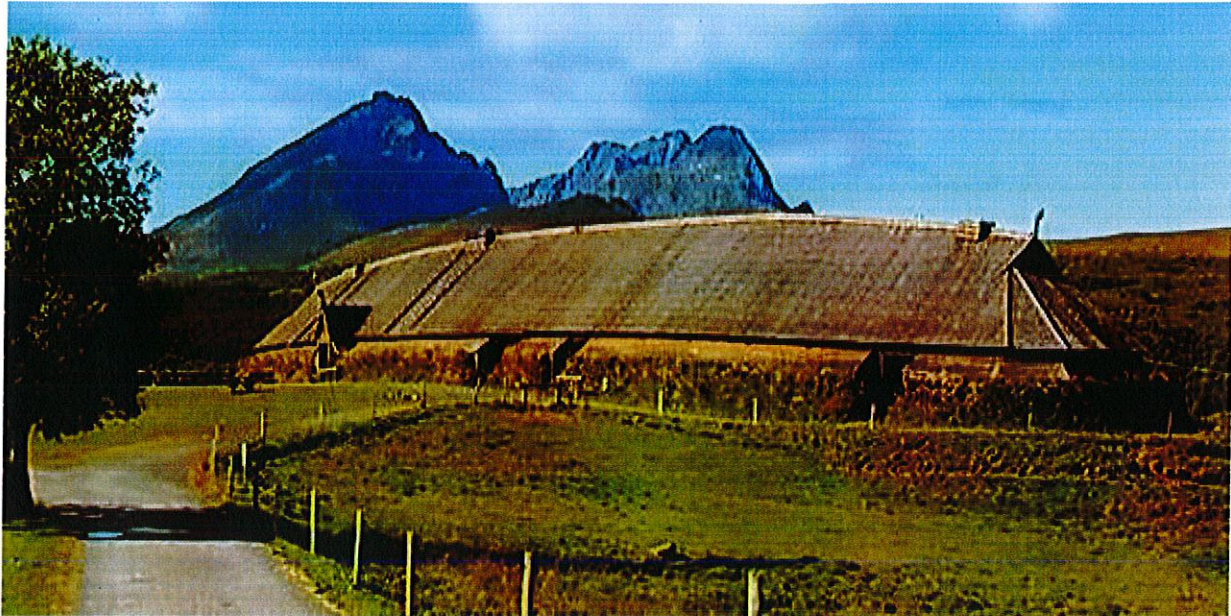


Figure 7 - The modern day Lofotr Museum stands in the same locale and was constructed in the same manner as the original hall

Beowulf serves as a melting pot of cultural identity. These attributes allow claim to the poem to be made by the Danes, the Swedes, and the English. Due to its Old English composition, a Northumbrian comparison to the great hall of Heorot is the Anglo Saxon Hall of Yeavingering (previously known as Ad Gefrin) located the Glendale Valley of England. The Gefrin Trust claims that:

For over 5000 years, people have been drawn to the prominent plateau of sand and gravel lying between the foot of the largest hillfort in Northumberland, Yeavingering Bell, and the River Glen. They came for religious ceremonies, to live and bury their dead and to meet their rulers.⁴⁰

The Yeavingering site has a wealth of historical activity, including a series of seventh century timbered buildings and a burial site, called Grave AX. These facts alone provide a comfortable

comparison to the *Beowulf* poem, however when looking deeper at the Yeavinger site and the hall-descriptions within the poem, its compatibility to the text grows stronger. Yeavinger is representative of an Anglo Saxon/Germanic Iron Age hall, and is very similar to the Danish and Norwegian halls previously mentioned. Further, the site represents the conversation between the Germanic tradition of the hall and the growing Christian world that was developing in Anglo Saxon England during the seventh century. Activity in the Yeavinger vicinity has been traced back to the Mesolithic, Neolithic, and Bronze Age Periods by flint flakes discovered by archaeologists making the locale one of historical prestige. Though North-East Northumberland holds an impressive history of settlement, perhaps most impressive was the seventh century Yeavinger development of a great hall under the reign of King Edwin of Bernica and his successor, Oswald. Between 1953 - 1964, archaeological excavations made by archaeologist, historian, and Cambridge scholar, Brian Hope-Taylor, revealed a complex layout of various halls and buildings at the site of Ad Gefrin; more complex than congruent Scandinavian halls. Ad Gefrin is the earlier name of Yeavinger.

The series of halls that were constructed at Ad Gefrin stood at various – but grand – heights. Over 16 buildings have been excavated at Yeavinger thus far, and there is an assortment of other possible-buildings that are still being uncovered and debated to this day. The wealth of buildings discovered at Yeavinger indicates the reputation that the location would have held regionally during the seventh century. Historians and archaeologist alike refer to this locale as Ad Gefrin.

The first reference to the great hall at Ad Gefrin was in textual form circa 627 C.E. the venerable Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People: Book II chapter XIV*.

So great was then the fervour of the faith, as is reported, and the desire for the laver of salvation among the nation of the Northumbrians, that Paulinus at a certain time coming

with the king and queen to the royal township, which is called Ad Gefrin, stayed there with them thirty-six days, fully occupied in catechizing and baptizing; during which days, from morning till night, he did nothing else but instruct the people resorting from all villages and places, in Christ's saving Word; and when they were instructed, he washed them with the water of absolution in the river Glen, which is close by. This township, under the following kings, was abandoned, and another was built instead of it, at the place called Maelmin.⁴¹

Bede did not explicitly reveal the location of Ad Gefrin in his work, but it was clear to seventeenth century English historians that Ad Gefrin had come to be known as Yeavinger.

