# La Cetra Cornuta : the horned lyre of the Christian World

Young, R.C.

# *DE INVENTIONE*

# CHAPTER 1 - Inventing a Christian Cithara

## 1.1 Defining a Vast Period of Study

The main period under consideration for this study is c. 1100 to c. 1530, for this is the period where representations of a plucked chordophone with consistent salient features may be found exclusively in Italy. An early specific 'cornerstone' for this time span is the relief sculpture of Benedetto Antelami (Parma, c.1200; see Chapter 3, **Catalog Entry 5**, **Catalog Entry** henceforth abbreviated in this study as "**CE**"), whereas Gaudenzio Ferrari's painted ceiling (Saronno, 1535; **CE 51**) offers a well-detailed monument at the end of the chronological field of data.[1] Literary sources contemporary with much of our chronological period confirm that this instrument was called *cetra* or *cetera,* in its day, in vernacular Italian.[2]

The first cornerstone, the Antelami sculpture (**Pl. 1**), is veritably a monumental one. With an impressive degree of realism in its three-dimensional form, it manifests the fundamental, salient features which define the later cetra going all the way into the 16th-century. A spade-shaped body (with articulated shoulders), fixed frets (in contrast, for example, with tied-on gut frets of the lute), shortish neck, oval peg head with frontal pegs, and strings attached to the bottom of the body (as opposed to, for example, attachments at the bridge as on the lute), are all found on the instrument of Antelami. It is important to note that this is not the earliest source with an instrument showing these features, but this is a monument which is, by all accounts, definitive; the morphological similarity with later sources is clear and concrete.

---

[1] There is, sadly, no existing musical instrument today which can be examined which is directly relevant to my study. My work mainly confines itself to analyzing existing images, restored and unrestored, within the (to some extent overlapping) study areas of Christian iconography, music iconography and organology; music iconography might be defined as the study of ideas related to music as expressed in images found in the visual arts, and much of historical Western music iconography in the Middle Ages and Renaissance hovers under the giant umbrella of Christian iconography. See also the excellent articles by McKinnon 1977 and Seebass 1997. An approach to music iconography which has an important place in modern study, yet, to me, leans more towards an organological orientation and less towards one of cultural context and the history of ideas, is the work of Howard Mayer Brown in Brown 1980.

[2] See comments in Chapter 4 and Appendix II.

Additionally, this image has been well-known to modern students of historical organology, at least since its publication by art historian Emanuel Winternitz.[3]

Plate 1: Parma, Baptistry, inner west portal: Benedetto Antelami, David with musicians and dancers, c. 1200 (detail of musician).[4]

Our period ends with the establishment of the cetra in 16th-century Italy with consistent specific features, that is, as a six-course instrument with metal frets on a longer neck than pre-16th-century instruments (more precisely, a neck whose general length, inclusive of peg-head, matches, or is greater than, the length of the body), as shown in **Pl. 2**:

---

[3] Winternitz 1961, Pl. 37d.

[4] Photo: author; throughout this work, any photos with no credit listed are my own.

Plate 2: 16th-c. Italian-style cittern by Peter Forrester, Norfolk, 1991.

As a specific marker to delineate the end of this study's time-span, we have chosen the latest example known to us of an instrument with unequivocal wooden block frets, even if we cannot be sure about the neck-length-to-body proportion (**Pl. 3**):

Plate 3: Saronno, Santa Maria dei Miracoli, dome of Santuario:
Gaudenzio Ferrari, angel musician, 1535 - 36.[5]

[5] Photo: Ferrari 1990, Pl. 13.

There will be much discussion in this chapter concerning shapes and forms of stringed instruments (in organological terminology: chordophones) which consist of a hollow body (to amplify the sound) joined to a neck against which strings are pressed to produce multiple pitches from a given string (in organological terminology: lutes, whether plucked or bowed).[6] The most basic body-shapes are oval and half-oval (spade), with a multitude of sub-types within these; **Pl. 3** above would be an oval variation. By definition, a spade body will have clearly angled, pointed or otherwise ornamented upper bouts (or shoulders, looking from the front at a vertically-positioned image of the body). An ovoid body does not. Spade bodies may be short, i.e., half-egg shaped, or they may be somewhat elongated (**Pl. 1**) or extremely elongated (**Pl. 53-59**); some have straight sides, others show incurved sides ranging from a slight, gentle incurvature to a dramatic, deep one.

A second salient feature to keep our eye on will be the neck of the instrument, in terms of length relative to body length. It will be sufficient for this study to think in two basic types, long-necked and short-necked. Long-necked means that the length of the entire neck equals or is greater than the length of the body; a length less than that of the body is short-necked.[7]

The data field of nearly half a millennium, c. 1100 - c. 1530, will be divided into three distinct periods. An even more vast expanse of time preceding these centuries will first be examined in an effort to explain what may have led up to the Romanesque cetra, bringing the total number of chronological sub-chapters to be looked at to four:

1. PRE-ROMANESQUE (up to 12th c.)
2. ROMANESQUE (12th-13th c.)
3. FRANCISCAN (13th-14th c.)
4. HUMANIST (15th-16th c.)

Our organological exploration of the millennium preceding Benedetto Antelami will be like a dive, down into the depths of the ocean...the further down one goes, the less visible things

---

[6] See Sachs 1940, 463 - 465.

[7] Both designations are understood to be subject to artistic license, that is, in any depiction of any object from any period, the artist may, for example, have exaggerated some feature or proportion which the actual depicted object did not possess. Thus, in some cases, what appears to be a "long-necked lute" might actually have been an instrument with a neck shorter than its body length.

become. We cannot rely solely on what we think the eye tells us, and we will need to refer to a kind of map or guidebook. This is made up of writings about musical instruments, found as a favorite theme of the early Christian authors who bring those instruments into the consciousness of the faithful. These early Christian writings are in Greek and Latin, and their background and context is the culture of the late Roman Empire. The musical practices of Rome represented, in overview, a kind of Great Inheritance from Classical Greece (hence the modern term "Greco-Roman"), yet the many different cultures of the Empire, both geographically and chronologically, each produced a unique synthesis of different influences and elements.

## 1.2 Greco-Roman Heritage: Kithara / Lyre / Psalterion

The three most important musical artifacts for the early Christian authors were Roman instruments with a Classical Greek history; they are given here in their Latin, Greek and (modern) English spellings: *cithara* (Lat.), *κιθάρα* (Gr.), kithara (Engl. spelling for Greek instrument), cithara (Engl. spelling for late Roman or post-Roman instrument); *lyra* / *lira* (Lat.), *λύρα* (Gr.), lyre (Eng); *psalterium* (Lat.), *ψαλτήριον* (Gr.), psalterion (Eng).[8] A fourth Roman instrument, hardly present in ancient Greek and Patristic texts, but of consequence for the development of necked chordophones in Latin Christianity, is: *pandura* (Lat.); *πανδουρα* (Gr.); pandura (Eng.). Further terms relating to stringed instruments may be encountered in Greek and Latin sources, but are not the focus of this introductory chapter.[9] See **Glossary** for further information about the use of these terms in this dissertation.

---

[8] I use "psalterion" as an English term, rather than "psaltery", because the latter is heavily laden with associations from medieval art, which has to do with a different instrument type which did not exist in Greece or Rome.

[9] For the most useful in-depth study on the stringed instruments of the Roman Empire, including terminology, Greek heritage, literary sources, iconographical sources, archeological artifacts, etc., see Vendries 1999. A useful comparative chart of instrument names is found on p. 190, "Tableau I: les noms des instruments à cordes."

Studies of ancient Greece and its music cultures tell us about the lyre, kithara, and psalterion.[10] The Greek lyre referred to the so-called chelys-lyre, made from a tortoise shell with the plastron (or bottom-plate) of the carapace removed. After two arms made of wood or animal horn had been attached to the shell, a tightly stretched animal skin was affixed across the open space. The arms were bridged near their upper ends with a crossbar of wood; the strings ran from the crossbar down to the bottom of the shell, running over a bridge placed on the taut skin, as seen in **Pl. 4**.:

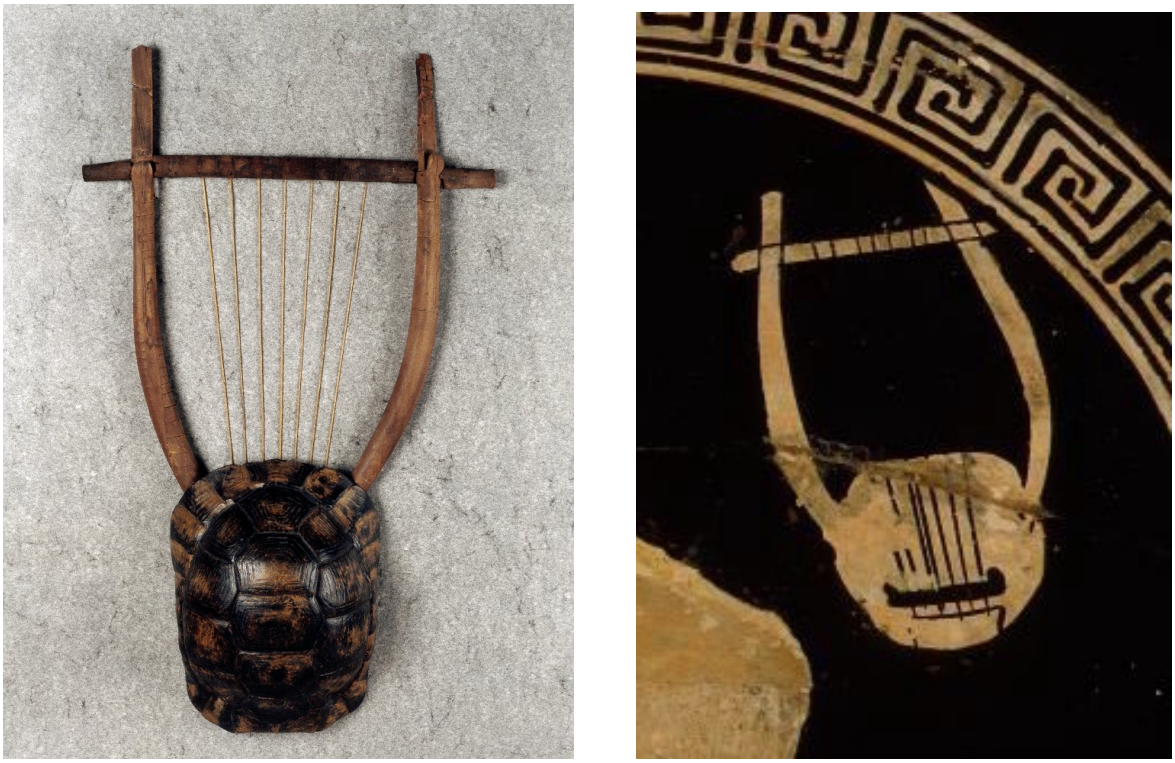


Plate 4: Chelys-lyre, back (l.), front (r.)

The mythology of the invention of the tortoise shell chelys-lyre was an important motif in medieval music theory because it was this instrument that Boethius wrote about as the original invention of Mercury, with four strings representing the primary consonances of music, "the consonance of the diapason....the diapente and the

[10] The starting point for a study of ancient Greek instruments is Maas and Snyder 1989.

diatesseron….there was nothing discordant in these, in imitation of cosmic music, which consists of the four elements." The authority of Boethius on all matters of music, including the tuning of the four-stringed cithara, continued through the Italian Renaissance and beyond.[11]

The Greek *κιθάρα* was a somewhat larger, more ornate type of lyre with an all-wooden resonator chamber instead of a turtle shell (**Pl. 5**). The two instruments occupied very different positions in Greek culture. The chelys-lyre was the most widely used member of the lyre family, which included other types besides these two, the chelys-lyre and kithara. *Lyra* / *lira* (Lat.) and *λύρα* (Gr.) were also used generically to represent the whole family of lyres. The lyre figured in mythology as an invention by Hermes using a tortoise shell, and it was associated with many other mythological figures, including Orpheus and the Muses. It is a more informal, unpretentious instrument of the well-educated population, rather than the fancier, more ornamental kithara of the professional kitharode, a trained specialist entertainer.[12]

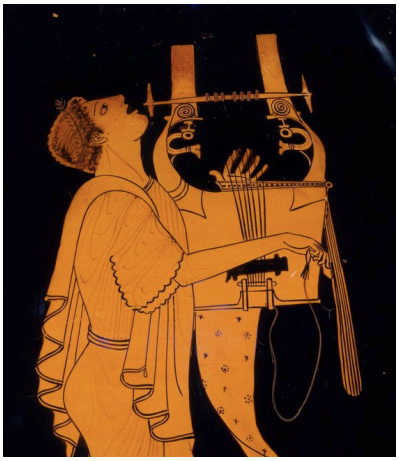


Plate 5: New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 56.171.38., Attic amphora attributed to the Berlin Painter; detail showing kithara.[13]

---

[11] Bower 1989, 29 - 30. The three intervals listed by Boethius are of course those consisting of primary numbers 2/1, 3/2 and 4/3, in that order of mathematical priority, which generate in effect the Pythagorean pitch system.

[12] For a definitive study on ancient Greek instruments, see Maas and Snyder 1989.

[13] https://i.pinimg.com/736x/c5/55/6f/c5556f1a98aa4f8790d1764677642955--musica-antica-greek-pottery.jpg (accessed 10.01.2018)

The Greek *ψαλτηρίον* (**Pl. 6**) referred to a triangular harp, which, in the 4th-c. B.C., was a speciality of professional female performers. The term became *psalterium* in Latin, manifesting a built-in affinity between the Greek term "psalmós" (*ψαλμός*) and the "Psalter" or collection of the Psalms of David in the Old Testament. The Roman *psalterium*, however, is an instrument which seems very hard to find in iconographical sources, either as any kind of triangular harp, or as anything that looks like a box zither with many strings.[14]

Plate 6: London, British Museum, Accession number GR 1836.2-24.142 (Cat. Vases F 315; detail of vase showing a psalterion (Anzi, c. 320 B.C.).[15]

[14] "The psaltery did not exist in the ancient world" according to Jeremy Montagu (Montagu 2002, 40). For James McKinnon, the psaltery was not a real instrument for the Church Fathers (McKinnon, 1965, 222). Christophe Vendries raises the interesting question of whether a handful of images of certain multi-string *pandurae* from the 3rd c. could be a type of psaltery (Vendries 1999, 140 - 145).

[15] Photo source: www.hellenicaworld.com/Greece/LX/en/Pelike_fawn_BM_F315.html (accessed 10.03.2018).

By the late Roman Empire, the lyre "belongs to the cultural heritage of being civilized, and participates in the idea of the universality of culture in the Empire."[16] It was now well-established as the signature instrument of Greco-Roman musical science-theory. For theatrical entertainments at the Imperial courts, the cithara was the refined instrument of the professional singer/ accompanist. Many types of poetry and oratory were complemented, indeed, completed, by an accompaniment with either the cithara or lyre. The "citharamania" of Rome, as Vendries put it, generated a modern saying that might puzzle someone quoting it today: "Nero plays his fiddle while Rome burns" is obviously not historically correct - he was a passionate player of the *lyra*.

## 1.3 Church Fathers: Stringed Instruments of the Bible

The Church Fathers seem to have known the lyre and cithara, in their culture, as two different things with different identities, even if they belonged to the same family of instruments. They gave a special emphasis to the cithara above the lyre, as the word *cithara* is far more present in the Vulgate than *lyra*; also, the cithara occurred as a pair with the *psalterium* (Jerome's Vulgate translation of *ψαλτήριον καί κιθάρα* was *psalterium et cithara*).[17] Many centuries will pass before 13.-c. music theorists in Paris, such as Jerome of Moravia, start writing in Latin about the practice of stringed instruments, but when they do, we may be able to notice a certain insecurity about the identity and relationship of *lyra* to cithara. The uncertainty about "which is which", and the confusion about vernacular names of stringed instruments in the Middle Ages and Renaissance may be said to continue to plague the field of research in our own day.[18]

The modern "father" of the Church Fathers, in terms of twentieth-century research on music in early Christian culture, is surely James W. McKinnon, whose research on what the Church

---

[16] Vendries 1999. The author further remarks that the epitome of Roman musical culture featuring the cithara occurred, in his view, during the rule of Hadrian (117 - 138).

[17] See Montagu 2002, 162 - 170, for a chart of multilingual Bible references.

[18] Lira or lyra was used both generically and specifically in the 15th and 16th centuries, where it could mean any stringed instrument, or a specific one such as lute, cetra, lira da braccio, viella or viola da mano.

Fathers wrote about music took the form of a dissertation written in 1965. At the outset he remarked, "Patristic practices and attitudes have an influence on the Middle Ages which is difficult to exaggerate", similar to the comment of medieval historian Norman Cantor, who wrote in 1963, "A great number of symbols which appear in art and literature, even in the High Middle Ages, constitute merely the traditional perpetuation of allegorical themes delineated by St. Jerome and other Church Fathers. Once set down by Patristic authority, allegorical symbols tended to be perpetuated through the medieval centuries. The artist or writer of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries merely employed them as commonly received materials of his craft; it was a matter of repetition rather than novel, conscious symbolizing."[19]

McKinnon specified that his survey would end "with the great Church Fathers of the late fourth and early fifth centuries such as Chrysostom, Jerome and Augustine, who represent the climax of Patristic literature. After them there was a sharp decline in the quality and originality of ecclesiastical writing, and subsequent authors more or less repeated the opinions of the Church Fathers on every conceivable issue. Music was no exception, and men like Cassiodorus, Isidore, Bede and Rabanus Maurus, when writing about it, did little more than transmit Patristic ideas. Thus one can speak of two Patristic periods, the Patristic period proper ending with the death of Augustine, and a secondary Patristic period reaching well into the twelfth century during which medieval thought was dominated by the influence of the Church Fathers."[20]

To obtain an overview of the writings of the Christian authorities, we may look at the chronological divisions proposed by McKinnon in his catalog of citations relating to music, which he published as *Music in Early Christian Literature* in 1987:

1st / 2nd c.

Apostolic Fathers: Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch
Greek Apologists: Justin Martyr, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus
Other: Odes of Solomon, Sibylline Oracles

---

[19] Cantor 1963, 91.

[20] McKinnon 1965, 3.

3rd / early 4th c.

Greek authors: Clement of Alexandria, Origen

Carthage / Rome: Tertullian, Hippolytus, Novatian, Cyprian, Lactantius

4th c.

Alexandria: Athanasius, Synesius, Isidore of Pelusium

Cappadocian: Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa

Palestine, Antioch, Syria: Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom, Nilus of Ancyra

Greek historians: Eusebius of Caesarea, Theodoret of Cyrus

4th / early 5th

Western: Hilary of Poitiers, Niceta of Remesiana, Jerome, Augustine

In his *Music in Early Christian Literature,* McKinnon presented 380 examples of Patristic writings, culled from these centuries and authors, which are concerned with music in some way. Many of the texts come from Psalm commentaries.[21] *Psalterium* occurs in seven text citations in McKinnon's catalog, plus another twelve examples where it is paired with cithara. A search for *lyra* yields fourteen passages, but by far the most citations, as previously mentioned, are found for cithara - thirty-five. The dominance of the term cithara in these texts will, following the early Christian period, have a stunningly momentous significance for the history of musical instruments in the Western world.

Without any doubt, the presence of musical instruments in the writings of the Church Fathers is - almost exclusively - allegorical. I say 'almost exclusively,' because Clement of Alexandria (c. 150 - c. 215) includes a passage in his *Paedagogus* which lends itself to an interpretation of an approval to imitate David: "if you should wish to sing and play to the cithara and lyre, this is not blameworthy; you would imitate the just Hebrew

[21] McKinnon 1965, 221: "Psalms 32, 42, 48, 56, 67, 70, 80, 91, 97, 130, 136, 143, 147, 149, 150. The numbering of Psalms used here is that used by the Fathers, that is, the numbering associated today with Catholic as opposed to Protestant and Jewish editions."

king giving thanks to God."[22] While a few other texts *might* be read with a similar spirit concerning actual musical practice, most are clearly symbolic. The Patristic authorities frequently used instruments as symbols of sinful, pagan behavior, but when they were not thundering against what a Christian should *not* do, they presented inspiring allegorical images which compared the Christian man to a cithara, as in the following list:

1. The faithful Christians are attuned to the bishop like strings to a cithara.[23]
2. A Christian moved by the Divine Spirit is like a cithara producing sweet harmony by the agency of the plectrum.[24]
3. God's cithara is the human being.[25]
4. By mortifying the flesh and tuning the soul, a Christian becomes like a cithara.[26]
5. The cithara symbolizes the flesh of Christ made incarnate because its sound-box and strings form the sign of the Cross.[27]
6. The cithara is the instrument of David, who prefigures Christ, and the cithara represents the figure of the Cross of Christ.[28]

The comparison of the cithara with the suffering and death of man, in order to have eternal life, owes an obvious debt, first of all, to the ancient Greek tale of Hermes and the lyre.[29] The tortoise in the ancient story, silent in life, achieves a kind of immortality of voice-spirit by its

---

[22] McKinnon, 33.

[23] Example: Ignatius of Antioch (c. 100), *Ephesians IV*, 1-2; see McKinnon 1987, 19.

[24] Example: Clement of Alexandria (c. 200), *Paedagogus II, iv*; see McKinnon 1987, 32.

[25] Example: Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus I*; see McKinnon 1987, 30.

[26] Example: John Chrysostom (c. 400), *In psalmum xli*, 2; see McKinnon 1987, 81.

[27] Example: Hippolytus of Rome (c. 200), *On the Psalms, Patrologia Graeca 10.715*; see Schueller 1988, 460 - 461.

[28] Example: Niceta of Remesiana (c. 400), *De utilitate hymnorum* 3 - 4; see McKinnon 1987, 135.

[29] See Borthwick 1970.

transformation after dying, into a vessel of beautiful harmony.[30] The Christian achieves immortality through the Crucifixion and the mortification of his flesh. The Patristic association of the cithara as a lowly, earth-bound instrument, in contrast with the heavenly psaltery, will be elaborated below, but for the moment it is only necessary to point out that the tortoise was seen as a lowly, humble, insignificant animal.[31]

Christianity is, in such texts as those given above, being sold as a path to self-improvement, that is, self-purification. The image of a string instrument to represent this process can be used in two basic ways. The first allegorical topos is the process of tuning, which is, in essence, the act of adjusting discordant strings to resonate in the harmony of correct measure (proportion). The second topos is what a well-tuned cithara does: it makes sweet sound. *Musica humana* was the same concept, without the Christian component, of fundamental human health. Man's well-being depended upon the interdependence of mental (emotional / spiritual / psychic) and bodily (physical) health. The catch-word *musica humana* will bring Boethius to mind, who indeed was the main author to convey the idea, in a musical-mathematical context, to the Latin world of the Middle Ages.[32] Of the three levels of *musica* described by Boethius (see miniature below, **Pl. 7**), the second, *humana*, is perhaps the most easily misunderstood by modern students, who may understand the allegory as referring to the relationship and interaction between people, or human society. Boethius, in contrast, makes it clear that it is the relationship of the mind to the body, of the rational to the irrational, of the soul to the flesh. It was logical and convenient for the Patristic writers to adapt this ancient Greek concept for their message.

---

[30] In the Roman and Patristic periods, the story of the invention of the lyre is transmitted by, among other sources, Ovid and, implicitly, Augustine, who refers to a tortoise-shell resonator, before being passed on by later authors in the context of music (Isidore, Rabanus). For the context of Ovid, see Schueller 1988, 108 - 110; for Isidore, see McKinnon 1998, 44; for Rabanus, see Throop 2009, 207. For a further discussion of the symbolism and use of the tortoise shell as a musical instrument, see Vendries 1999.

[31] See the interesting discussion comparing Patristic views of the cithara/psalterium pair with those of the Calabrian mystic Joachim of Fiore (late 12th c.) in Hirsch-Reich 1966.

[32] Boethius wrote, "whoever penetrates into his own self perceived human music. For what unites the incorporeal nature of reason with the body if not a certain harmony and, as it were, a careful tuning of low and high pitches as though producing one consonance? What other than this unites the parts of the soul, which, according to Aristotle, is composed of the rational and the irrational? What is it that intermingled the elements of the body or holds together the parts of the body in an established order?" (Bower 1989, 9-10).

Plate 7: Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Pluteus 29.1, f. 1:
Three levels of *Musica* (*musica mundana*, *humana*, *instrumentalis*).[33]

[33] http://www.szkolateologii.dominikanie.pl/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Pani-Muzyka-3.jpg (accessed 12.12.2017).

The Patristic authorities, then, made good use of the concept of *musica humana*. There is also in their work an echo, albeit a somewhat fainter one, of the construct of *musica mundana*.[34] "Now if the cosmos is an harmonious instrument set in rhythmic motion, I worship Him who tuned it, who strikes its notes and sings its concordant melody, not the instrument. Nor do the judges at the contests pass over the cithara players and crown their citharas," as the 2nd-c. author Athenagoras formulated it in his *Supplication for the Christians*.[35] More frequently encountered, however, is a pairing of cithara and *psalterium*, as found in the Psalms of the Old Testament.[36] This pairing of terms brought to the reader an immediate association of giving praise to God, as in the Psalms, but it also generated an interesting allegorical comparison of these two different physical forms of cithara, which raises an important question for us: did the Patristic authors have specific instruments in mind, and if so, what impact might this have had on the evolution of the cetra in Italy? Let us briefly examine a handful of passages including the terms cithara and *psalterium*:

"David alone of the prophets prophesied with an instrument, called by the Greeks the 'psaltery,' and by the Hebrews the 'nabla,' which is the only musical instrument that is quite straight, and has no curve. And the sound does not come from the lower parts, as is the case with the cithara and certain other instruments, but from the upper. For in the cithara and the lyra the brass when struck gives back the sound from beneath. But this psaltery has the source of its musical numbers above, in order that we, too, may practise seeking things above, and not suffer ourselves to be borne down by the pleasure of melody to the passions of the flesh." (Hippolytus, c. 200, *In Psalmos*, I, 2)[37]

"While the brass of the cithara and lyre respond to the plectrum from below, this psaltery has the source of its harmonious strains from above, so that we two might be anxious to pursue

---

[34] For the *musica mundana* reference in Boethius, see Bower 1989, 9.

[35] See McKinnon 1987, 22.

[36] Psalms 32:2, 56:9, 80:3, 91:4, 107:3 and 150:3. See Van Schaik 1992, 75-76.

[37] Schaff 1885, 500.

higher things, and not brought down to the passions of the flesh for the pleasure of song." (Basil the Great, c. 330 - 379; *Homilia in psalmum* i, 2)[38]

"Some also take the meaning of these instruments allegorically and say that the tympanum calls for the death of the flesh and that the psaltery looks to heaven. And indeed this instrument is moved from above, not from below like the cithara." (John Chrysostom, c 347 - 407; *In psalmum* cxlix, 2)[39]

> "But what is psaltery: what is cithara? Through His flesh two kinds of deeds the Lord has wrought; miracles and sufferings: miracles from above have been, sufferings from below have been. But those miracles which He did were divine; but through body He did them, through flesh He did them. The flesh therefore working things divine, is the psaltery; the flesh suffering things human is the cithara. Let the psaltery sound, let the blind be enlightened, let the deaf hear, let the paralytics be braced to strength, the lame walk, the sick rise up, the dead rise again; this is the sound of the psaltery. Let there sound also the cithara, let him hunger, thirst, sleep, be held, scourged, derided, crucified, buried. When therefore thou seest in that flesh certain things to have sounded from above, certain things from the lower part, one flesh hath risen again, and in one flesh we acknowledge both psaltery and cithara." (Augustine, 354 - 430; *Ennarrationes in psalmos* 56, 8)[40]

These commentaries on the Psalms present an identification of the *psalterium* with a more exhalted, heavenly side of things and the cithara with a more passionate, earthly side. In the words of Athanasius, "arise psalterium and cithara, the psalterium is the soul, the cithara the

---

[38] McKinnon 1987, 66. This is an interesting early reference to metal strings for both the *cithara* and *lyra*. Basil had clearly read Hippolytus, whose earlier source(s) I have not been able to trace, with the possible exception of the Roman writer Flavius Josephus, who, in the last quarter of the first century, wrote in his treatise *Jewish Antiquities* VIII, 3. 8, that an alloy of gold and silver, *electrum*, was used to make the *kinnor* (the instrument translated by Latin writers as *cithara*). Before using this passage as evidence that the ancient Hebraic instrument commonly had strings of this metal, we should remember that the context is the construction of Solomon of the Temple, for which he had *forty thousand* kinnors built (sic). See Montagu 2002, 41 - 42.

[39] Translation from the Greek by McKinnon, see McKinnon 1987, 83.

[40] McKinnon 1965, 235.

body."[41] The comparison between the human body and the cithara became such a fundamental concept to Christian culture that, to this day, comparative anatomical terms are used to describe instruments such as violin, guitar, etc: "neck", "body", "shoulders", "back", "waisted sides", and others.