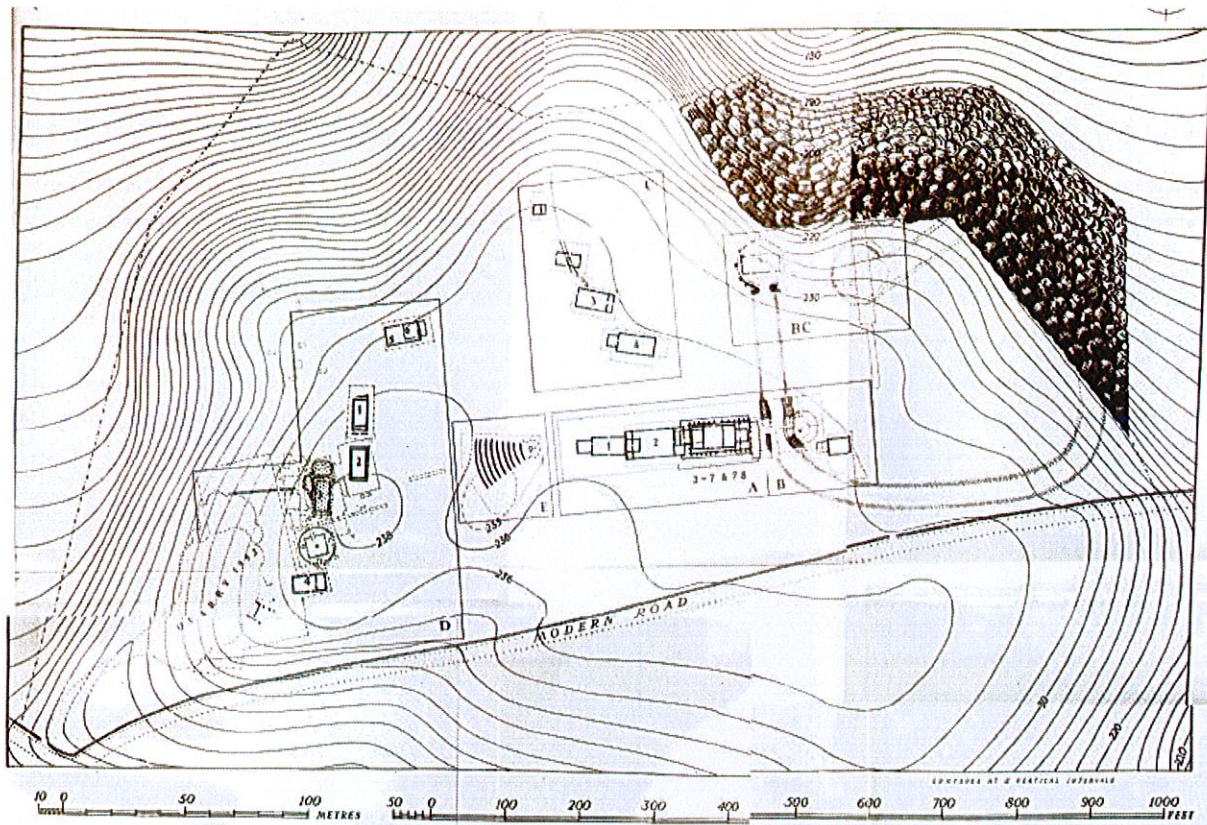


Figure 8 – Aerial view of the Yeavinger ground layout, Brian Hope-Taylor

In his 1695 post-mortem publication of *Britannia Newly Translated*, sixteenth century author William Camden claimed that ““Soon after, Till is increas'd by the river of Glen; which gives the name Glendale of Glen to the Valley through which it runs. Of this rivulet Bede gives us the following account; Paulinus coming with King and Queen to the Royal Manour of Ad-gefrin ('tis

now call'd Yeverin).”⁴² This quote can not be substantiated, but the Gefrin Trust publicized Camden’s quote in their publication *Yeaving; Rediscovering the Landscape of the Northumbrian Kings*.

Excavations in 1953 – 1962 made by Brian Hope-Taylor at Yeavinging revealed remnants of a great hall that was presumably in operation circa 550 C.E. and was abandoned sometime before 700 C.E. “Because of Hope-Taylor’s convincing interpretation of the distinctive rectangular crop marks at Yeavinging, it is possible to recognize these forms as characteristic of early Anglo Saxon settlement.”⁴³ The site at Yeavinging is expansive, reflecting not only a main hall, but also several outlier halls in the perimeter and a grandstand. The inclusion of a grandstand was not typical in the Germanic tradition, but a main hall and several outlier halls are congruent with other Germanic Iron Age halls. The grandstand would have acted as some type of outdoor theatre; perhaps a suitable location for the *Beowulf* poet to recite his epic. During the sixth century of Medieval Scandinavia, Anglo Saxons were seeking to expand north, and along with their geographical expansion, they simultaneously sought to expand their settlement capabilities. Hope-Taylor argues that the ornate and extensive settlement practices are indicative of the growing Anglo Saxon cultural sentiment. Meaning that the Anglo Saxons were attempting

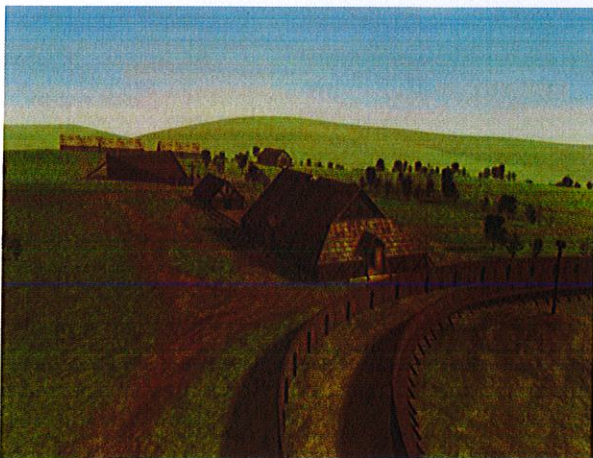


Figure 9 - Virtual reconstruction of the settlement at Yeavinging

to create settlements unique to their societies. The site at Yeavinging is much more expansive than other Germanic Iron Age settlements, with its various halls and arenas, Figure 9 is a virtual reconstruction of the site that is very similar to the actual reconstructions of the aforementioned congruent halls.

When the *Beowulf* manuscript came to the forefront of medieval literary scholarship in the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, it was subject to extensive claim and debate. The *Beowulf* poem is connected to a welter of Northern European culture and communities, possessing a tenth - eleventh century Anglo-Saxon writer, a Danish setting, and Geatish hero. Due to the fact that the poem was written in Old English, it is entirely possible that the elements of fact within *Beowulf* occurred at Yeavering in Northumberland. Due to its regional prestige and massive size, the Yeavering halls serve as fine comparisons to Heorot, holding the largest Anglo-Saxon Iron-Age hall yet discovered in England and acting as an influential royal, religious, cultural, and historical center.

In relation to the *Beowulf* poem, all of the above mentioned halls suffered damage or underwent reconstruction of some sort, which is compatible with the text as Heorot “towered high and horn-gabled – [and] awaited hostile fires.”⁴⁴ Though the *Beowulf* poet does not give any indication of the reconstruction of Heorot, contextually during the medieval period any location of great power would have been rebuilt. The enduring form of the traditional Germanic hall explains the enduring reception and cultivation of Heorot and the *Beowulf* poem.

When examining the construction of the Germanic Iron Age hall, it is imperative to understand that there was a standard of construction that swept throughout Northern Europe and Scandinavia during the sixth and seventh centuries. There was intentional design to Heorot and other Iron Age halls as they were meant to represent the center of the medieval worldview. Further, in medieval culture it was common for communities to replicate the matter of the hall in funeral practices as a means of showing respect to the dead. Because halls play a significant role in the *Beowulf* text, the ship burial representing the hall also warrants acknowledgement. “The fact that ships were used in such elaborate ways implies that they had considerable

symbolic significance in their respective societies.”⁴⁵ As mentioned, the poem begins with Scyld Scefing. In the epic, when Scyld passed away, he was adorned with a ship burial which consisted of placing the deceased, accompanied with luxury and treasure, into a decorated ship and either burying the ship or sending the ship out to sea. In *Beowulf*;

Him ða Scyld gewat to gescæphwile
felahror feran on Freatan wære;
hi hýne þa ætbæron to brimes faroðe,
swæse gesiþas, swa he selfa bæd,
þenden wordum weold wine Scyldinga---
leaf landfruma lange ahte.
Þær æt hyðe stod hringedstefna
isig ond utfus, æþelinges fær;
aledon þa leofne þeoden,
beaga bryttan on bearm scipes,
mærne be mæste.

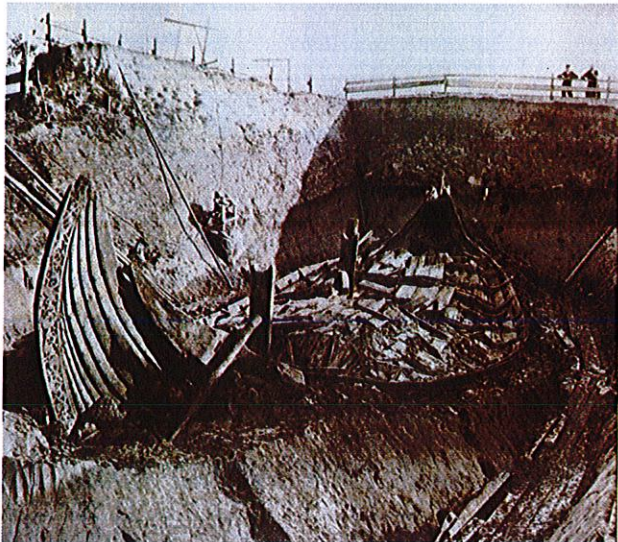


Figure 10 – Oseberg Ship Burial in ground

(Scyld passed away at his appointed hour, the mighty lord went into the Lord’s keeping; they bore him down to the brimming sea, his dear comrades, as he himself had commanded while the friend of the Scyldings wielded speech - that dear land-ruler had long held power. In the harbor stood a ring-prowed ship, ice, outbound, a nobleman’s vessel; there they

laid down their dear lord, dispenser of rings, in the bosom of the ship, glorious, by the mast).⁴⁶

Beowulf scholars have no physical evidence of ship burials that were sent to sea, like that of Scylds burial, nor could they; however cremation burials with war-gear were common in

medieval Scandinavia. The *Beowulf* audience serves as witness to two funereal customs within the poem. The first is that of Scyld Scefings, and the second is Beowulf's. Beowulf did not receive a ship burial, but instead was given the common practice of a funeral pyre, in which the man was cremated with all of his belongings.



Figure 11 – Oseberg Ship prow

Though historians cannot have evidence of cremated practices, a common practice within Medieval Scandinavia was burying ships in the ground in earth graves. Perhaps the most commonly known ship burial is the one found in Tønsberg, Norway – the Oseberg ship burial. The Oseberg is a luxury coastal vessel meant for decorative presentation. The burial mound of Oseberg measured approximately 40 meters long by 6.5 meters high and due to the dendrochronological analysis of the artifacts and ship itself, the burial was entombed in circa 834 C.E. The adornment of the Oseberg ship indicates that the ship burial would have held someone

of great power, and though it outdates the composition of the *Beowulf* poem, it serves as a praiseworthy comparison to the ship that would have served as Scyld's grave hall. The intricate interlacing of Germanic forms carved into the wood of the ship's prow indicates the care and detail that was put into the construction of the ship. Medieval ship burials not only included the burial of the departed, but also the burial of many worldly possessions that were thought to assist in the afterlife. A compelling fact about the Oseberg ship burial is that it housed the remains of two female bodies and one of the only ship burial discoveries that contained the remains of

women. The burial also held two oxen, four dogs, 13 horses, a bed, sleds and wagons, textiles and a vertical loom. As evidenced by the artifacts contained at Oseberg, ship burials were outfitted to represent the sex of the inhabitants. Though the Oseberg ship's exterior design is compatible with the Scyld's ship grave, the interior contents would have differed greatly. In regards to Scyld Scefing's ship burial, the epic continues to say

Ðær wæs madma fela
of feorwegum frætwa gelæded;
ne hyrde ic cymlicor ceol gegyrwan
hildewæpnum ond heaðowædum,
billum ond byrnum; him on bearne læg
madma mænigo, þa him mid scoldon
on flodes æht feor gewitan.
Nalæs hi hine læssan lacum teodan,
þeodgestreonum.

(There were many treasures loaded there, adornments from distant lands; I have never heard of a more lovely ship bedecked with battle-weapons and war-gear, blades and byrnies. In its bosom lay many treasures, which were to travel far with him into the keeping of the flood. With no fewer gifts did they furnish him there, the wealth of nations...).⁴⁷ As the text implicates, the burial of Scyld Scefing would have been intentionally accessorized with compatible artifacts that were meant to represent the chieftain's wealth, power, and status. The fact that ship burials were almost always reserved for great chieftains further implies that ship burials and their decorative nature were meant to represent a burial hall. A typical ship burial would feature the compartmentalization of interior and exterior artifacts.⁴⁸ To any onlooker, the entire burial would appear to be prepared for sea-departure, complete with oars, anchor, mast, and ropes.

In addition to the practical accompaniments ships have, a ship burial would also include a grave chamber situated in the center of the precipice.⁴⁹ This central grave chamber was to represent the hall of the deceased. In efforts to connect ship burials to a Germanic hall, Frands

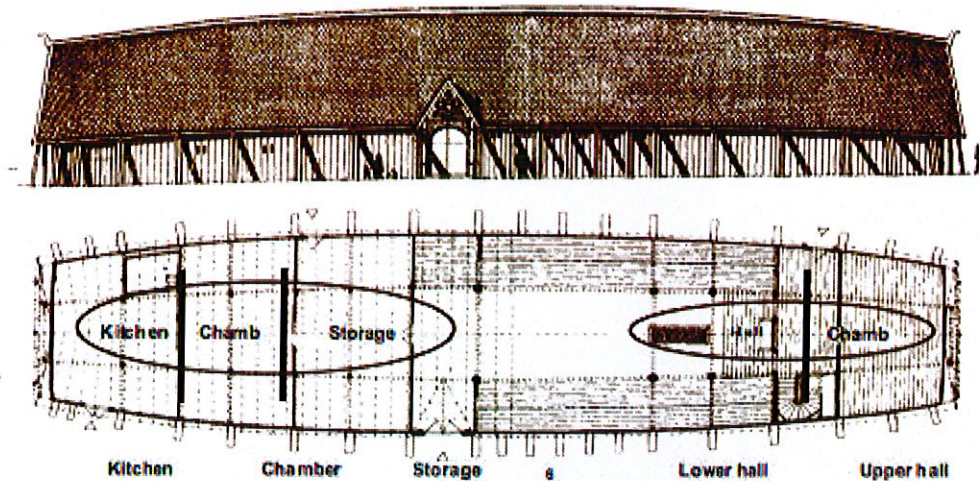


Figure 12 – Herschend's layout comparison between Lejre and a Vendel period Ship burial

Herschend compares a Vendel period ship burial found in Sweden to the Lejre halls of Denmark.

The installation in Valsgärde, Grave 8 represented one end of a hall building consisted of a chamber and the upper part of the hall room. It is tempting to compare this layout to that of the hall, e.g. the one in Lejre. Making the connection Valsgärde-Lejre is no doubt the tentative interpretation, inasmuch as we have little exact knowledge about the room function in large halls.⁵⁰

It is clear that there was a very precise and intelligent design to ship graves in comparison to the standard hall configuration. Though the Oseberg ship burial is an impressive piece of work, the artifacts contained are not relevant to and cannot directly be applied to the *Beowulf* poem.

A more appropriate ship burial comparison to the *Beowulf* epic is that of Sutton Hoo excavated in 1938 in Suffolk, England. It is here that one of the most influential discoveries regarding *Beowulf* was made. The archaeological team of Basil Brown uncovered remains of a 27 meters long, 6th century ship grave that held a plethora of medieval artifacts that have been

dated to the sixth and early seventh centuries C.E. Unfortunately, due to the highly acidic conditions of the soil the *Sutton Hoo* ship was disintegrated, leaving only imprints in the ground. However, the ship's oak planks that once lined this earth-grave have disintegrated leaving only the shape of the ship and divot impressions in the sand and from the imprints it has been concluded that the Sutton Hoo ship is the largest Anglo-Saxon ship grave that has yet been

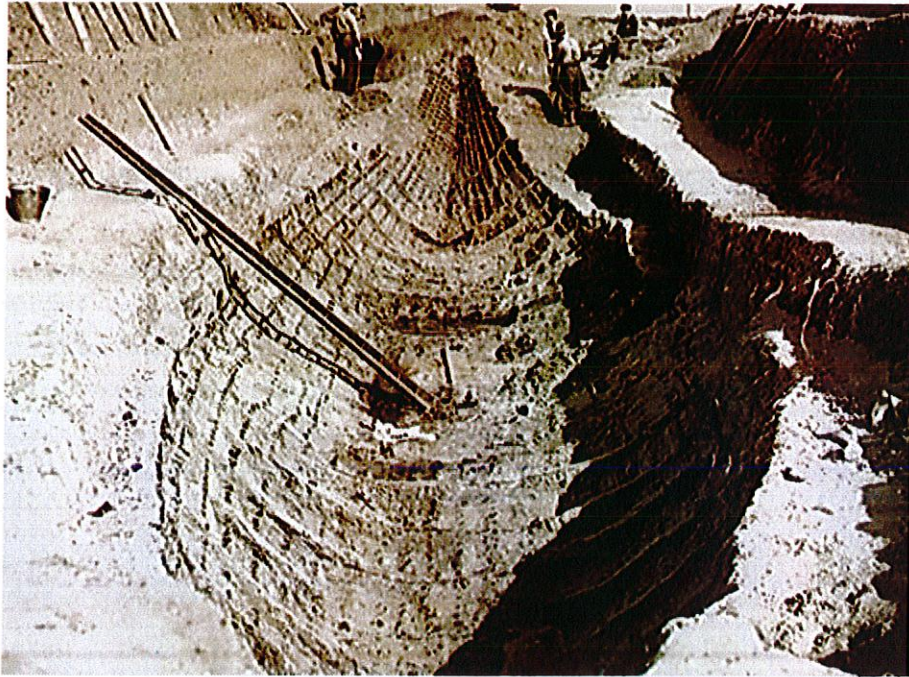


Figure 13 – Sutton Hoo Ship Burial site

unearthed. The ship was built to hold 40 men, possessing 40 oar slots along the sides, and Brown and his team discovered indications that the ship had undergone a series of repairs during its lifetime, which indicates that the ship was not built primarily for burial, but rather existed as a sea-faring ship before it was entombed. From the artifactual evidence, it is clear that the Sutton Hoo Ship burial was meant for a prestigious chieftain, like Scyld. The ornate war-gear and numerous gold artifacts meant for pomp and circumstance are perspicuous indications that the deceased was a man of not only great wealth, but also great power. Creating a burial for chieftains that was suitable and representative of the roles they played in society while alive was