Augustine elaborated numerous other references to *psalterium* and cithara in his Psalm commentaries, describing the *psalterium* as having the soundboard "above", in contrast to the soundboard of the cithara which is "below"; his comments, while firmly within the context of allegory, might be taken to imply a description of the form of the two instrument types and how the they are plucked, from above and below respectively.[42] Augustine also described the *tympanum* or hollow resonating chamber of the cithara by a comparison with *testudo* (tortoise-shell).[43] Augustine was enormously influential: in McKinnon's words "it was Augustine, especially, who expanded and elaborated the instrumental allegories of the Eastern Fathers in his massive *Enarrationes in psalmos*. In turn, Augustine's work largely determined the content of Western Psalm commentaries."[44] We may note that by combining the image of a tortoise-shell with the term cithara, Augustine effectively subsumes the lyre

---

[41] McKinnon 1965, 222.

[42] In his discussion of the passage from Hippolytus given above, Hugo Steger (Steger 1961, 50) clearly envisioned a trapezoidal-shaped instrument with the term *psalterium*, while with the "soundboard above" description, he understood a playing position whereby the psaltery was held upright against the chest.....in other words, he was thinking mainly of images of psaltery-players from medieval art. The chest-held position presupposes a triangular or trapezoidal instrument, including the so-called "pig snout" psaltery of the Middle Ages. A second possible way of playing the psaltery is to have it lying on one's lap, which excludes the 'resonator-above' idea, although this position is indeed 'played from above.' Steger's main point here, and it is a plausible one, is that the Church Fathers employed instruments they had first-hand knowledge of in their Christian allegories.
McKinnon felt, by contrast, that *psalterium* represented an abstract concept for the Fathers, in other words, they had no corresponding "real" instrument in their culture with which to associate the term (McKinnon 1965, 222). The cithara, on the other hand, was an instrument familiar to them. See also Footnote 6 above regarding the proposal of Vendries concerning the *psalterium*.

[43] See Van Deusen 1988 for an interesting discussion of cithara / *psalterium* symbolism in Augustine and Cassiodorus, including the Latin passages referenced above. The "soundboard above / soundboard below" comparison must be approached with caution, in terms of making conclusion about specific instrument types that the Patristic writers may have had in mind. For McKinnon, "the *psalterium* was for most Fathers a general term for a stringed instrument so that in their allegories they were free to invest the psalterium with whatever form they wished....the cithara, a real contemporary instrument, had earthly associations, while the *psalterium* was an unknown quantity and also a term rich in mystical suggestiveness."

[44] McKinnon 1968, 9.

morphology into that of the cithara. In other words, the cithara in this passage is associated with an oval resonator which is suggestive of lute-family instruments, i.e., necked chordophones. This is seemingly a small descriptive detail, but it will set a precedent for members of the lute family, including the example carved by Benedetto Antelami shown at the beginning of this chapter, to be considered a cithara.

A second example of the morphological confusion between the lyre and the *cithara*, which later centuries witnessed, can be found in treatises on astronomy, where the constellation *Lyra* might be confused with the form of the cithara, as in the drawing shown in **Pl. 8**, combining the rounded resonator and horns of the lyre with the square base and kollopes (see Glossary for these terms) of the cithara :[45]

Plate 8: Bern, Burgerbibliothek, Cod. 88, fol. 4v: Germanicus, *Aratea* (diagram of the constellation *Lyra,* c. 1000).

[45] http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/bbb/0088. For kollopes, see Chapters 2 and 4 below.

Finally, the Fathers' consideration of *psalterium*/cithara with a heavenly/earthly symbolism contains an echo of the Greek distinction between *κιθάρα*/*λύρα* (kithara/lyre) that was touched upon earlier: the kithara is more refined, exalted, while the lyre, with its lowly tortoise shell, is more humble. The allegorical writings of the Church Fathers, in sum, introduced discussion about musical instruments named in the Bible, primarily in the Psalms. The Patristic authors played a vital role in shaping the iconography of the illuminated Psalters of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, with masterful images illustrating King David as citharist.

## 1.4 Encyclopedists and Other Authorities on Music

Before considering the form and features of David's instruments in Psalter illustrations, and whether these sources might have played a part in the evolution of the cetra, a number of further text sources must be considered. As transmitters of Greek knowledge to the Latin world, Boethius, Cassiodorus, Isidore and Rabanus Maurus were regarded as high figures of authority in the Middle Ages and, to some extent, in the Renaissance. Of some consequence for the later understanding of cithara were the following, listed here in chronological order:

**Julius Pollux** - The earliest compilation author of relevance for our topic is the Greek scholar Pollux, whose *Onomasticon* (c. 175) is a kind of encyclopedia of nouns and phrases essential for the understanding of life and thought in Classical Antiquity. We shall return to his work when discussing the evolution of the cetra in the Humanist period.

**Martianus Capella** - A book of travels through the spheres, *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii et septem artes liberales* (The Marriage of Philology and Mercury and the Seven Liberal Arts, fl. 410 - 420) presents the wedding of groom Mercury (Eloquence = Trivium, or the skills of using words; an alternate meaning could be Profitable Action) and bride Philologia (Learning = Quadrivium, or the skills of measurement in Nature; also, Knowledge by Study) at Jupiter's castle, a union which has been recommended by Apollo, inventor of the cithara and the god who brings everything into tune in his grove of tall trees that make music on Mt. Parnassus. Abounding with wondrous images, the story introduces the seven noble maidens who are the *artes liberales*. Last to appear is *Harmonia,* representing *musica*, whose laminated-gold garment "tinkled softly and

soothingly with every measured step and movement of her body." Her main attribute is not the expected cithara, but a veritable Shield of Harmony, a circular metal shield (*clypeum*) with dazzling concentric-circle engravings (the resonant spheres), attuned to each other, from whence issue forth "a concord of all the modes…no lyre or lute or tetrachord appeared on that circular shield, yet the strains coming from that strange rounded form surpassed those of all musical instruments."[46]

This extraordinary dream-vision does not gain our attention as the earliest standing ovation for a musical performance - which it may be, and from the gods, no less - but rather, for the reason that Musica (Harmonia) seems *never* to be represented in European art, of any period, as having a circular shield as her primary attribute, representing *musica mundana*; she is usually depicted with a cithara of some kind (lyre, harp, psaltery, lute), alternatively in late

---

[46] Translation in Stahl 1977, 352-353. The original full passage reads *Dextra autem quoddam gyris multiplicibus circulatum, et miris ductibus intertextum velut clypeum gestabat, quod quidem suis invicem complexionibus modulatum ex illis fidibus circulatis omnium modorum concinentiam personabat. Laeva autem Virginis quamplures ex auro adsimulatae, parvaeque effigies theatralium voluptatum, religataeque pendebant. Verum ille orbis, non chelys, nec barbiton, nec tetrachordon apparebat; sed ignota rotunditas omnium melodias transcenderat organorum*. Transcribed from *Antiquae musicae auctores septem. Graece et Latine, Marcus Meibomius restituit ac notis explicavit*, 2 vols. Amstelodami: apud Ludovicum Elzevirium, 1652, (Hayes 1994, 2:165–98). ("In her right hand Harmony bore what appeared to be a shield, circular over-all, with many inner circles, the whole interwoven with remarkable configurations. The encompassing circles of this shield were attuned to each other, and from the circular chords there poured forth a concord of all the modes. From her left hand the maiden held, suspended at equal length, several small models of theatrical instruments, wrought of gold. no lyre or lute or tetrachord appeared on that circular shield, yet the strains coming from that strange rounded form surpassed those of all musical instruments", in the translation of Stahl and Johnson 1977, 352-353).
Regarding the "small models of theatrical instruments", a footnote (Stahl and Johnson 1977, 353, Footnote 23) explains, "Remigius says that the term *effigies* refers to musical instruments made by mortals, as contrasted with the divine music symbolized on the shield." "Theatrical instruments" is a term used in Patristic writings to mean instruments used in secular music, and later in Martianus' narrative, "Harmony's songs delighted and soothed the spirits of all the gods; and the strains that poured forth from her stringed instruments were no less sweet than the melody of her voice." (Stahl and Johnson 1977, 356).

medieval / Renaissance images with an organ as an instrument demonstrative of musical science.[47] Capella also has Musica singing songs for the gods and playing "stringed instruments" later in his tale.[48]

**Boethius**: Moving ahead one hundred years we meet Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius (c. 480 - 524), who, thanks to its success in later centuries, did more in his *De musica* to establish the cithara as the music science-theory instrument of choice, than any other single work.[49]

**Cassiodorus**: Boethius' Roman colleague and successor Cassiodorus combined Christian writings, including Psalm commentaries a la Augustine, with a Liberal Arts compilation intended as an encyclopedia for clerics (*Institutiones*, c. 530 - c. 550).[50] The latter has some material on music, but the Psalm commentaries, especially, contain numerous allegorical references to the cithara.[51] Among these is a comparison between the shape of the cithara and the letter "D" (Greek letter *delta*), which will be repeated by later writers.[52]

An 11th-c. Latin gloss on the section of the *Institutiones* concerned with musical instruments (*Institutiones* ii, 5 - *Instrumentorum musicorum genera sunt tria: percussionalia, tensibilia, inflatilia*) may shed light on contemporary instruments used in Italy c. 1000: a bowed *vitula*, *arpa* (harp), a lyre which is called an Italian instrument (*itala rotta*), a non-Christian *lira* of

---

[47] A portrait of a lutenist, Felix Hungersberger, by Albrecht Dürer in 1520 shows a man labelled in the drawing by the artist as a *kostlich und ubergrad lawtenschlaher* ("exquisite and outstanding lutenist"). Hungersberger is kneeling behind a prominent circular shield, without any lute, but with the tip of a sword visible behind him (he had a military career as an imperial captain in the service of Charles V). Dürer, himself an avid lutenist, added a second note: *Und sind dy pesten felix adolff samario* ("and the best [lute players] are Felix, Adolf [Blindhamer] and [Gianmaria Alemanni]"). While the presence of a shield in the portrait is logical given its subject's military identity, reference to Musica and Rhetorica are called to mind. For further discussion see Young and Kirnbauer 2003, 250 - 253.

[48] *Talibus Harmoniae carminibus oblectati omnes permulsique divi. nec minor quippe ex fidibus suavitas quam vocis modulamine resultabat (fidibus* = "stringed instruments"); see footnote 46 above for English translation in context.

[49] The standard edition of this work is Bower 1989.

[50] McKinnon 1998, 33-38.

[51] On the Psalm commentaries, see Van Deusen 1988.

[52] For a list of sources containing references to delta-shaped instruments, beginning with Cassiodorus, see Van Schaik 1992, 63, 152, note 12. This work also includes an entire chapter on "The Delta Harp," with extensive discussion of the sources.

some kind, and a cithara played with a plectrum. As Calvin Bower pointed out in his interesting research published in 1993, these glosses may offer a new interpretation of the illustrations found in two 11th-12th-c. manuscripts from northern Italy of the same Cassiodorus material.[53] The place of the illustrations in the cetra narrative will be discussed below.

**Isidore of Seville**: Isidore's (d. 636) monumental work, influenced by Cassiodorus, Augustine, Quintilian, Macrobius and Boethius, includes multiple references of interest to the cithara story. Speaking first of the inventors of music, in olden times, the lyre and kithara (*lyra vel cithara*) were used at banquets. In the threefold division of music as sound produced by the voice (*musica harmonica*), wind instruments (*musica organica*) and struck instruments (*musica rythmica*), the cithara is given as the generic example for the last-named category. After more detailed treatments of the first two categories *harmonica* and *organica*, Isidorus looks at the *rythmica* division, where the first to be mentioned are the different species of cithara, about which a number of comments are made. A summary of Isidore's notable points includes:

---

[53] Bower 1993. The relevant passages from Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, lat. Z. L. 497 on stringed instruments read: *DE CITHARA Perstrepit exiguo cum garrula cithara plectro DE VITULA Vitula bis binos arcu spectante boatus DE ARPA Arpa gerit quinas daxtra pendente sonoras DE LIRA Consue bis binas et tu lira barbara voces DE ROTTA Cantica melliflua da nobis itala rotta* ("The garrulous cithara makes much noise with a meager plectrum. The *vitula* emits two double crude tones with bow attending. The harp offers five sonorities with the right hand hovering. And you, barbarous lyre, accustom yourself to two double pitches. O Italian *rotta*, give us mellifluous songs." The translation is Bower's).
Before drawing conclusions about the Venice manuscript, there may be a connection between this source and an earlier one in Old High German, the *Evangelienbuch* of Otfrid von Weissenburg (mid 9th-c.), where verses 198 - 199 use the terms *líra fídula hárpha* and *rótta*. Two of these four, *lira* and *fidula*, relate to terms we have seen in earlier sources listed above (*lira*/*lyra*: Church Fathers; *fidula*: Martianus). The earliest document to my knowledge containing *rotta* and *harpa* is the well-known 6th-c. poem of Fortunatus, *Carminum Liber VII*, viii, 63-64, where *crotta Brittana* carries an association with Britain and the Welsh crwth; see Fortunatus, Venantius and Friedrich, Leo, *Venanti Honori Clementiani Fortunati presbyteri Italici opera poetica*, Berolini (1881), 163: *Romanusque lyra, plaudat tibi barbarus harpa, Graecus Achilliaca, crotta Britanna canat* ("May the Roman praise you on the lyre, the barbarian on the harp, the Greek on the cithara, and the Briton on the rotta.") For more on this passage, see Luisella Fadda, Anna Maria, "Cithara barbarica, cithara teutonica, cithara anglica", *Romanobarbarica* 10 (1988 - 89), 232-239.
For the original text of the Evangelienbuch, see *Thesaurus Indogermanischer Text- und Sprachmaterialien* (http://titus.uni-frankfurt.de/texte/etcs/germ/ahd/otfrid/otfrilex.htm, accessed 16.07.2017)
See the "Iconography" section of this chapter below for the illustrations mentioned above and for further discussion.

1. Tubal invented the cithara and *psalterium*.[54]
2. According to the Greeks, Apollo invented the cithara.
3. In Doric Greek, kithara meant human chest, hence the comparison between the instrument and part of the human body.
4. Many different types of *cithara* were invented - named *psalteria*, *lyrae*, *barbitae*, *phoenices*, *pectides, Indicae* and numerous others, of square and triangular form.[55]
5. The ancients called the cithara *fidicula* and *fidicen*, because strings must agree with each other, like men who have faith (*fides*).
6. The ancient cithara had seven strings, also according to Virgil; it was invented by Mercury.
7. The psaltery is similar to that of foreigners, in the form of the letter delta. It differs in that it has the soundbox above and the strings are struck below, whereas the (other) cithara has the soundbox below.
8. The Hebrews used a ten-string psaltery, corresponding to the Ten Commandments.
9. The lyre was invented by Mercury; although mentioned previously, details of the Homeric tale are now provided; resonator has ovoid form.