important to the society and culture that existed in medieval Scandinavia during the sixth and seventh centuries. The ship burial as grave hall was a crucial and significant representation of the power of the deceased. Thus, ship burials were often intentionally built and organized to represent an atmosphere that would carry the deceased into the afterlife (see Figure 12). Additionally, they were adorned with artifacts that were meant to represent the prestige of the deceased and with which the graves inhabitants were to possess in their death.

Many artifacts were excavated at the Sutton Hoo ship burial site, some of which hold great significance in relation to the *Beowulf* poem. A prominently recurring artifact within *Beowulf* is the war-helmet – more specifically the image of a boar-ornamented helmet. In the epic, as Beowulf and his men arrive in Daneland, “Eoforlic scionon ofer hleorbe[g]ran gehroden golde, fah ond fyrheard , ferhwearde heold. gubmod gr[i]mmon.” (Boar-figures shone over gold-plated cheek guards, gleaming, fire-hardened; they guarded the lives of the grim battle-minded.)⁵¹ The first time the reader encounters Beowulf it is with this image of a boar-ornamented warrior. Not only does the mere mention of the boar in the description of the war-gear imply the importance of such an image, but the poetic description also implies that the boar images acted as guardians to the warriors. The helmet excavated at the Sutton Hoo ship burial is popularly attributed to the *Beowulf* poem as it features one of the most distinct and intricately carved boar-images. In contrast to the disintegration of the actual Sutton Hoo ship, the artifacts found at the site remarkably withstood the perils of the sandy grave.

The Sutton Hoo helmet is world-renowned. When discovered the helmet was in fragmentary condition, but underwent marvelous replicated using comparative techniques, thus the helmet replication depicts the pertinent late sixth - seventh century Style II interlacing animal ornamentation. Style II of medieval Scandinavian art exemplifies interlacing tendrils leading to a

central or several sporadic zoomorphic gripping-beasts figures. Lotte Hedeagar claims “From the Migration Period to the Viking Age depictions of humans in animal form can be found, primarily attached to the helmets from the rich warrior graves in Vendel, Valsgärde in Uppland and the Sutton Hoo grave from East Anglia... The majority of this anthropomorphic artistic motif took the form of either wolf-human warriors or boar-human warriors.”⁵² Further, Hedeagar asserts the anatomy of the helmet in relation to the images (see Figure 14).

On the crest sit the wild boar and the bird of prey... The animal figures are, however, to a greater extent part of the helmet’s composition. On the Sutton Hoo helmet, for example, the snakes lie like a crest from the neck to the bridge of the nose, whilst the bird protects the face in front, its beak reinforcing the protection of the bridge of the nose. Its wings make up the helmet’s eyebrow arches, and the wing tips rest on the temples, where the most vulnerable part of the face is located. And here we find two wild boar heads.⁵³

The boar is a sacred icon within Germanic mythology. Hedeagar claims, “from the beginning to the end [of animalistic artistry in medieval Scandinavia] the animal styles were an inseparable part of the elite’s material identity.”⁵⁴ In *Beowulf*, the descriptions of the helmet-wear display the standard aristocratic material culture of the Late Migration periods described by Hedeagar. In medieval culture, animalistic art styles were directly related to the world that they were a part, and thus the boar – being intricately woven into medieval society – was a typical animal ornament that is found on many sixth - seventh century artifacts.

Nordic animal ornamentation does not only incorporate animals, it *is* animals – that is, it is entirely a paraphrasing of a many-faceted repertoire of animal motifs: whole and half animals, small animals and large animals, animal fragments and anatomically complete animals, along with animal heads without bodies and animals bodies without heads.⁵⁵

In *Beowulf*, the image of the boar is most frequent when describing the aristocratic material culture - namely the helmets.

When Beowulf arrives in Denmark with his fourteen men, he and his men “set off – their vessel stood still, the roomy ship rested in its riggings, fast at anchor. Boar-figures shone over



Figure 14 – Sutton Hoo Helmet, replica

gold plated cheek-guards, gleaming, fire-hardened.”⁵⁶ This description is very similar to the anatomy and detail of the Sutton Hoo helmet. The descriptions of the armor within the *Beowulf* poem imply the mystical powers the boar image holds as a symbol of great protection. When Hrothgar commissions armor for Beowulf before his return to Geatland, “He ordered to be borne in the boar standard, the helmet towering in battle, the gray byrnie, the decorated sword.”⁵⁷ The

boar standard credits the impenetrable quality of armor to the boar and thus heightens the protective powers of the image.



Figure 15 – Sutton Hoo Helmet, reconstruction

Pan-Germanic archaeological findings, particularly those of armor and war-related artifacts, often carried riddling features meant to symbolize a cultural belief relevant to their medieval worldview. Meaning that the image often carried underlying significance that would have resonated strongly with the poem's original audience. This characteristic allows for the Style II descriptions of the helmet-ware in the poem, with zoomorphic and interlacing detailing, to hold weighted implications to the *Beowulf* audience.

Early Anglo-Saxon metalwork abounds in visual riddles – images which can be read in more than one way. On the head plate of some sixth-century square-headed brooches of

Kentish type, for example, the animals can be read as crouching beasts, or, by rotating the view, as human profiled heads attached to animal bodies; alternatively two of the profiled human heads can together make an animal mask.⁵⁸

In recognition of the incredible artistic abilities for medieval metalworkers, the fact that the images act in multi-faceted ways indicates the greatness of those associated with such an artifact and further, the formidable impact it would have had on the audience. Symbolic zoomorphism is not absent from the Anglo-Saxon Sutton Hoo helmet. Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of the Sutton Hoo helmet is the facemask (see Figure 13). It is equipped with eye-sockets, eyebrows and a nose, which has two small holes cut in it, which would have allowed the wearer to breathe freely. The bronze eyebrows are inlaid with silver wire and garnets and each end in a gilt-bronze boars-head. Here again, the viewer is witness to the image of the boar, which was a great symbol of strength and courage.

Though there is no existing evidence of the *Beowulf* poem's historical accuracy, there is a plethora of contemporary artifacts that resemble the paraphernalia as described by the text. For example;

Beowulf geared up in his warrior's clothing...the broad war-shirt, woven by hand, cunningly made, had to test the mere - it knew well how to protect his bone-house... The shining helmet protected his head, set to stir up the sea depths, seek that troubled water, decorated with treasure, encircled with a splendid band, as a weapon-smith in days of old had crafted it with wonders, set boar images, so that afterwards no blade or battle-sword might ever bite it.⁵⁹

The *Sutton Hoo* helmet, and the other pieces of armor within *Beowulf*, engraved with boar imagery, were said to be impenetrable. In *Beowulf*, this wonder is exemplified by the fact that no hero is struck, or "bit," while wearing boar-ornamented protective coverings. Due to the poem's ambiguous nature, modern historians are left to make assumptions regarding almost all aspects of the poem. One such assumption that has been popularized among *Beowulf* scholars is that the Sutton Hoo helmet best fits the descriptions of helmets in the poem. However, though it is a

prime example to surely compare with the poem's material culture, the descriptions of the aristocratic material art within *Beowulf* do not allow for a specific artifact to be attributed to the poem. Instead, the descriptions indicate that the helmet-ware is best matched with archaeological findings of sixth - seventh century pan-Germanic artifacts.



Figure 16 – Benty Grange Helmet

Another Anglo Saxon helmet-comparison to the descriptive language in *Beowulf* is the Benty Grange helmet (see Figure 16), discovered in 1848 by Thomas Bateman, an English archaeologist, antiquary, and barrow-digger. The Benty Grange helmet is the most *obviously* boar-decorated Anglo Saxon helmet found to this day. The helmet was uncovered on the Benty Grange farm in the southern region of the Monyash parish in England and is dated to approximately 650 C.E., during the heart of the English

Anglo Saxon period. The barrow is of shallow elevation and the center held a single – lavishly decorated – body.⁶⁰ According to Thomas Bateman's research journal,⁶¹ "proceeding westward from the head for about six feet, we arrived at a large mass of oxidized iron, which, being removed with the utmost care, and having been since repaired, were unavoidably broken, now

presents a mass of chain work, and the frame of a helmet.”⁶² Bateman’s discovery featured an iron band that would have been wrapped around the deceased skull and protruded upward to the cusp of the helmet. According to Bateman’s research journal, the impressions left on the iron band indicate that the helmet had a layer of horn inlayed diagonally so as to display a herringbone pattern. These horn plates were secured to the iron with silver ornamental rivets. The front of the helmet features an extension of one of the core ribs of iron, which would have been included for nasal protection. This “T” shape on medieval helmets was standard during the Anglo-Saxon period. On the nasal plate was inlayed a silver cross that was embellished with beading.



Figure 17 – Benty Grange Boar

The inclusion of the cross on the helmet is most likely indicative of Christian influence that infiltrated the aristocratic material culture during the seventh century. However, the helmet

also features very clear pagan qualities. The most fascinating feature of the Benty Grange helmet is the crown (see Figure 17). “On the crown of the helmet is an elliptical bronze plate supporting the figure of an animal carved in iron, with bronze eyes, now much corroded, but perfectly distinct as there presentation of a hog.”⁶³ In addition to the perceived protective qualities of the boar stated above that existed in medieval Scandinavia during the sixth and seventh centuries, it was also considered sacred by the Norse fertility Goddess, Freyja. Saxon settlement of what is now England began at the decline of the Roman Empire in the fifth century, when paganism was rich in the Saxon communities. In the famed *Prose Edda*, Icelander Snorri Sturluson explains Norse Mythology during the Medieval Period. He explains that Freyja lives in *Sessrumnir* (land of many seats) in *Folkvangar* (the warriors’ fields); she was a Valkyrie of sorts, having the first choice of the dead after a battle. Valkyrie is an adaptation of the Old Norse “valkyrja” which translates to “chooser of the slain.” Valkyries are who, during battle, would select which of the warriors would live and which would die mythological female character. The legend claims that after a battle and in preparation of Ragnarok, Freyja would claim half the dead and Odin would get the other half.⁶⁴ In some myths Freyja possesses a pig-companion named Hildisvini, *battle-boar*, who would accompany her into battle. The sacredness of the Hildisvini to Freyja matched with the perceived protective powers of the boar would surely infiltrate the weapon art of Medieval Scandinavia and England during the Late Migration and Anglo Saxon periods, as paganism was the dominant religion of the region during the sixth and seventh centuries. The boar figurine on the Benty Grange helmet would have been an obvious and symbolic symbol for any onlooker – not only in its striking construction, but also in its well-known protective endowment. The helmet uncovered at Benty Grange would have been worn by a prestigious warrior, perceived to carry significant power – much like Beowulf. The iron-boar that rests atop

the crown is composed of an iron body with gold inlays and garnet eyes. The inclusion of such an intense and deliberate image would have been a high honor during the time of its approximate creation in the seventh century.

Apart from the boar-figure on the Benty Grange helmet, another compelling aspect of the piece is the inclusion of the silver cross on the nasal extension. In 597 St. Augustine was sent by Pope Gregory the Great to convert King Æthelberht and his Kingdom of Kent to Christianity. Though this was not the first time England had been exposed to Roman Christianity, it would be centuries until the new religion took root in society. During the Benty Grange helmet's construction circa 650 C.E., its makers would have existed in a time of great religious influx, hence the inclusion of both pagan and Christian elements on the famous Anglo Saxon artifact.

Similarly, the *Beowulf* poem was subject to the interplay between paganism and Christianity and this is evidenced throughout the poem. The literary work possesses extensive pagan imagery and themes that pre-date Christian influences in medieval Scandinavia, but it also



carries many Christian motifs. Though this is the case throughout the *Beowulf* poem, the reader is never given explicit descriptions or implications of Christian imagery on the weapon art. Instead the text reveals descriptions of the war gear featuring “boar-ornamented” characterization. The fact that the Benty Grange helmet straddles the worlds of paganism and Christianity in its construction implies its compatibility with the *Beowulf* poem as the poem too straddles these two worlds. However, because the reader is offered numerous descriptions of boar-ornamented artifacts it is more appropriately matched

Figure 18 – Benty Grange Cross

with the Late Migration period, when paganism was rich in Northern Europe. Due to their obvious boar-imagery, the Benty Grange and Sutton Hoo helmets serve as prime Anglo Saxon archaeological findings that are congruent with the descriptions of the helmets in *Beowulf*. The *Beowulf* poem is a literary work that represents a pan-Germanic medieval Scandinavian worldview. It should be noted that the Anglo-Saxon helmets are equally congruent if not more congruent with the material culture of *Beowulf* as Scandinavian examples.

Satisfying the pan-Germanic nature of the *Beowulf* poem, several Scandinavian comparisons between the war-gear featured in *Beowulf* and archaeological helmet findings are those of the Swedish Vendel Period. These comparisons are appropriate to the *Beowulf* poem, not only for their ornate construction, but also for the fact that Beowulf was a Geat, a modern day Swede. Excavations at the Late Iron Age Vendel site in Sweden featured seven ornately embellished boat burials that have been dated to circa 550 C.E. – 800 C.E. The boat burials were so ostentatious that the period intervening the Migration and Viking Periods became known as the Vendel Period. At Valsgärde, another Swedish site of elaborate excavation, the first boat burial is dated to the early seventh century and was followed by 14 subsequent burials, five of which are absorbed by the Vendel Period, the other 10 extend into the Viking Age. “True equipment of the boats mainly consist of helmets, swords, shields, spears, buckles, saddles, drinking cups/glasses, cauldrons/kettles of iron, cauldron chains, pokers, scissors, axes, combs, dice and gaming pieces, drinking horns, currency bars, armour pieces, spits, pliers, hangers, frost nails, halters, animal leashes, hooks and textiles.”⁶⁵

However, the most fascinating of the artifacts that were dated to the Vendel period of Swedish history, are the helmets, which are all very similar in construction and ornamentation. During this period in Scandinavia, paganism and the Germanic-lifestyle were very prevalent to

society and this fact infiltrated all elements of culture – most prevalently in the decoration of the ceremonial war-gear. Ceremonial war-gear consists of elaborately embellished armory that was meant for pomp and circumstance more than actual battle. This type of gear was most frequently the product of gift-giving. In *Beowulf*, King Hrothgar and Wealtheow “ordered to be borne in the boar standard, the helmet towering in battle, the gray byrnie, the decorated sword”⁶⁶ in gratitude

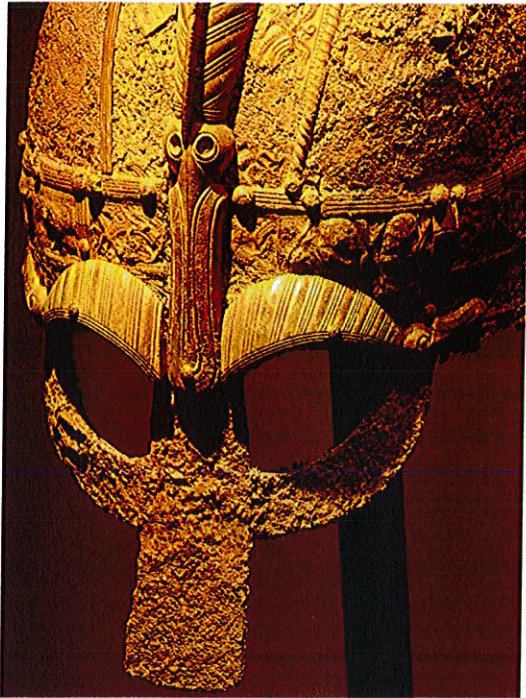


Figure 18 – Vendel Grave XIII Helmet

for Beowulf’s heroic deeds in conquering Grendel and purifying the Danish Kingdom of evil. Beowulf then gifted this ceremonial art-gear to *his* king, Hygelac. This was a standard practice in medieval culture as loyalty and dedication to one’s king was the highest form of heroism and honor.