The passage we have been examining confirms that Isidorus had some knowledge of ancient Greek string instrument names. In the absence of any surviving artifacts or monuments, it seems difficult to postulate that he himself knew any of these as a contemporary instrument (although the physical form of the *barbitos* seems to have been invoked later in the 13th c. in a

---

[54] Tubalcain was the half-brother of Jubal, the inventor of music in the Book of Genesis. Because of the name similarity and the fact that Tubalcain was a blacksmith, the two names were sometimes confused in early treatises on music.

[55] While a detailed discussion of the nature of ancient Greek instruments lies outside the scope of this essay, a comment on Isidorus' various cithara names may be relevant to our study. *Barbitae* clearly comes from *barbitos*, one of two types of turtle-shell lyres used in Classical Athens of the late sixth and fifth centuries. The smaller version is usually referred to in modern organology literature as chelys-lyre (possibly Isidorus' *lyrae* in this passage), as distinct from the *barbitos.* It had the same size turtle-shell body as the chelys-lyre, but much longer arms, which, at the yoke-end, were strongly incurved. The *phoenices* is the *phoenix* found in the Pseudo-Aristotle Problems (XIX, 14) and mentioned by Pollux (Pollux IV, 59; see Vendries p 66-67), but regarding this mysterious string instrument nothing else can be said. The same goes for *Indices*, which has been translated as "Indian cithara" (Strunk / McKinnon), which requires two people to play it. *Pectides* corresponds with *pektis*, an ancient Greek harp; another Greek term for harp was *psalterion*, which Isidorus begins his list of ancient Greek *citharae with.* See Maas 1989, 113 - 138, 184.

handful of chordophone images from Italy and Spain; see **Pl. 92**). In contrast, his comment listed as Point 7 above, regarding the shape of the psaltery he knows - as compared with a non-Christian type - seems to suggest a contemporary instrument of his culture.

The so-called **Dardanus Letter** (first half 9th-c.), a commentary on instruments of the Old Testament, is an anonymous document which has been described as "the most comprehensive and important treatise on musical instruments of the early Middle Ages".[56] Once thought to have been written by Jerome to a certain Dardanus, this authorship has been rejected since the time of Erasmus.[57] The text exists in three different source-contexts, (1) as part of *De musica* of Rabanus (see below), (2) as an independent treatise in music theory compilations and (3) as introductory material in selected Psalters.[58]

While the **Dardanus Letter** contains no unequivocal description of a chordophone, and indeed, little of use to understand instruments contemporary with the writing of the Letter, it makes two statements about the cithara which have potential relevance to the Christian identity of the later cetra. First, the cithara had 24 strings as used by the Hebrews, which symbolized the 24 Elders of the Apocalypse in the New Testament.[59] Second, it was shaped like the Greek letter delta (D).[60] The earlier text of Isidore had associated this letter shape with the *psalterium* and with the barbaric cithara, and joined that information together with the older *psalterium* = sound-box above, cithara = sound-box below distinction. Dardanus simplifies the formulation and applies it succinctly to the *cithara*. The form of the *psalterium* is solely quandrangular here, in opposition to the description given by Isidore.

**Rabanus Maurus** *De universo de rerum naturis* (c. 830 - 844), containing material on music, *De musica et partibus ejus* (including the Dardanus Letter and many borrowings from

---

[56] Seebass 1973, 141. The reception of this source spans a huge period, 9th c. - 18th c. (Lexicon of J.G.Walther, 1732); see Hammerstein 1959, 117.

[57] Hammerstein 1959, 117.

[58] Seebass 1973, 142.

[59] See CE 15, the Elders of the Apocalypse in San Francesco Basilica inferiore in Assisi.

[60] For the text of the Dardanus Letter, see Hammerstein 1959 and Avenary 1961.

Isidore), represents a Carolingian textbook of substantial influence for the Middle Ages.[61] It is not known whether the Rabanus text served as a source for the Dardanus Letter, or whether the reverse is true. Underscored points of relevance for the cithara include:[62]

1. The cithara has a D(elta)-shaped body with 24 strings.
2. The 24 strings represent the 24 Elders of the Apocalypse.
3. The cithara symbolizes the Cross, strings symbolize the arms of the Crucified One.
4. The cithara symbolizes the Church.
5. The resonator is below, and it symbolizes earthly life.
6. Mercury invented the *lyra* (a type of cithara) of tortoise (oval) shape.
7. The building of the temple of the Church, by using precious teachers of Christianity, is like the cithara and *lyra* builders who use precious rare woods for construction of a harmonious tool, whose function is to give praise.

The delta-form body of the cithara was first noted by Cassiodorus, as stated above. Musicologist Martin Van Schaik provided a welcome and lengthy discussion in 1992 about the symbolism of the delta body shape. While the first and most logical association might be "D" stands for the instrument of David, as the first letter of his name, Van Schaik points out that this specific meaning is not given in any commentary.[63] Cassiodorus and others (who picked up the reference that the cithara had the delta shape) seem to have conflated cithara and *psalterium*, for the *psalterium* was consistently described as having 10 strings. For the Greeks, the number 10 was the sum of the *tetrakys* (1,2,3,4) and was represented by a geometric drawing of an equilateral triangle or figure made up of 10 points, consisting of one point at the top, two below that, three below that and four at the bottom. The string number, in other words, generated the delta form of the *psalterium*'s body. The cithara, in texts such as

---

[61] For the 9th-c. Pseudo-Jerome commentary on Daniel 4:7 referred to Epistola ad dardanum (Dardanus Letter), see Hammerstein 1959 and Avenary 1961.

[62] See Richenhagen 1989, 232 - 241.

[63] Van Schaik 1992, 80.

Rabanus, had 24 strings and (in contrast to the physical distinction made between the two instruments by the earlier Church Fathers) the delta shape.

Van Schaik made an interesting analysis of delta-form instruments where the "D" shape had been rotated.[64] Although he did not look at necked chordophones, the rotation principle may be applied in their case as well, which, using the example of a 180 degree rotation of a D, generates the spatulate body shape which later became a salient morphological feature of the Romanesque cetra (see **Chapter 2**).

Post-Carolingian Psalm commentaries, for example, that of Petrus Lombardus, *Commentarius in psalmos*, made use of the allegory of the Cross/cithara.[65] We shall examine iconographic examples below, keeping in mind that there is the background of Psalm commentary texts extending all the way back to the Patristic writers of the early Church.

Treatises concerned with Carolingian chant practice (examples: *Musica disciplina* of Aurelian of Réômé, *Scolica enchiriadis*, *Alia musica*) offer little material of direct relevance to our cithara narrative, with the exception of two points.[66] First, following the graphic pitch-representation convention of Boethius and others, the earliest form of a musical staff, that is, parallel horizontal lines representing pitches, comes from the image of the parallel strings of the cithara lying horizontally. This was used, by way of example, in the 9th-c. treatise of Hucbald, *De Harmonica Institutione*, and became increasingly institutionalized in music theory writings and musical notation of the Middle Ages.[67] As it had been in Boethius, the cithara was the primary musical instrument to be associated with the study of music as a science. Secondly, music treatises including tonaries were occasionally illustrated with instruments, and this too can provide a modicum of iconographical insight.

---

[64] Van Schaik 1992, 88-89.

[65] A facsimile of the 12th-c. Petrus Lombardus codex Württembergische Landesbibliothek, MS Cod. theol. et. phil. fol. 341 may be viewed at http://digital.wlb-stuttgart.de/sammlungen/sammlungsliste/werksansicht/?id=6&tx_dlf%5Bid%5D=2952&tx_dlf%5Bpage%5D=9 (accessed 02.07.2017).

[66] A useful summary of the Carolingian treatises and their context is found in Philips 1990.

[67] On Hucbald and his treatise, see Babb 1978, 2 - 46.

## 1.5 Summary of Pre-Romanesque Commentary on Cithara

In sum, the body of texts presented above provides a "theory of the cithara", as it were, for the Middle Ages and Renaissance. It will be impossible to understand the language of the visual arts, upon which so much of our study will be based, without having text sources to refer back to. The main points we have seen are within Christian and Classical contexts:

**(Christian Allegory and Symbolism)**

1. The cithara is an appropriate musical instrument for a Christian, to give expression of humility and earthly piety, along with the *psalterium*, which is more tied with heavenly devotion. The former is an instrument of the common man.

2. The symbolism of the cithara is associated with David, Christ, the Cross and the human body, thanks in part to its physical form as a necked chordophone.

3. The cithara stands for the harmonious Church.

4. Its sound-box is "below", not "above" like the *psalterium*, suggesting the playing position of a lute-family instrument, with the neck held by the left hand higher than the sound-box held against the body of the player; by contrast, the widest part of the *psalterium's* sound-box is held up, against the chest of the player.

5. The association of the delta form "D" body shape, by selected commentators, with the cithara, may be manifested on instruments with and without necks.

**(Classical Antiquity)**

6. The kithara is the most appropriate instrument for *musica* (Greek-based musical science).

7. It was the first instrument of the gods, invented and played by the most musical god.

8. The kithara and chelys-lyre were the most appropriate instruments for accompanying poetic text.

9. The oval-shaped sound-box came originally from a tortoise shell, an association which became a fundamental morphological feature of lute-family instruments.

## 1.6 Morphology of the Cithara : Introduction

We now turn our attention to pre-Romanesque visual images of musical instruments, roughly - and not undauntingly - encompassing a millennium, c. 100 - c. 1100, which can be associated, directly or indirectly, with an Italian (Roman - Christian) provenance. Art history has typically divided this vast chunk of time into compartments labelled (1) late Roman / early Christian (2nd - 5th c.), (2) early Byzantine / pre-Carolingian (6th - 8th c.), (3) Carolingian (9th c.), and (4) Ottonian (10th - 11th c.).

In the absence of existing instruments, that is, an historical artifact which could be labelled a cetra, or a fragment thereof, one searches for the next-best thing to a first-hand experience. As Sebastian Virdung wrote in 1511, “no one is alive now who has made, heard or seen these instruments, for they are no longer in use. I would certainly like to see them, even more to

hear them, and most of all, *to know what they represented…because whatever Jerome wrote about these things, it always had to have a second, spiritual meaning*" (italics mine).[68] Virdung was of course not talking about a cetra per se (although in one sense, he was, as the source included cithara), he was discussing the instruments mentioned in the 9th-c. Dardanus Letter. Here we witness an early modern testimony to the idea that musical instruments in Western culture could have spiritual meaning (allegory, symbolism) as their most interesting aspect, more so than the actual sound or physical form; one can only marvel at how far away Western culture in the 21st-c. has come from this perspective.

The frontispiece to the Psalms in the so-called First Bible of Charles the Bald, also known as the Vivian Bible, provides an example of a *cithara* laden with "spiritual meaning", as Virdung put it. In a miniature made at Tours c.845 (**Pl. 10**), the crowned figure of David stands dancing, playing an instrument, in the center of a mandorla usually reserved, in contemporary works, for depictions of Christ in Majesty.[69] The almond-shaped mandorla is framed by a rectangle, with one of the four Cardinal Virtues, Prudence, Fortitude, Justice and Temperance, inside each corner.[70] David's four Temple musicians Ethan (spelled *Aethan*), Asaph, Jeduthun and Heman sit above and below him, playing instruments, while on his left and right stand the guards Crethi and Plethi.

---

[68] The translation is from Bullard 1993, 111. The original text in Virdung 1511 reads: *kein mensch jetz lebe/ der die selben instrument gemacht/ gehoeret/ oder gesehen ha(t)/ dann die selben synd nit mer in dem gebrauch/ ye doch wolt ich sye gern sehen/ noch vil lieber hoeren/ und aller liebst wissen was sye hetten bedeutet/ dann was Hieronimus von den dingen hat geschriben/ dass muess alles ein andern geistlichen synn haben*. (Cii - Ciii)

[69] Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 1, f. 215v. There are many published facsimiles of this famous work, for example, Mütherich, Florentine and Gaehde, Joachim, *Carolingian Painting*, Braziller, New York (1976), 78.
That the attitude of David represents the act of dancing is clear from late Classical models going back to the 6th-c. and earlier; see Thomas 2016, 48, where an embroidered panel from a 6th-c. (?) tunic shows Dionysian figures dancing in precisely the same position as David in the miniature above.

[70] The ancient association of virtue with music and musicians culminated, in a way, with the fascination of the possible complexities of proportional rhythm in polyphonic music of the late 14th and 15th centuries. So-called *ars subtilior* repertory, together with treatises on proportion extending all the way to the time of Thomas Morley, often used *virtus* as a word in the text of a composition requiring concentrated problem-solving in order to be correctly performed. In other words, a high level of skill was necessary which could only be achieved through the application of the virtues; the successful singer demonstrated the qualities of the virtues. The modern idea of a virtuoso as a musician who can play very fast has little to do with *virtus* in medieval music. See Fallows, David, "The End of the Ars Subtilior", *Basler Jahrbuch für historische Musikpraxis* 20 (1996), 21 - 40.


Plate 10: Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 1, f. 215v: David with musicians, guards and Virtues (Tours, c. 845)

As stated in the Introduction, the three main 'hunting grounds' for musical instruments in Christian art before the 16th-c., are images that deal with King David, the Apocalypse and the Virgin Mary. These three theme-areas flourished chronologically in *that* order, and may be thought of as David = Carolingian, Apocalypse = Romanesque, and Mary = Gothic/ early Renaissance, keeping in mind that the first two of these three continued to be represented after their respective periods ended. The rise of Davidian art - the classic medium is the illustrated Psalter or Book of Psalms in the Bible - occurred as a Carolingian phenomenon for a very clear reason; their kings took power by force, not by traditional bloodline, and they very much needed to project an image of divinely-favored Emperors, rulers of the continuation of the Roman Empire under Christ - the Holy Roman Empire.