The Vendel and Valsgärde archaeological sites are situated in the parish of Gamla Uppland, Sweden or Old Uppsala. The earlier sites – the Vendel sites –

are a series of seven ship burials in total. Of the seven, five (sites X, XIV, XI, XII, and I) included a helmet. The other two (sites VII and III) showed evidence of being looted⁶⁷ and thus may have contained a helmet at one point, but archaeologists are unsure. The burials at Vendel and Valsgärde are the largest ship graveyards of medieval Scandinavia, and as evidenced by the wealth of aristocratic material culture found therein, the sites held numerous kings and chieftains. On the image above (Figure 19), notice the customary “T” shape to the facemask that is embellished with a dragon-like figure protruding down the nose from the crown. Most of the excavated Vendel and Valsgärde helmets feature elongated golden bodies that extend down from the top of the nose out over the eyebrows and end in a

zoomorphic boar's head over the temple.



Figure 20 – Vendel Grave XIV Helmet



Figure 21 – Vendel Grave XIV Helmet, replica

The boar head resting over the temple, as imaged on the Sutton Hoo, Vendel, and Valsgärde helmets was standard of the sixth and seventh centuries. A difference between the Vendel and Valsärde helmets and the one found at Sutton Hoo is that the latter helmet possesses a bird-like figure that reaches up over the nose into the forehead region whereas on the Vendel and Valsgärde helmets the figure lengthens down the forehead with the face resting on the root of the nose and has an additional piece that extends down into another dragon-like figure that covers the entire nose and part of the mouth. “When worn, the animal/bird covering the human nose can be interpreted as receiving enough air ‘to come alive’ through the constant inhalation and exhalation of air of the mask wearer.”⁶⁸ This belief would allow the mask-wearer to literally

breathe onto the face of the creature (see Figure 20), installing life into the symbol, igniting the protective qualities of the image, and creating a marriage between the beast and the warrior. Further, because the helmets in *Beowulf* were most often constructed in the boar-standard, and because the boar symbols were said to withstand the “bite” of any weapon, and *further* because the images ere attributed transcendental prescriptions, the sixth and seventh century helmets found at Sutton Hoo, Benty Grange, Vendel, and Valsgärde, are congruent comparisons to those that would have appeared as *Beowulf*’s aristocratic war-gear. Like the Sutton Hoo Helmet, the Vendel and Valsgärde period helmets possess an ornately plated cap of iron depicting figural scenes with facial mask and eyebrow components that portray boar and dragon/bird like imagery.⁶⁹ Though the images below (see Figures 22 & 23) differ in basic style,

similar bird-like horned tips that sit atop the figures head.

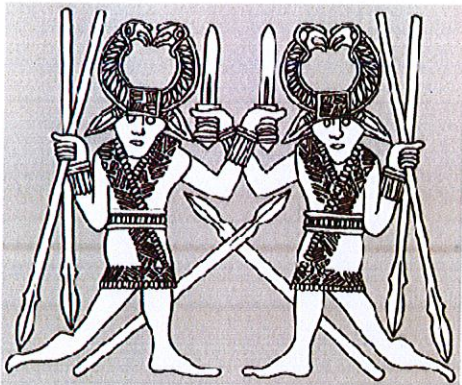


Figure 22 - Sutton Hoo Helmet Plate drawing



Figure 23 – Vendel Grave XIV Helmet plate drawing

Figure 22 is a reconstructed drawing from the Sutton Hoo Helmet, where Figure 23 is the reconstructed inlay of the figural images of the Vendel Grave XIV helmet (also see Figure 21). Helmets that were bedecked with animal ornamentation are a defining feature of the Late Migration age. Scholars speculate on the imagery that embellished helmet-hoods during this time, and many believe that the images were meant to represent Odin’s army of berserkers who often decorated themselves with the pelts of wolves, bears, or boars before going into battle.

In *Beowulf*, as mentioned, helmets were often

adorned with animalistic images as seen in the Anglo Saxon Benty Grange and Sutton Hoo helmets, as well as those excavated from the Swedish Vendel and Valsgärde sites. The *Beowulf* author supplies the reader with descriptions of the “boar-images [that] shone over gold-plated cheek-guards, gleaming, fire hardened”⁷⁰ but does not offer any commentary on the plates that may have been included on the helmet hood and what they depicted. However, because of the commonness of the images depicted on the plates of the Vendel and Viking age helmets, it is not unlikely that these images would have also been represented on the boar-ornamented helmets of *Beowulf*.

Further, because the frequency of decorated helmet-plates that existed throughout Northern Europe during the sixth and seventh centuries, and which were commonly believed to invoke a great warrior passion, a reader might question why such a description is not included in the *Beowulf* text. Regardless, the Vendel and Valsgärde helmets are significant discoveries in the world of *Beowulf* scholarship as they portray the standard zoomorphic imagery and boar-like symbols of the era in which they were constructed – the sixth or seventh century. Thus, the *Beowulf* poem is further grounded in that time period. Due to the lack of helmet-plate description in the text itself and because these masterly carved hoods and symbols were thought to invoke a berserk fashion in its wearer that is absent from the text, perhaps a more simple, yet still incredibly made helmet, like the Benty Grange helmet, is better matched with the *Beowulf* poem. However, the works text does not provide enough descriptive detail to confidently suggest one helmet over the other – instead it should be noted that any Northern European helmet dated to the sixth and seventh centuries is comparable to the *Beowulf* text.



Figure 24 – Coppergate Helmet, reconstruction

Further evidence grounding the descriptions of the aristocratic war-gear within *Beowulf* to the era of Late Migration is a comparison to helmets constructed in later centuries such as the Viking and Saxon periods of Northern European history. The eighth century York Coppergate helmet is a fine example of a Later Saxon helmet that holds lingering sixth to seventh century elements – like that of the boar-image – but does not wholly suit the *Beowulf* text (see Figure 24). The helmet was made from riveted iron sheets held together with brass strips engraved with interlacing animalistic styles.

Though the interlacing tendrils somewhat resemble the artistic styles of the preceding Late Migration period, the Coppergate helmet better represents the transition from the Style II of artistic expression to the Trewhiddle style that became popularized in the ninth century, but began in the eighth century of the Common Era.