The miniature, in effect, presents a royal figure (David, suggestive also of Christ / Charles the Bald) in a *chlamys* or robe in the style of Byzantine imperial fashion, which Byzantine rulers like Justinian wore in imitation of late Roman emperors. David wears only the *chlamys*, being otherwise nude in the style of Classical Age warrior-heroes. The garment is the royal color, purple. By portraying themselves in the same garb as Byzantine emperors in their Bibles, Frankish rulers identified themselves with both imperial and divine power. Byzantine elements and style in both Carolingian and Ottonian art, then, are to be expected, and will continue to be influential going into the Romanesque period. The new way of playing stringed instruments with a bow, observable in the later 10th and 11th centuries, was a fashion in Byzantine culture before it spread westward into Italy and beyond.[71] But to return to our miniature, it is clear that the artist is referencing late Antique forms and modelling, in addition to the Byzantine elements.[72]

David is playing a *psalterium*, which we recognize from the text sources, including Isidore and Dardanus, which describe it as having the soundbox above. The more earth-bound cithara, with the resonator below, is being played by the figure below David on the left, labelled *Aethan* (**Pl. 11**).

---

[71] Bachmann 1969.

[72] Mütherich 1976, 79.


Plate 11: Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 1, f. 215v: detail of Aethan[73]

[73] Schlesinger 1910, 337, was the earliest music-specific modern study to include an image (drawing) of this instrument.

Aethan's cithara is heavily symbolic.[74] The geometrical form shown here contains the possibility of finding [at least] five Crosses: (1) an upper one, from the fingerboard going up to the highest trefoil as the vertical segment, and the horizontal crossbar comprised of the two inner arches framed by the outer-shoulder trefoils; (2) a lower Cross uses the strings as the vertical element and the straight upper edge of the resonator as its crossbar; (3) a Greek cross represented by the four-pronged ornament inside the space above the two arches; (4) a Patriarchal cross (also known as the Lorraine Cross) with two crossbars near the top; (5) a Papal Cross with three crossbars formed by the upper edge of the resonator, the two-arch-crossbar and the crossbar of the small Greek cross.[75]

The form of the cithara, too, hints at the architectural construction of a Church in cross-section, including the rounded arches of ceiling and windows above, and hollow vessel or nave below. The "nave" is the resonator referred to in many Patristic texts as being "below" on the cithara, as opposed to the *psalterium* held by David, in this miniature, with its resonator "above".[76] The resonator itself is spatulate in shape, which is a variant of the letter D - as a *cithara* must be, according to Dardanus /Rabanus.[77] The earlier discussions of Cassiodorus, Isidore, and others regarding the Delta-shaped *psalterium*, had congealed by the time of

---

[74] The question arises whether David's four musicians follow iconographical patterns in terms of their instruments. Which musician is which is the first problem, for, in general, it is only in selected Carolingian - Romanesque illuminations that they are named. This study presents a total of four examples with names (Pl. 11, 51, 69 and CE 1). Three of these show Aethan/Ethan with a plucked instrument, and one, Pl. 51, labels "Asaph Cythara". I have been unable to find a dedicated study providing an answer on the question; neither Hammerstein 1961, 114-115, nor Seebass 1973, 134, offer comment (but see both studies for an overview of visual examples). My impression - and perhaps why both experts made no comment - is that there is no clear identification of any of the four musicians with a particular type of instrument. There does, on the other hand, seem to be an influential Carolingian model which places Aethan to the lower left of the central figure of David, giving the artist room to depict a stringed instrument in his hands without, for example going outside of the composition.

[75] There are many reference works on the history of crosses in Christianity. As two examples, see Metford 1983, 75 - 76; and Sill 1975, 30 - 32.

[76] The above-or-below, resonator-and/or-playing-position opposition between the *psalterium* and the cithara was discussed by McKinnon, who concluded that the topic began with Basil in the 4th-c., before it was taken up by many other authors. The *psalterium*, McKinnon maintained, did not correspond to a 'real' instrument for these writers, whereas the cithara did (presumably he means the Roman kithara, effectively a later version of the Classical Greek kithara, although nowhere in his dissertation does he explicitly say exactly what real instrument, at least until the Carolingian period, the cithara was).

[77] See commentary on Rabanus above.

Dardanus into the explicit description of the *cithara* as D - shaped instrument. Meanwhile, the upper architecture of the construct forms mirror-image D's, pointing, so to speak, up to Heaven.

The three prominent trefoil-lily ornaments at the upper end of the instrument are most typically found adorning crowns in Christian art of the Middle Ages. As a symbol of Sovereignty, Purity, Virtue, the Trinity, and the Cross itself, the three-pronged lily is arguably the most potent symbol to be associated with Christianity which has its origin in Nature; it grows in this form. The total number of 'leaves' or lily-segments is fifteen (three trefoils, plus the four segments of the Greek cross, plus one segment each on the shoulders of the resonator), suggestive of 3 x 5 (three strings, made from and symbolizing flesh) x (five Wounds of Christ); the viewer is shown the open palm of Aethan (as representative of David, himself prefiguring Christ) to evoke the image of the Crucifixion with open hand nailed to the Cross. A parallel connection with the number three is seen in the number of strings which the instrument carries. Two further aspects of the image hark back to Rome, recalling days of Imperial splendor: the portrait pose and the golden cithara. Aethan's head is rendered in side-view as in Roman portrait style, and his instrument is made of gold, symbolizing power and magnificence of the scene. Lastly, the chair upon which the musician is seated reflects Byzantine furniture form.

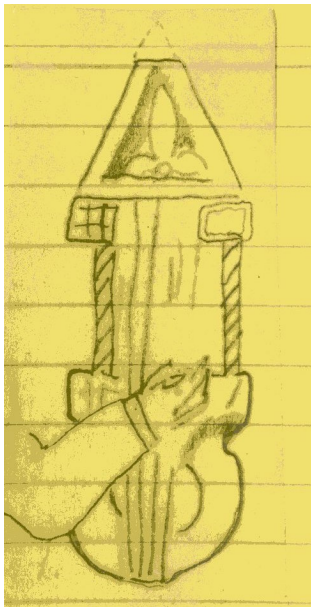
The miniature we have been discussing was painted at the monastery of St. Martin in Tours just before the middle of the 9th c., yet as we have seen, the artist was strongly influenced by elements of Byzantine fashion. To these influences we can add the lyre itself, which is prefigured in two surviving early Byzantine relief carvings of the 6th c., shown in **Pl. 12**[78] and **13a/b**[79]:

---

[78] https://www.pinterest.de/pin/419679259001229691/ (accessed 12.12.2017).

[79] Reproduced in Wessel 1963, 61 (Abb. 54), and in Buchner 1985, 55 (Abb. 49).

Plate 12: Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Antikensammlung, Inv. Nr. 2497: ivory relief panel with *pantomimus*, detail (early 6th c., Trier).



Plates 13a/b: a (= left), Leningrad, Hermitage Museen, wooden relief panel with David, detail (6th c.); b (= right), author's rendering.

If the datings offered in research publications are correct, the Berlin ivory relief is late 5th. or early 6th. c., somewhat earlier than the Leningrad example. The content of the Berlin plaque is distinctly pagan, that is, non-Christian. It shows a *pantomimus,* or solo male dancer who danced a story to musical accompaniment in Roman theatrical entertainment; he was precisely the type of character that gave musical instruments a bad name, according to the Church Fathers, by practicing lascivious amusements. This character prefigures the *jongleur* of the Middle Ages. His instrument conforms visually more to the lyra type than to the cithara, for it has an ovoid rather than quadrangular resonator, squared and shouldered at the upper edge in a spade shape with cut-outs below the shoulders (and thus of presumable wooden construction) and arms with prominent horns at the top….and not without sexual innuendo. The next example is the Leningrad instrument, dated perhaps 50 to 100 years after Berlin. Here, the horns have disappeared on what is otherwise the same instrument type. In their place is a large triangle crowning the lyre, and framing a trefoil-lily. The viewer will thereby have understood that the musician holding the lyre is David.

By the end of the 6th c., then, there is a Christianization of the lyre taking place. The earlier artifact, the ivory relief, found its way to St Maximin's Abbey in Trier. Whether it came originally from a workshop in Constantinople, a center of ivory relief carving in the early Byzantine period, and was exported to Rome or somewhere else, we do not know. The wooden carving in Leningrad has a Byzantine-Coptic provenance. Both instruments feature a general body shape that will be found on surviving Byzantine instruments, as will be seen below.

It is clear, then, that the artist who painted Aethan some two centuries after the Leningrad carving had knowledge of this lyre type as an Italo-Byzantine model, which was already becoming Christianized by c. 600. It is equally clear that the person who painted the next illustration from the Bible of San Callisto c. 870 was using a frontispiece to the Psalms in the First Bible of Charles the Bald as his model (**Pl. 14**):

Plate 14: Rome, San Paolo fuori le mura, lat. 1 (Bible of Callisto), f. 147v: David with musicians, guards, and attendents (detail), c. 870 - 875.[80]

Here is an instrument structurally very close to the lyre shown in **Pl. 11**, dated 30 - 35 years earlier; this source was produced at Rheims for the same patron Charles the Bald. Although this artist's style is less ornate with ornamental details, one easily recognizes his model. The only surprise is the angled playing position, a more natural one for stopping strings with the

[80] Seebass 1973, Pl. 99.

left hand on the lyre's neck.[81] Why would this artist have altered the playing position? Did he have more knowledge about playing this type of lyre than the earlier painter? This brings us to the question of 'real vs imaginary' when studying these images: were all four of these lyres (**Pl. 11-14**) existing instruments at the time the image was painted / carved? For that matter, were the robes pictured really worn by Carolingians?

The fashion of wearing Imperial Byzantine-style garments at the highest levels of ritual was practiced by Carolingian rulers, it was not simply an iconographic convention used to enhance the miniatures of their illustrated Bibles. They donned the robes because doing so was part of the publicity or public image the court wished to sell.[82] Similarly, Byzantine-styled items of furniture, such as a chair, are present in the miniatures that were used at the Carolingian court. The same line of reasoning applies to the lyres being played in the miniatures. It would be foolish to reject the idea that these art works depict actual contemporary instruments. More to the point, these images amplify visually the piety and virtue of a secular ruler by posing him as King David of the Old Testament. The reader is helped to understand this message by the presence of recognizable artifacts, including the lyre.[83]

The four examples presented above show how a late-Roman type of lyre became Christianized. We need now to step back for a wider view, encompassing more instrument types and a broader chronological field, to understand the manifestation of the Antelami chordophone type around 1100 in Italy.

---

[81] The angled playing position was typical of the Greek chelys-lyre; see Maas and Snyder 1989, 99.

[82] Fashion in medieval court culture is discussed in Van Buren 2011; specific to Carolingian, Byzantine and Ottonian court fashion is the webpage <http://dressforsuccession.weebly.com/>, accessed 19.07.2017.

[83] On the Carolingian lyre, see Butt 2002, 167-168.

## 1.7 Morphology of the Cithara : Ancient Greek Lute Forms

The background story begins with two lute-types depicted in terracotta figurines and relief carvings from ancient Greece, beginning in the 4th c. BCE. A study published in 1965 by Greek historians Reynold Higgins and Reginald Winnington-Ingram examined thirteen images, concluding that there were two types of lute shown, A and B.[84] Type A is shown in **Pl. 15**:

Plate 15: Athens, National Museum, relief from Mantinea, workshop of Praxiteles (c. 330-320 BC), Muse playing pandoura.[85]

[84] Higgins 1965, 64.

[85] Panum (1915) 1971, 205; Behn 1918, 95; photo: <https://it.pinterest.com/pin/288793394837615728/> (accessed 12.12.2017).

Type B is shown in **Pl. 16**:

Plate 16: Alexandria, Greco-Roman Museum, statue of Muse with instrument (c. 330 - 300 BC).[86]

[86] Photo: https://it.pinterest.com/pin/354799276867525829/ (accessed 12.12.2017).

The difference between the two types is the shape of the body; type A (**Pl. 15, 17**) has clearly articulated shoulders or corners at the junction of where the neck meets the body, whereas type B (**Pl. 16**) has no such shoulders, making it difficult to tell where the neck ends and the body begins. The body sides of type A may be be straight or incurved, which a modern viewer might call "guitar-shaped" or "waisted". Type B could be called piriform or oval. The oval body shape, found in such natural forms as the tortoise shell and the gourd, is the more ancient of the two body types, going back at least to the Akkadian period (3rd millennium BC). A Hittite relief carved in the 14th c. BC at Alaca Höyük (in Anatolia, known to the Greeks as Galatia / Phyrigia) provides an early monument showing a body type of a long-necked lute with incurved sides (**Pl. 17**):

Plate 17: Ankara, Museum of Anatolian Civilization, (14th c. BC).[87]

[87] Schlesinger 1910, frontispiece; Panum (1915) 1971, 195; Behn 1918, 91; photo: https://i.pinimg.com/originals/e7/b7/e2/e7b7e2629ae7077b1a7b66df3b479ef8.jpg (accessed 12.12.2017).

Higgins and Winnington-Ingram noted that "one might conclude that the lute was probably not employed in Greece before the time of Alexander the Great and was perhaps introduced as a result of his conquests."[88] Alexander conquered Phyrigia in 333 BC, bringing up the question of the possibility of importing an updated version of the much older instrument type shown in **Pl. 17**.[89] **Pl. 18** strengthens this theory: here is an artifact from Eretria, some fifty kilometers from Athens, representing Eros "wearing 'oriental' costume (Phyrigian cap, trousers and a pouched chiton)" holding an elongated lute body with slightly incurved sides.[90]

When the depictions of lutes begin in 4th-c. Greece, most are of instruments with long or longish necks, and most show bodies of piriform profile rather than a shouldered/waisted shape. We have seen the shouldered Mantinea lute in **Pl. 15**, which is one of two or three existing examples.[91] The second rare example is shown in **Pl. 18**, a terracotta figure of winged Eros playing a lute with an elongated rectangular body with slight but discernible shoulder articulations in the shape of the body. Unfortunately the figure is damaged, with the neck and left hand of the player broken off. The question of the length of the neck is of some interest, because short-necked lutes (where the neck length does not exceed the body length and could also be a good bit less) are extremely rare in Greek sources; we have, to my knowledge, a grand total of two candidates (**Pl. 18, 20**):

---

[88] Higgins 1965, 68.

[89] Higgins 1965, 68-69, discusses further arguments on the Mantinea lute as a possible new import, concluding that while the dating of the artifact cannot be conclusive, "the later the date the happier one will feel", i.e., the authors lean towards the view that it was a recent import facilitated by the campaigns of Alexander. According to Maas 1989, 185, lute-types "seem to appear in many parts of the Greek world - southern Italy, the Peloponnesos, Egypt, Cyprus - almost simultaneously and to have burst upon the scene about the time of Alexander's Persian campaigns of the late 330's".

[90] Description published on British Museum website http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?assetId=362112001&objectId=465113&partId=1 accessed 01.08.2017.

[91] Higgins 1965, 62, lists a gilt terracotta appliqué from late 4th c. Tarentum showing an instrument of type A; I have not been able to locate a published image of this item, from the collection of the Staatliche Antikenmuseum in Munich (8702). See also Maas 1989, 185, for a brief mention.

Plate 18: London, British Museum: terracotta figure of Eros (Eretria, 230 - 200 BC)[92]

[92] Photo: http://musiclanguagefrontiers.blogspot.ch/ (accessed 10.01.2017).

Plate 19: London, British Museum: terracotta figure of Eros earlier photo with intact (?) lute neck; this statuette was described by Higgins 1965 as "upper part of instrument, with the player's left hand, has broken away."[93]

[93] Photo: Nickel 1972, Abb. 14.

Plate 20: Paris, Louvre: Tanagra figurine (first quarter 3rd c. BC)[94]

94 Panum (1915) 1971, 206. Photo: https://it.pinterest.com/pin/288793394837615701/ (accessed 12.12.2017).

Both of these lutes would seem plausible candidates for short-necked instruments in Greece of the 3rd c. BC, although I would be reluctant to take the two figurines as incontrovertible proof of the existence of a short-necked-lute type in Greece. For example, **Pl. 20** bears some morphological resemblance to a second terracotta figurine playing a lute-type chordophone (**Pl. 21**), which shows the altogether more common features of piriform body (type B) and elongated neck, i.e., a long-necked lute:

Plate 21: Paris, Louvre: Eros figurine (Myrina, first half 2nd c. BC)[95]

[95] Panum (1915) 1971, 206; photo: https://it.pinterest.com/pin/399413060675529208/ (accessed 10.10.2017).

## 1.8 Morphology of the Cithara : Roman Pandura Forms

Like the kithara and lyre, Greece bequeathed the long-necked lute to the civilization of Rome. The thirteen monuments presented in the study of Higgins depict just two character-types playing the instrument: a woman (sometimes a Muse), or Eros, represented about equally in the sources.[96] One of Higgins' artifacts was a gilt terracotta plaque used as a funeral decoration at Tarentum, for the pictorial sources of Roman lutes will follow the pattern of the lute as an instrument typically played by women, with funeral iconography as its most common context. Roman lute iconography begins generally in the 2nd c. AD, when we start to find images with consistent features on artifacts associated with the center of the Empire, the city of Rome.

Before proceeding with a short discussion of the Roman lute based on visual sources, the question arises, what was the lute called in its day? The Greek name was *πανδουρα,* which became the Latin *pandura.*[97] Literary sources from the 1st c. BC contain bits and pieces of information about it, the interpretation of which may be problematic. The authors who write about it are, generally, either from eastern parts of the Empire, or they associate it with the East. The following list of selected literary references, in Greek and Latin, from the end of the Roman republic (1st c. BC) through the end of the Roman Empire (early 5th c.) point to at least four regions of the eastern Empire which can be associated with the pandura, Egypt, western Syria, Assyria and Anatolia[98]:

—Varro (116 - 27 BC; earliest Latin reference[99]): *Pandura* is a type of cithara.[100]

---

[96] Higgins 1965, 62-64.

[97] Research on name references may be outlined by the following, which is by no means an exhaustive bibliographical list: Panum 1940 (1915), 215; Higgins 1965, 65-66; Wardle 1981, 298-306; Maas 1989, 185 -186.; Vendries 2012, 110-112.

[98] See Vendries 2012, 110-112, for an excellent discussion of terminological sources.

[99] Vendries 1999, 119.

[100] De lingua latina, VIII, 61: *cur nona cithara et psalterio et pandura, dicamus citharicen et sic alia.* According to Varro is the earliest Roman literary source for *pandura*.

—Pollux (2nd c AD, Egyptian): Author mentions the monochord and the *trichordon*, three-string instrument, "which the Assyrians call *pandoura*".[101]

—Clement of Alexandria (c. 150 - c. 215, Egyptian) pandura of Phyrigian origin (Anatolia)

—Athenaeus (fl. c. 200, Egyptian) "the weak-sounding *pandurus*";[102] "Pythagoras, who wrote a book on the Red Sea, says that the *Troglodytae* (a tribe living by the Red Sea) made the *panduri* out of the daphne which grows on the seashore."[103]

—Emperor Elagabalus (ruled 218-222, family of Syrian origin) played pandura according to Lampridius.[104]

—Martianus Capella (fl. 410 - 420, Carthage) The pandura is an instrument appreciated (cultivated) by the Egyptians (*panduram Aegyptios attemptare*).[105]

An examination of Imperial iconographical sources and existing artifacts will confirm that the instrument type was cultivated in different parts of the Empire, including Egypt and Syria, and that it occupied a much humbler position than the cithara in Roman culture. Christophe Vendries gives **Pl. 22** as the earliest monument of Roman iconography with a pandura.[106]

---

[101] Wardle, 1981, 305. See also Vendries 1999, 118. Mathiesen 1999, 284, uses the term "invented by the Assyrians", although Wardle's translation suggests familiarity, not origin per se.

[102] *Deipnosophistae* 4.78; English translation from *Athenaeus of Naucratis / The deipnosophists, or, Banquet of the learned of Athenæus* vol. I (1854), 281.

[103] *Deipnosophistae* 4.82; Athenaeus quotes earlier sources such as Euphorion; see Mathiesen 1999, 284, for a translation of the wood as "mangrove" (surely incorrect), and Wardle 1981, 305, for a reading of "laurel". The excellent work of 2012 by Vendries and Eichmann proves that laurel is the correct understanding; see Vendries / Eichmann 2012.

[104] Wardle, 1981, 306.

[105] Wardle 1981, 306, understands Capella's statement as "was an Egyptian invention." Vendries 2012, 110, reads "the Egyptians appreciate the pandura". The standard English translation of *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* of Stahl 1977, 357, reads, from the lips of Harmonia, "I permitted the Egyptians to try their skill with the pandura."

[106] Vendries 1999, 125; photo: https://it.pinterest.com/pin/310748443025318847/ (accessed 10.10.2017).


Plate 22: Mérida, Museo Nacional de Arte Romano: Inv. 8.241 (Emerita Augusta, end 1st c. - beg. 2nd c.), funerary carving of Roman Lutatia Lupata with pandura.

**Pl. 23** shows a sarcophagus found beneath the church of San Crisogono in Rome:

Plate 23: Rome, Trastevere, San Crisogono: sarcophagus in marble, 2nd. c.[107]

[107] Photo: http://ancientrome.ru/art/artworken/img.htm?id=3773 (accessed 24.10.2015).

**Pl. 24** presents a similar instrument to Plate 23, in a different medium (bronze):[108]

Plate 24: Rabat, Musée Archéologique: bronze pandura, 8 cm, Inv. B 753 (Iulia Valentia Banasa, 2nd - 3rd c.?).

Funerary sculpture from Roman and Athenian sarcophagus manufacturers show *pandurae* with relatively small bodies of ovalish or spade shape. A tortoise-shell resonator was used on some; **Pl. 25** and **27** below might be candidates for such instruments, whereas **Pl. 26** might suggest a carved neck-body joint and body.[109] Stone-carved images tend to have broadish necks, occasionally with significantly more than the usual three or four strings shown. Whether the broad neck (and/or string number) is medium-related to stone or metal work, or realistically specific to regional variations in Italy and Greece, we cannot say. A crescent-shaped ornament adorns the top end of the neck on **Pl. 23, 24** and **27**, of presumably no functionality to the sound of the pandura. Suggestive of the attribute of Luna, this may mark the pandura as a kind of lyre of the Roman moon goddess, appropriate to female musicians, in a pairing with the lyre of Apollo the sun god; it also echoes graphically the horns of Apollo's lyre with its two upright points.

---

[108] Vendries 1999, 126-127; photo: https://www.pinterest.ch/pin/563442603373388879/ (accessed 09.12.2017).

[109] See Vendries 1999, 126-127, for the view that north African *pandurae* typically used a tortoise shell body. For more comment on the bronze artifact in Pl. 21, see Vendries 1999, 127 and Pl. Xc; for the Achilles sarcophagus shown in Pl. 23, see Vendries 1999, Pl. XIIb; for the mosaic from Hadrumetum, see the same study, 127 and Pl. XIa.

Plate 25: London, British Museum: Child's sarcophagus in marble showing the marriage of Cupid and Psyche, Museum number 1805,0703.132 (Rome, 3rd c.; found at San Cesareo in Palatio).[110]

[110] Schlesinger 1910, 240; Panum (1915) 1971, 210; Behn 1918, 96; photo: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details/collection_image_gallery.aspx?partid=1&assetid=1612951332&objectid=459993
(accessed 10.10.2017).

Plate 26: Paris, Louvre Museum: sarcophagus in marble showing Achilles at the court of King Lycomedes, detail of musicians with cithara (l.) and pandura (r.); Museum Inv. No. Ma 2120 (Athens, c. 240).[111]

[111] Schlesinger 1910, 322 - 323; Panum (1915) 1971, 213; Behn 1918, 97; photo: http://ancientrome.ru/art/artwork/sculp/gr/headstone/hea037.jpg (accessed 10.11.2017).

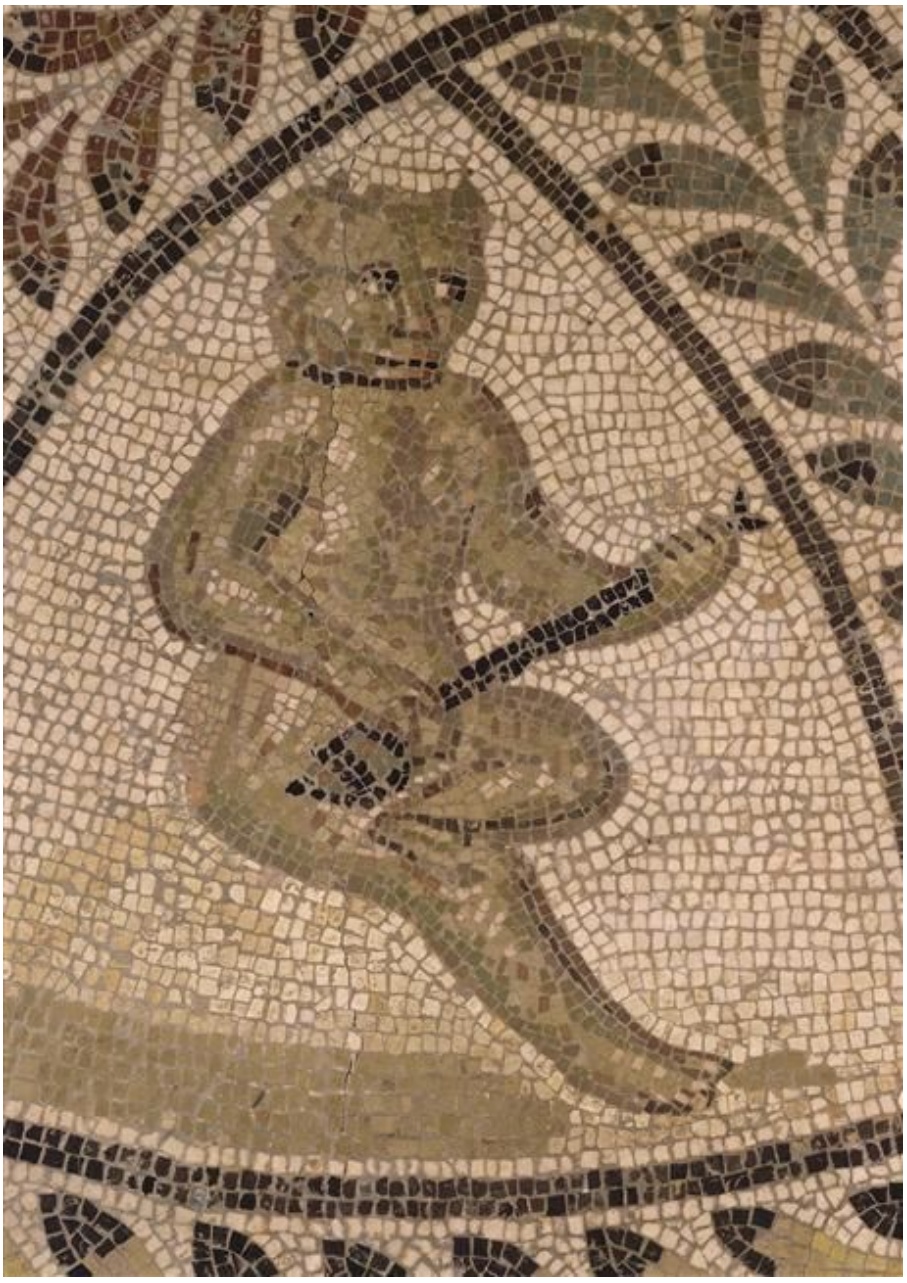


Plate 27: Paris, Louvre Museum: mosaic showing monkey with pandura (Hadrumetum, Tunesia, early 4th c.?).[112]

Long-necked chordophones are in evidence, then, in Roman culture on the Italian peninsula by the 3rd century AD, and they had been cultivated in Eastern Mediterranean cultures

[112] Photo: http://www.grandpalais.fr/sites/default/files/field_magazine_thumbnail/arton11801_0.jpg (accessed 10.12.2017).

substantially earlier. Greece, as we have seen, had the long-necked pandura since the 4th c. BC, and the Greek peninsula had become part of the Roman Republic during the 1st. c. BC. By the time of Emperor Augustus and the birth of Christ, all of the Eastern Mediterranean regions later to be identified with the history of the pandura had been annexed to Rome, some already since many decades. It would therefore seem reasonable to assume that the pandura was the earliest kind of lute on the Italian peninsula, and that it was known there, in some fashion, since the early days of the Emperors.[113] During the 3rd c. it apparently became fashionable enough to enjoy an important place in funerary iconography.[114]

Vendries' work as a modern scholar of the Roman pandura has been exceptional in fine-tuning our understanding of that instrument. In 1999 he wrote, in my paraphrase, "The repeated image of the lute in African iconography leads us to believe that from Roman Africa, which already flooded Rome with its manufactured products, Italy adopted the use of the lute. This instrument appears repeatedly in the arms of the women on the decoration of the vats of sarcophagi of the 3rd century, at the time of the crisis of the Third Century." I would agree that a foreign influence upon the lutes of the Italian peninsula was an important step for their development - also for the cetra of the 11th c., toward which we are slowly but surely creeping - but that the influence was not specifically north African during the 2nd and 3rd centuries. As outlined above, the pandura was already established in Rome by then via its proximity to Greece and the rest of the Eastern Empire.