The Trewhiddle style is a mid-ninth century Anglo Saxon art form that features imagery of both large and small beasts with intertwined tendril bodies. Later Anglo Saxon helmets also appear to hold Irish imagery that is absent from their earlier counterparts. This can be seen through the Gaelic shaped tendrils that extend down the nose cover. The tendrils are reminiscent of the Celtic Triquetra. The Triquetra was frequently used as an image of Germanic Paganism, but was later adopted to represent the Christian Trinity. Further, the brass strips that run from ear

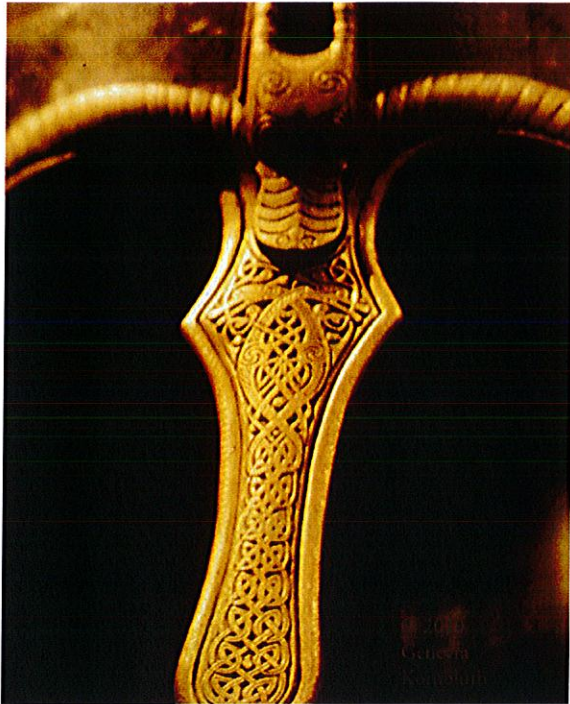


Figure 25– Coppergate Helmet nose covering, reconstruction

European styles of artistic expression, in regards to material culture, as it also resembles some of the earlier Migration period styles of helmet construction. The audience can see the dragon-like figure at the root of the nose whose body reaches up over the top of the helmet. However, this is the only component that is reminiscent of the earlier helmet construction. The elaborate board-ornamentation that we see extensively on the Late Migration Period helmets are absent from the Coppergate helmet, which makes the helmets of the Anglo-Saxon and Vendel period – sixth and seventh centuries – more compatible with the *Beowulf* text.

There is a general trend among helmets of the later medieval period, the ninth – eleventh centuries. From the artifactual evidence, it is clear that after the sixth and seventh centuries, helmet construction went through significant changes. Further, after the adoption of Christianity in Northern Europe and Nordica, the number of helmets being created appears to have declined significantly.

to ear around the back of the helmet read in Latin
 “IN NOMINE : DNI : NOSTRI : IHV : SCS :
 SPS : DI : ET : OMNIBVS : DECEMVS :
 AMEN: OSHERE : XPI - In the name of our Lord
 Jesus Christ and of the Spirit of God, let us offer
 up Oshere to All Saints. Amen.”⁷¹ Oshere is
 identified as the owner of the helmet. This clear
 Christian reference enhances the shaping of the
 tendrils in the Trewiddle style by placing them in
 a Christian context. Further, the helmet
 demonstrates the transition between Northern

The Coppergate helmet acts as a bridge from an era of numerous helmet constructions and an era of very little helmet constructions. Contrary to popular belief there is only one



Figure 26 – Gjermundbu Helmet, partial reconstruction

archaeologically found Viking helmet. The Gjermundbu helmet is a tenth century helmet discovered in 1943 at Gjermundbu, Norway. As Figure 26 displays, the Gjermundbu helmet represents a complete shift from the earlier stylized helmets of the sixth and seventh centuries. The helmet, dated to 970, features a crossed crown cover attached to the band of iron that would have reached around the warrior's head.

Protective iron plates were riveted onto this skeleton frame. The helmet was discovered in a Viking burial rich in weapons dated to the later tenth century and is now housed in the Museum of Cultural History in Oslo. The Gjermundbu helmet (see Figure 26) does not possess any boar imagery that is so central to the descriptions of the aristocratic war-gear in *Beowulf*. Further, the customary "T" shape to the facemask that was prevalent to the sixth and seventh helmets of Northern Europe. Instead the Gjermundbu helmet features a full iron cap, free of ornamentation and a heart-shaped facemask with cut-outs for vision. As mentioned, this helmet is a rare find dated to the Viking period, the late eighth – mid eleventh centuries. Due to the lack of boar ornamentation, the helmets within *Beowulf*, as described by the text, are best suited to match those of the sixth and seventh centuries

Beowulf is a wonder of the medieval world. Due to its unknown author and ambiguous dating, modern historians are left to extract the poems context from the text. From the poet's use

of descriptive language in relation to the helmet-ware and the great hall, archaeologists are able to extract compatible artifacts best suited to match the poem, and are thus able to ground the poem in the appropriate century. A thorough and rich analysis of the *Beowulf* text leaves the reader with an understanding of the material culture that is most harmonious with the Late Germanic Iron Age of Scandinavia, the Anglo Saxon period of England, and the Vendel period of Sweden; congruent with the era of Migration in Northern Europe.

Heorot, the setting for the majority of the poem, is a site of rich cultural history and is described as “the timbered hall, splendid and gold-adorned – the most famous building among men under the heavens – where the high king waited; its light shone over many lands”⁷², as well as “high and horn-gabled”⁷³ and “...men’s golden house, finely adorned...[with a] steep roof plated with gold.”⁷⁴ The ornate descriptions of Heorot indicate the hall’s prestige and renowned reputation. Heorot would not have been an ordinary hall. Most scholars agree that the most appropriate archaeological comparison to Heorot are the great halls that was discovered in Lejre, Denmark in the twentieth century. The halls at Lejre and Heorot in *Beowulf* share a plethora of similarities; from the obvious relationship between the historically founded Skjöldung dynasty and the Scylding dynasty within *Beowulf*, to the tragic fate of Heorot as described in the poem and the matching fate of the earlier Lejre Hall. However, Heorot shares similarities with several Germanic Iron Age halls, and thus cannot be confidently placed in one locale. Thus, it is necessary and important to compare other Iron Age and Migration Period halls, such as the halls of Yeavinger, Gudme, Tissø, and Börg, to the descriptive language surround Heorot in the *Beowulf* poem. The descriptive language used in the legend compliments the history the poem possesses and thus only allows historians to speculate the poem’s proper time period placement.

A thorough analysis of the the *Beowulf* poets descriptive language regarding the great hall, reveals that the poem is most likely set within sixth or seventh century Northern Europe.

Further, the descriptive language surrounding the helmet-ware within the poem perpetuates the dating of the legend to the sixth and seventh centuries. The helmets within the epic, specifically those attributed to Beowulf, are described as being made in the “boar-standard”⁷⁵ and with “boar-figures [that] shone over gold-plated cheek guards, gleaming, fire-hardened; they guarded the lives of the grim battle-minded.”⁷⁶ Here, the boar image is attributed mystical powers that were thought to protect and illuminate the life of the warrior who wore such ornamented gear. Scholars and enthusiasts alike typically attribute the infamous Sutton Hoo helmet to the *Beowulf* text as it’s detailing is congruent with the time period in which the epic is set and compatible with the helmet descriptions. However, though the Sutton Hoo helmet and associated boar-imagery can be attributed to the poem, it would be inappropriate to choose a single artifact to best represent the poet’s words. Instead, by comparing other sixth and seventh century helmet findings, scholars are able to ground the poem within a time frame. The *Beowulf* poem, with it’s vast history, can be rooted within many time periods, but the aristocratic material culture is best ledged within the sixth and seventh centuries of Northern European history. This means that *Beowulf* poet’s descriptive language surrounding Heorot and the helmet-ware was meant to represent the era of Late Migration in medieval Scandinavia.

The *Beowulf* poem is a 3,182 line poem that holds descriptions of many artifacts that could be researched and explored in this papers expansion. Expanding the research within this thesis will in turn help found the poem in a more specific date. The next steps of this research will be to look at the sword culture within the text and find archeologically uncovered swords that may match the descriptions within *Beowulf* – most notably that of the ring-sword, another

gift that was awarded to Beowulf in the poem was a sword. "That hilted sword was named Hrunting, unique among ancient treasures - its edge was iron, etched with poison strips, hardened with the blood of war."⁷⁷ The sword culture within the text is one much similar to the helmet-ware. Medieval swords were a symbol of great power and to have one that was ornately decorated as the descriptions suggest signified the greatness of its owner. Other avenues of research for the extension of this thesis include looking closely at various war-gear, sword hilts, artifacts of gift-giving, funeral pyres, et cetera. Further, looking at the descriptions within the poem that refer indirectly to medieval motifs is another approach to expanding the research of this paper. Many aspects of medieval Scandinavian culture are revealed within the *Beowulf* poem, including religious conflict, kingship, kinship, mythological and supernatural attributions, and so on. The *Beowulf* text holds many medieval themes that allow modern historians to deduct components of the cultures and societies that then existed. In conclusion, through a successful and comprehensive investigation of the *Beowulf* poem, it becomes clear that the descriptive language surrounding the aristocratic material culture in *Beowulf* is best matched with archaeological discoveries dated to the sixth and seventh centuries of the medieval period.