## 1.9 Morphology of the *Cithara* : Byzantine Pandura Forms

The tangible influence for Italy came from an amalgamation of Christian and late Roman elements manifested in the *pandurae* of early Byzantine (Coptic and Syrian in particular) cultures of the southeastern and eastern Mediterranean, first visible in the 5th c., not before. Two groups of artifacts will illustrate this statement, the first a modest but significant group

---

[113] Vendries 1999, 128.

[114] That the instrument received a boost in public attention is to be understood from the importance of the emperor who is known to have played it, the short-lived Elagabalus, 218 - 222. Did his successor and Syrian sibling Severus Alexander also have a taste for it? See the discussion in Vendries, 2012, 106.

of four iconographical sources (**Pl. 28-33**), and the second, a group of seven existing pandura specimens in museum collections (**Pl. 35-40**). All sources of both groups show fundamentally the same type of pandura, although details of body size and shape are depicted according to different styles. The first two sources are floor mosaics:

Plate 28: Constantinople, Imperial Palace: mosaic showing pandura player (c. 425? - c. 625).[115]

[115] Farmer 1949 was the first publication to show a photo of this mosaic, which he called a Greek "pandore"; interestingly, while drawing welcome attention to the source, the article did not attempt to assign a date to the mosaic. Vendries 1999, 129, ftnt. 3, cites the early dating 425 - 450 from Salies 1987, whereas a consensus now favors a dating of the earlier 7th c. proposed in Trilling 1989 . Photo: https://it.pinterest.com/pin/472807660856222843/ (accessed 25.12.2017).

Plate 29: Qasr al-Lebia, Museum of Qasr al-Lebia: mosaic showing shepherd with pandura (dated 539, executed for Christian church under Bishop Makarios).[116]

The next two sources are from Qusayr ʻAmra, an 8th-c. hunting lodge east of Amman in Jordan. Both frescoes (**Pl. 30, 32**) depict spatulate-bodied *pandurae* with U-shaped side curvatures, while **Pl. 31** shows an artist's drawing of the fresco in **Pl. 30**, published in 1907:

[116] Photo: https://it.pinterest.com/pin/399413060675234612/ (accessed 22.08.2017).

Plate 30: Amman, Qusayr ʻAmra, Vault of Apodyterium: fresco showing bear with pandura (c. 725-740).

Plate 31: Drawing by A. Mielich of fresco shown in Pl. 30, published in 1907 and re-published in 1966.[117] The drawing has altered the shape of the resonator.

[117] Musil 1907, pl. xxxiv; Farmer 1966, Pl. 14 ("drawing by Alois Musil"). Mielich's drawing was published a third time in Fowden 2004, fig. 19.

Plate 32: Amman, Qusayr ʻAmra, fresco on ceiling arch of Great Hall showing woman with pandura (above), and author's on site drawing of pandura in same fresco.

In these images from the 5th - 8th c., we notice body (resonator) shapes unlike those of earlier *pandurae*. **Pl. 28** displays a resonator shape bearing a certain resemblance to **Pl. 22** and **26**, which suggests a retrospective association on the part of its creator; in fact, it is not so unlike the Mantinea relief from the time of Alexander the Great (**Pl. 15**). **Pl. 29**, a 6th-c. mosaic from a church floor in Libya, uses a new outline with articulated shoulders. Let us call

it a *spadix*. The following image (**Pl. 34**) from a grave chapel at Antinopolis in Egypt, 4th or 5th c., shows a woman holding a palm branch or *spadix*, a Christian symbol of eternal life and "Mary's triumph over death".[118] Similarly, the instrument in the Libyan mosaic is depicted in the proximity of a peacock, an early Christian symbol of eternal life.[119] I have borrowed the term *spadix* from three authors writing about musical instruments from the second century, Quintilian, Nicomachus and Julius Pollux, with full awareness that we do not know, ultimately, which kind of instrument they were referring to.[120]

Plate 34: Recklinghausen, Ikonen-Museum: Woman with palm branch, Schêch Abâde, Antinopolis.

[118] Photo: Wessel 1963, 89, 91. For the symbolism of the palm branch, see Sill 1975, 127.

[119] See Vendries 2012, 107.

[120] For comments on the term spadix as found in the three authors named, see Vendries 2012, 66-67.

We know, then, that *spadix* was a stringed instrument whose name meant "palm branch," and that it seems to have been used in what is now Jordan and Egypt, for the only writers who mentioned it came from those areas. Quintilian, from Spain and writing c. 100, had never actually seen one himself, but associated it with women. Nicomachus listed it after kithara and lyra, and Pollux mentioned it in a list including those instruments also. The palm branch or frond is represented as a long shaft with small, pointed leaves projecting at an angle inclined toward the branch end. The instrument in **Pl. 29** has small pointed ornaments on the shoulders of the waisted body, and these are connected to the slender neck in an organic style which might allow one to make an association with spadix, although this remains pure speculation.

The ornamental "leaves" on the shoulders of the chordophone are also found elsewhere than on musical instruments; they are a common motif in eastern Christian art forming ornamental borders and bands, as in the garland worn by the woman in **Pl. 34**, or the borders shown in **Pl. 27**. The figure in **Pl. 34** also offers a prominent three-leaf cluster at the end of the branch just above her hand, which seems to foreshadow the trefoil or lily so ubiquitous in later Christian art. Three-pronged leaves also figure in border patterns, as in **Pl. 30**, and the motif is sometimes carried over to turn up on the end of a pandura neck, where it can also give the impression of a later variation of the sickle ornament mentioned earlier (**Pl. 25, 31**). By c. 1100 it will have become a standard peg-head ornament on the cetra.

*Spadix*: the word sounds like "spade", meaning shovel, perhaps just a coincidence? Whichever words we use to describe the image of the resonator, this becomes the dominant body shape of the pandura during the 5th - 8th centuries, as confirmed by the next series of examples, which are actual surviving specimens. A total of seven instruments have been found that can be identified with a Christian Egyptian provenance from the 5th - 7th centuries. Among these, excavated from a grave site at Antinopolis like the small figure of the woman with the palm branch, is the lute shown in **Pl. 35:**

Plate 35: Grenoble, Museum: Body of lute (Byzantine pandura) found in a grave excavation in 1907 by Albert Gayet at Antinopolis, Egypt (5th - 6th c.).

All of the surviving *pandurae* are long-necked, including the Grenoble example above and the following selection of other specimens (**Pl. 36-40**). Three of the seven total have a known context; of the ones shown here, **Pl. 35** comes from Antinopolis and **Pl. 39** from Saqqara.[121] All are supposed to date within the 5th to 9th centuries, although the most secure dating is that of the Antinopolis lute (**Pl. 35**).[122]

[121] More details for all of the surviving instruments are found in Eichmann 1994 and Vendries 2012.

[122] Photos: Vendries 2012, 101.

Plate 36: New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art: lute (Byzantine pandura).[123]

Closer examination of these instruments reveals that the fingerboard section of the "long neck" is typically about half of the neck itself: were we to substitute the area above the nut with a compact peg-head, the neck would appear substantially shorter.

[123] Photo: https://metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/473395 (accessed 12.12.2017).

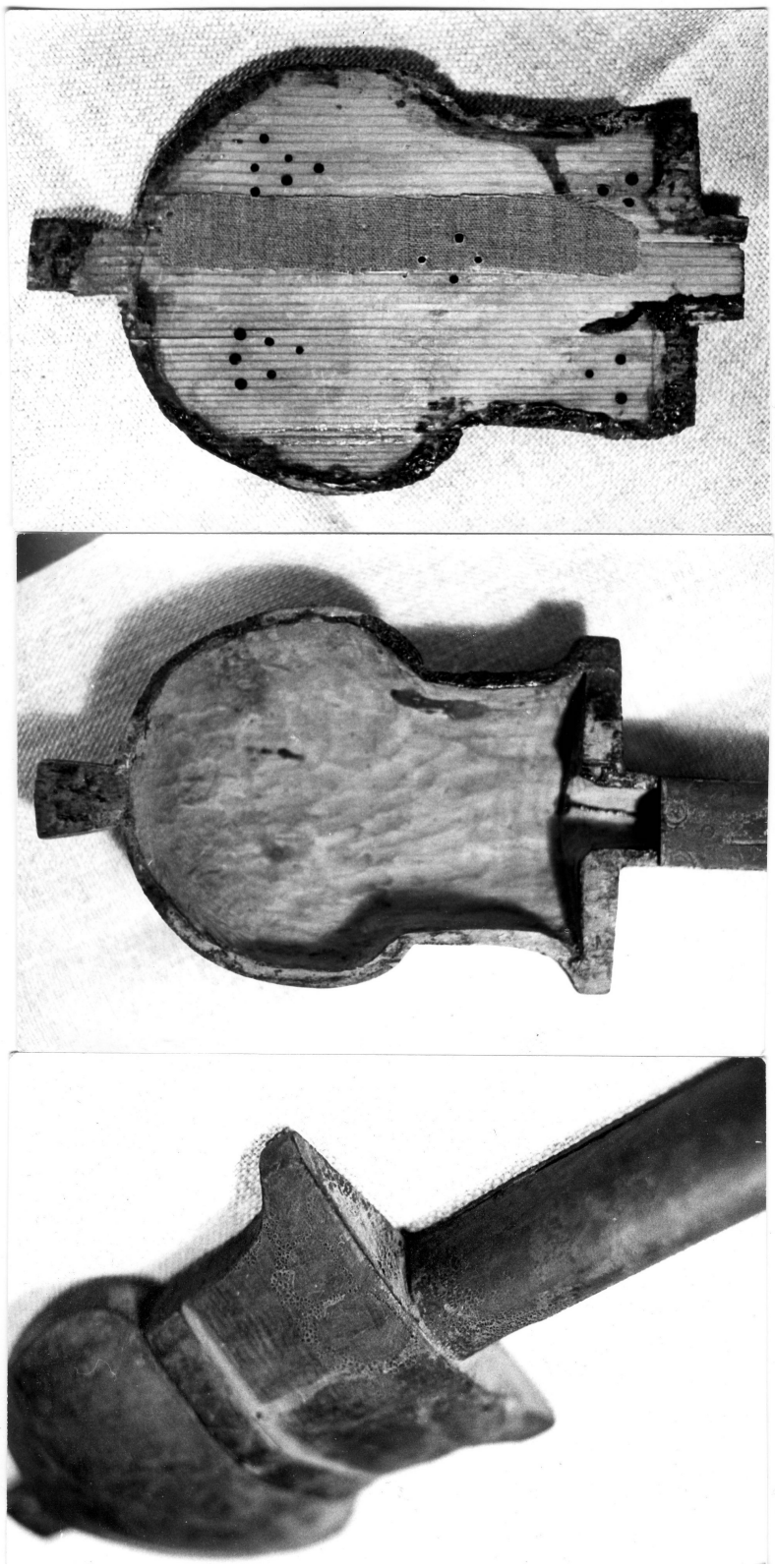


Plate 37: New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art: lute (Byzantine pandura).

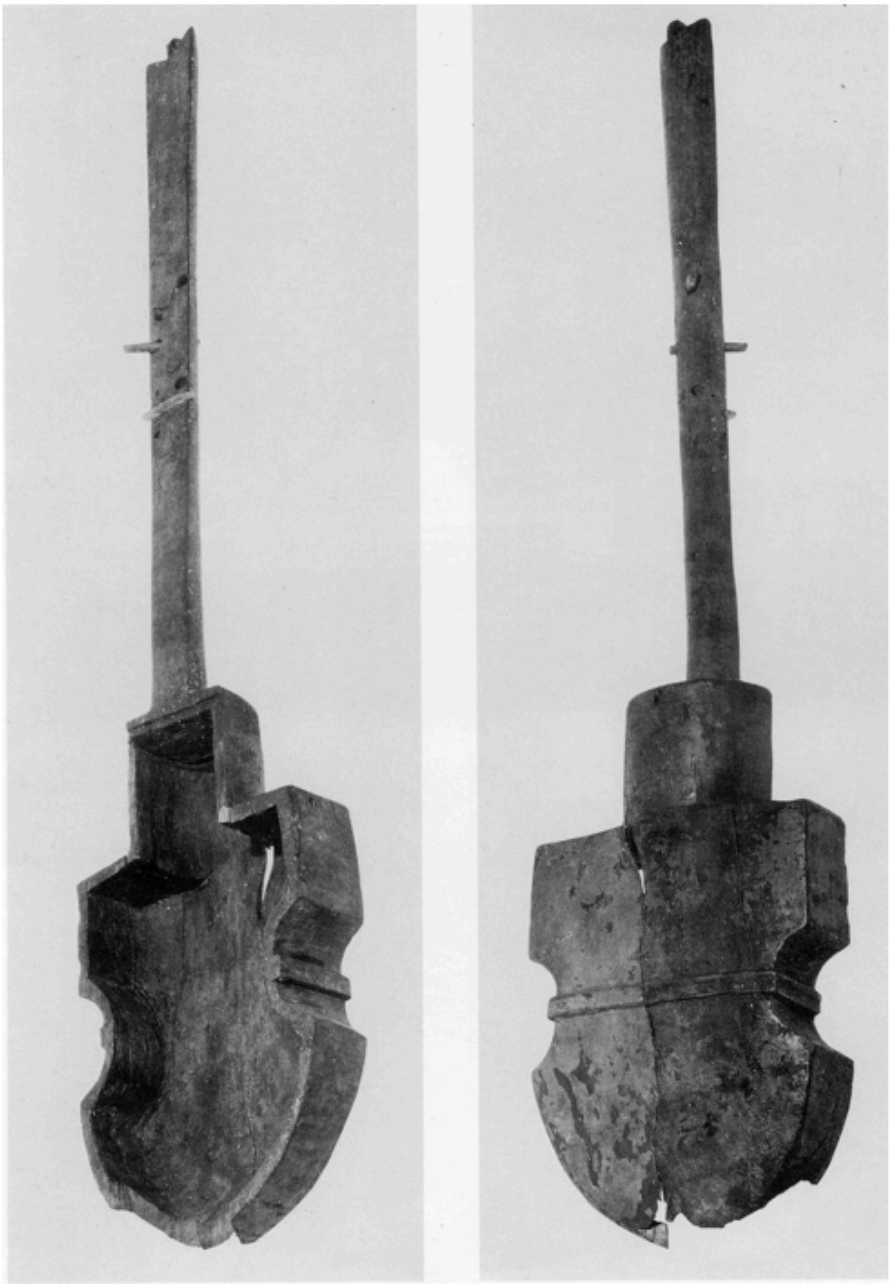


Plate 38: Heidelberg: lute (Byzantine pandura).[124]

[124] Photo: Eichmann 1994, Tf. 7.