Notes

¹ Luizza, *Beowulf: Second Edition* (Peterborough: Broadview Editions, 2013), 55..

² Luizza, 19.

³ Luizza, 16.

⁴ Luizza, 55. A “whale-ridings” is a medieval kenning (metaphor) meaning ocean.

⁵ Luizza, 59

⁶ Luizza, 59

⁷ Luizza, 59

⁸ Luizza, 71.

⁹ Luizza, 141.

¹⁰ Luizza, 133.

¹¹ Luizza, 131.

¹² Luizza, 115-123.

¹³ Lotte Hedeager, *Iron Age Myth and Materiality: An Archaeology of Scandinavia AD 400-1000* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 148.

¹⁴ Hedeager, 148

¹⁵ Hedeager, 150.

¹⁶ Luizza, 59

¹⁷ John D. Niles, *Beowulf and Lejre* (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2007), 41-62.

¹⁸ Niles, 1.

¹⁹ Luizza, 59.

²⁰ Niles, 49.

²¹ Luizza, 261.

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- ²² Jesse Byock, *The Saga of Hrolf Kraki*, trans. Jesse Byock (London: Penguin, 1998) ,xviii.
- ²³ Byock, xvii
- ²⁴ Luizza, 75.
- ²⁵ Niles, 173.
- ²⁶ Niles, 176.
- ²⁷ Luizza, 65.
- ²⁸ Luizza, 73.
- ²⁹ Luizza, 59.
- ³⁰ Luizza, 70.
- ³¹ As cited by Niles, 103.
- ³² Niles, 103.
- ³³ Luizza, 78.
- ³⁴ Luizza, 116.
- ³⁵ Luizza, 146, 285.
- ³⁶ Luizza, 70.
- ³⁷ Eric Rögnvaldssvni, *Lándámabok*, web form December 1998, <<http://www.snerpa.is/net/snorri/landnama.htm>> chapter 97.
- ³⁸ Gerd Stamsø Munch, *Borg at Lofoten: A Cheiftan's Farm in Norway* (Lofotr: Tapir Academic Press, 2003), 101-105.
- ³⁹ Munch, 103.
- ⁴⁰ Roger Miket and Sarah Semple, *Yeaving: Rediscovering the Landscape of the Northumbrian Kings*, 1.
- ⁴¹ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People: Book II*, chapter 14.
- ⁴² Roger Miket and Sarah Semple, *Yeaving: Rediscovering the Landscape of the Northumbrian Kings*, ed. Christopher Burgess, (England: Northumberland County Council, 2009), 1.

⁴³ Miket and Semple, 7.

⁴⁴ Luizza, 73

⁴⁵ Jonathan Adams, "Ships and Boats as Archaeological Source Material," *World Archaeology* 32: No. 3 (2001): 4.

⁴⁶ Luizza, 55-57.

⁴⁷ Luizza, 57

⁴⁸ Frands Herschend, "Ship grave hall passage – the Oseberg monument as compound meaning" *11th International Saga Conference* (2009): 143.

⁴⁹ Herschend, 143.

⁵⁰ Herschend, 143

⁵¹ Luizza, 73.

⁵² Hedeager, 75.

⁵³ Hedeager, 77.

⁵⁴ Hedeager, 61.

⁵⁵ Hedeager, 67.

⁵⁶ Luizza, 58.

⁵⁷ Luizza, 113.

⁵⁸ Webster, *Anglo-Saxon Art*, 34.

⁵⁹ Luizza, 114.

⁶⁰ Thomas Bateman, *Ten Years' Diggings in Celtic and Saxon Grave Hills, in the Counties of Derby, Stafford, and York, from 1848-1858, With Notices of Some Former Discoveries, Hitherto Unpublished, and Remarks on the Crania and Pottery from the Mound* (London: Irongate, 1861), 28.

⁶¹ Bateman, 30.

⁶² Bateman, 30.

⁶³ Bateman, 31.

⁶⁴ Snorri Sturluson, *The Prose Edda*, trans. Jesse Byock (New York: Penguin Classics, 2005), 35.

⁶⁵ Danielsson, *Sense and Sensibility: Masking Practices in Late Iron Age Boat Graves*, 122.

⁶⁶ Luizza, 113.

⁶⁷ Danielsson, 123.

⁶⁸ Danielsson, 124.

⁶⁹ Danielsson, 123.

⁷⁰ Luizza, 73

⁷¹ "Coppergate Helmet," *World Heritage Encyclopedia, World Public Library Association*, 2002, < http://self.gutenberg.org/articles/coppergate_helmet>

⁷² Luizza, 73.

⁷³ Luizza, 59.

⁷⁴ Luizza, 70.

⁷⁵ Luizza, 113.

⁷⁶ Luizza, 73.

⁷⁷ Luizza, 93.

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Figures

Figure 1: <http://www.viking.ucla.edu/hrolf/hallarc.html>

Figure 2: http://natmus.dk/fileadmin/_migrated/pics/lejrehallen1_stor.jpg

Figure 3: <http://benedante.blogspot.com/2014/09/viking-buildings-reconstructed.html>

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Figure 5: <http://vikingekult.natmus.dk/en/viking-cult/the-key-sites-of-the-project/tisoe/>

Figure 6: Munch, Gerd Stamso. *Borg at Lofoten: A Cheiftan's Farm in Norway*. Lofotr, Tapir Academic Press., 2003.

Figure 7: http://openarchaeology.info/files/styles/main-image_manuals-articles/public/26-lofotr-viking-museum.jpg?itok=Z2ZBsscT

Figure 8: http://www.pastperfect.org.uk/sites/yeavinger/archive/hi/bht_fig12.jpg

Figure 9: <http://www.pastperfect.org.uk/sites/yeavinger/images/royalcentre.html>

Figure 10: <http://www.medievalists.net/2013/09/30/viking-age-queens-the-example-of-oseberg/>

Figure 11: http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-F8OvMvoKmvo/UU8l_YoLERI/AAAAAAAAABXc/viMBaZX2TVM/s400/img_5308aw.jpg

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Figure 13:

http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/articles/k/the_sutton_hoo_ship.aspx

Figure 14:

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Figure 15: <http://poppy.nsms.ox.ac.uk/woruldhord/attachments/2580/722.2580.original.jpg>

Figure 16: <http://collections.museums-sheffield.org.uk/view/objects/asitem/search@/0?t:state:flow=1bb8950a-f270-484a-ad5a-524380120164>

Figure 17: <http://collections.museums-sheffield.org.uk/view/objects/asitem/search@/0?t:state:flow=b7853f92-898d-415a-81b1-8e3de19caf8e>

Figure 18: <http://collections.museums-sheffield.org.uk/view/objects/asitem/search@/0?t:state:flow=1bb8950a-f270-484a-ad5a-524380120164>

Figure 19: http://www.thorkil.pl/platnerstwo/helmy/wczesne/VendelXIII_front1.jpg

Figure 20: http://www.thorkil.pl/platnerstwo/helmy/wczesne/Vendel14_2.jpg

Figure 21: <http://www.thorkil.pl/platnerstwo/helmy/wczesne/43c.jpg>

Figure 22: <http://www.vikingrune.com/2009/10/odin-as-weapon-dancer/>

Figure 23: <http://fornrit.net/Web-Lang/French/OE/htmls/Beasts.htm>

Figure 24: <http://www.vikingrune.com/2010/07/coppergate-helmet/>

Figure 25: <http://www.kornbluthphoto.com/images/helmetNose.jpg>

Figure 26: http://www.europa.org.au/images/helmet_making/gjermundbu_helm.jpg