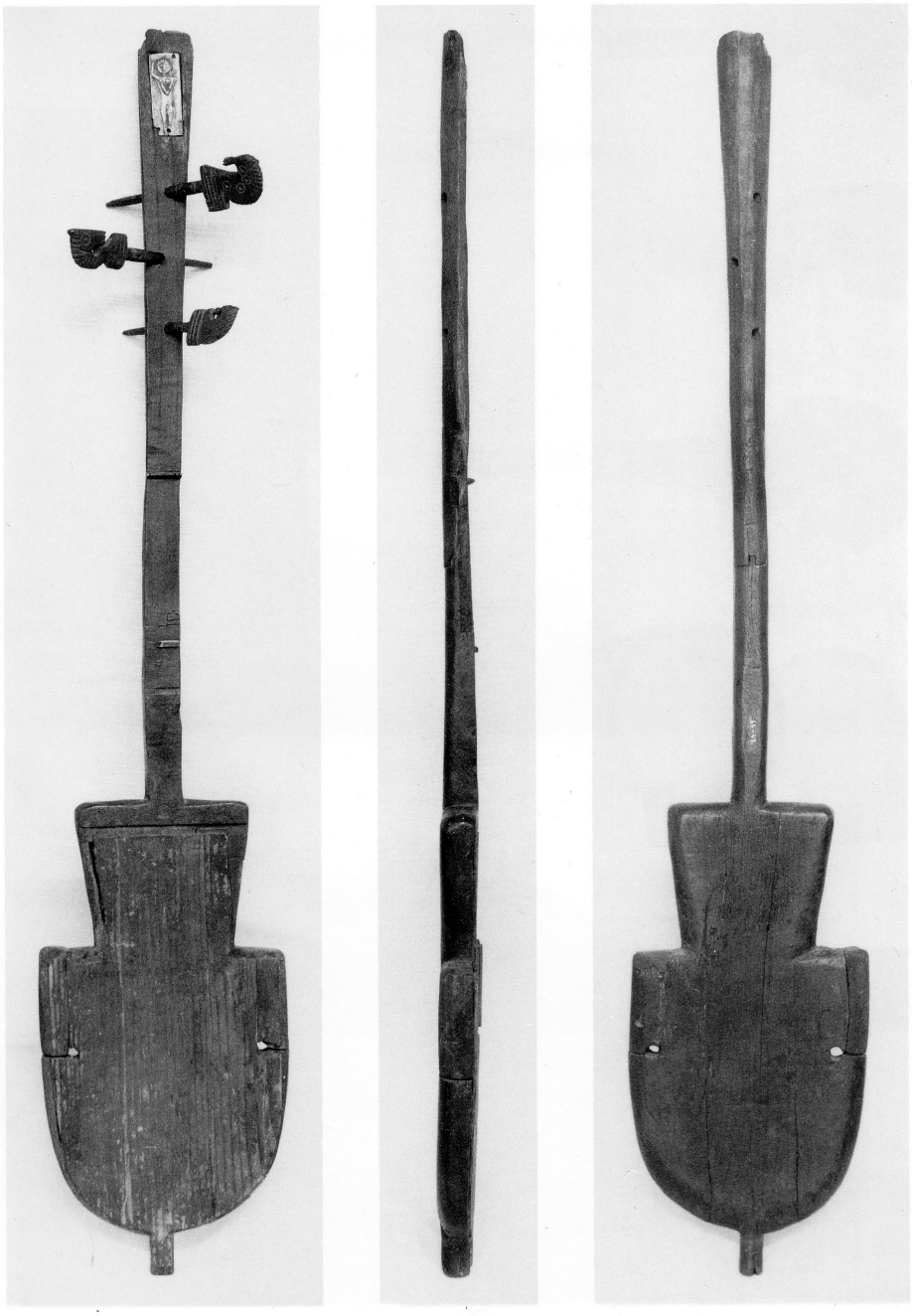
TAFEL 4


Laute Nr. 2 (Saqqāra/Koptisches Museum, Kairo): a. Rückansicht des Corpus von links; b. Rückansicht des Halses; c. Gesamtansicht von vorne. – Gesamtlänge 85,8 cm. – Photos: a.b. B. Hackländer-von der Way; c. Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Kairo.

Plate 39: Cairo: lute (Byzantine pandura).[125]

[125] Photo: Eichmann 1994, Tf. 16.

TAFEL 16



a b c

Laute Nr. 6 (Fundort unbekannt/Musikinstrumentenmuseum des Münchner Stadtmuseums): a. – c. Vorder-, Seiten- und Rückansicht. – Gesamtlänge 96,2 cm. – Photos: Verf.

Plate 40: Munich: lute (Byzantine pandura).[126]

[126] Photo: Eichmann 1994, Tf. 4.

Earlier in this chapter we saw evidence of the process of the Christianization of the Roman lyre-cithara via Byzantine culture, with two 6th-c. examples which turn up in 9th-c. Carolingian manuscript illumination (**Pl. 10, 11, 12, 13**). With the surviving instrument specimens from the 5th c. and later, we see the same process occurring with the Roman pandura in what had always been one of the most receptive areas of its practice, the southeastern part of the Mediterranean. The body profile of **Pl. 36** and **37** is recognizable on the 6th-c. lyres in **Pl. 12** and **13**. The proliferation of the spade-shaped body is consistent with the proliferation of the most potent Christian symbol of all, the cross; compare **Pl. 40** with this cross from a 9th-c. Psalter (**Pl. 41**):

Plate 41: Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbiliothek, Cod. bibl. fol. 23, fol. 1v, frontispiece with cross framing text of Isidore of Seville's prologue.[127]

[127] This and all of the photos below from this manuscript come from http://digital.wlb-stuttgart.de/sammlungen/sammlungsliste/werksansicht/?no_cache=1&tx_dlf%5Bid%5D=1343&tx_dlf%5Bpage%5D=1 (accessed 15.10.2017).

Some examples of otherwise unbroken spade profile incise the sides with two small incuts - possibly to allow the body to be stabilized with pegs or dowels when it was being carved.[128] The allegorical graphic does not finish with the cross, however, for those who have read the Church Fathers' remarks on stringed instruments - albeit a different type of cithara, the *psalterium* - will know that the letter D forms the shape of the instrument; that is, it has now become part of the design of a necked chordophone.[129]

In summary, the seven existing lutes are *pandurae* from Christian Egypt (Coptic) culture during the Early Byzantine period which ends in the 7th century. They should not be associated exclusively with use in Egypt, for they are found in other eastern Mediterranean iconographical sources of the period. Because the pandura is seen on sculpture from Rome and other areas of Roman influence in the 3rd and 4th centuries, reciprocal influences between (Christian) Rome and the eastern Empire must be assumed. Regarding which adjective best suits the surviving examples, Vendries' proposal of Byzantine is better than Coptic, which could imply an exclusion of the larger Christian-Roman context within which they thrived.[130]

The 6th c. seems to be the last one providing a handful of written records using either the Latin or Greek terms for the pandura.[131] It is also the time when Cassiodorus famously mentions *pandurius* as a wind instrument, ostensibly a case of confusion stemming from the syllable "Pan" (god of woodlands, shepherds, associated with the *syrinx* or panpipe) contained within the term. His mistake was repeated by Isidore and Rabanus in the 7th and 9th centuries respectively.[132] Is it in fact a "mistake," and why did later authors repeat or condone it? It is difficult not to entertain at least the possibility that it was a conscious rejection (Christian-fueled) of the pagan type of cithara, in an age where cithara is such a

---

[128] My thanks goes to Jacob Mariani and Peter Forrester for pointing this out from the standpoint of a luthier/ woodcarver; see further discussion on construction techniques in Chapter 4.

[129] See pp. 24 - 26 above for comments about this from Cassiodorus and later writers.

[130] Vendries 2012, 102. The author pointed out that D. Friedrich had used the term "romano-Coptic" to describe the Antinopolis instrument in 1984, whereas the term "Coptic lute" was, and continues to be, the commonly used one.

[131] See Vendries 2012, 111-112, for a useful list.

[132] For a discussion of Pietro Aaron's early 16th-c. commentary concerning Isidore's *pandorius* / *pandorium*, see Ceulemans 2002, 16.

charged icon. The 'misplacement' of it, etymologically speaking, was Freudian. But there is also an interesting corresponding phenomenon at this moment in iconography: as Cassiodorus was writing his statement on the pandura, the mosaic in **Pl. 29** was constructed, showing a shepherd playing, instead of the usual shepherd's instrument the *syrinx*, a pandura. A second example of the same "mix-up" is found in **Pl. 28**, more elusive to date precisely but roughly contemporary with the previous source. The shepherd, by having a type of cithara as his attribute rather than his usual *syrinx*, might suggest Orpheus, or he would - more convincingly, given the contexts of these monuments - suggest Christ.[133]

## 1.10 Morphology of the Cithara : Etrurian Forms

The Byzantine lutes and their related iconography reproduced above of the same period, 5th-8th c., represent the first observable step in the Christianizing of the pandura. They influenced lutes on the Italian peninsula; more precisely, they were an important part of the manifestation of the fashion of Byzantine culture in Italy during those centuries and beyond. The next group of monuments, those from the Carolingian era, will make this plain. Before we return to the glories of Carolingian book painting and ivory carving, a question may be interjected: was the pandura (or any other kind of lute with a shorter neck), which passed to Roman civilization from the Greeks, cultivated on the Italian peninsula before the Roman Empire?

The answer: not according to any evidence known. Parallel to Greek culture was that of the Etrurians in modern Tuscany, western Umbria and northern Lazio. While lutes - the only known contemporary type would have been the Greek *pandoura* - effectively had no presence in Etrurian culture, "in Greece the lyra (chelys-lyra) peaked during the Classical period, *but it was never as popular there as in Etruria and Lucania....the most surprising instrument is the cylinder-kithara which was often shown in Etruria but rarely in Athens....it can be called the*

[133] For a discussion of possible iconographic interpretations of these shepherd-with-pandura sources, see Vendries 2012, 107-109.

*'national instrument' of Etruria*" (italics mine).[134] Lawergren's term cylinder kithara refers to a round-bodied lyre with rather broad arms attached to the 'shoulders' of the resonator, with a cross-bar at the top of the arms (**Pl. 42**):[135]

Plate 42: Schwerin, Staatliches Museum, KG 708: Cylinder kithara depicted on Attic pottery, painted by Pistoxenos; Iphikles learns to play the lyre (Skyphos, c. 480 BC).

The word "cylinder" refers to the round shapes at the base of each arm where the arm meets the resonator. These are a salient feature of this interesting type of lyre, and they are always described in modern literature as being non-functional, although there is a case to be made for them as buzzing devices similar to medieval bray pins on a harp, or to Coke bottle tops attached to modern African finger pianos. Made of thinly hammered metal, thin pieces of horn or other natural material (seashells?), their buzzing or rattling would have enhanced the sound presence of the instrument; the wide arms may have been hollow as well for further volume. Similar "miniature cymbals" might be the circular ornaments seen on the ends of the

---

[134] Lawergren 2007, 122. The author described the presence of the lute in Etrurian iconography as "rare"; no images have, to my knowledge, been named or published.

[135] Mathiesen 1999, 256, fig. 42.

cross-bar of the Classical Greek concert kithara which are likewise claimed to be non-functional parts.[136]

Whatever its actual sound possibilities, the cylinder-kithara should perhaps not be too quickly dismissed as a presence, however dim, in the collective unconscious of the peninsula in terms of Byzantine-Carolingian and Byzantine-Ottonian precursors of the cetra, for many depictions of this common instrument in Etruria show a spade-shaped profile of the resonator. As Lawergren pointed out, "the body of the instrument is shaped like the letter D turned ninety degrees clockwise."[137] The Etruscan iconographical sources for this instrument fade out during the 3rd c. BC; whether its actual usage continued on locally, perhaps during the Imperial centuries, is not attested by any monuments.

There was another "buzzing" instrument with an elongated spatulate profile which further complicates the history of the lute in the Latin world of the Middle Ages and beyond. Isidore of Seville wrote about it as a kind of percussion instrument in the early 7th c., with Rabanus repeating Isidore in the 9th c.: "The *sistrum* is named from its inventress, for Isis, a queen of the Egyptians, is considered to have invented this species of instrument. Juvenal has: Let Isis with angry *sistrum* blind my eyes. Women use this instrument because a woman invented it.

---

[136] The topics of *overtone manipulation* and *tone color* on Western European musical instruments before the 16th century is a sadly neglected one in modern music history, with virtually no dedicated research publication appearing as yet. There was a wide range of devices for altering what we would call the tone color of an instrument: bray pins on a harp, a snare on a drum, rings on a triangle, a vibrating bridge on the tromba marina, a crenellated bridge on a vielle, a vibrating bridge or vibrating soundboard on a symphonia or hurdy gurdy, bray pins on a virginal....these are all examples of tone manipulators, used to enhance an intended musical function within a specific context. The presence and projection of soft string instruments, in particular, could thus be magnified. How else, without the application of such devices, could Paulus Paulirinus writing c. 1460 have declared that the harp "projects sounds to a great distance, indeed farther than any other instrument aside from the trumpet, organ and portative"? See Howell, Standley, "Paulus Paulirinus of Prague on Musical Instruments", *Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society*, Vol. IV - VI (1979-80), 9 - 36.

The Classical Greek concert kithara and cylinder kithara would thus seem to provide early iconographical evidence for such enhancement of stringed instrument sound. The percussive boost thereby gained would serve to accentuate the rhythm of a melody, an aspect vital for accompanying dance. For a discussion on the dance-music function of the cylinder kithara, see Fleischhauer 1964, 24 -25. This will be a common point with the musical function of the cetra to be described later in this essay.

[137] Lawergren 1985, 27.

So among the Amazons the army of women was summoned by the *sistrum*."[138] Yet an illustrated manuscript of Prudentius' *Psychomachia* contemporary with Rabanus represents it as a stringed instrument (**Pl. 43a/b**):

[138] McKinnon 1998, 44. For an english translation of the passage in Rabanus, see Throop 2009, Vol II, 208.

Plate 43a: Valenciennes, Bibliothèque municipale, Ms. 412 (393 bis), fol. 22: scene from Psychomachia (Prudentius).[139]

[139] Photo: http://beta.biblissima.fr/fr/ark:/43093/mdatabe26bf9b81c8fef58f66ac64d01a2069c04141c8 (accessed 12.04.2017).

In the scene illustrated above, Sobriety (*Sobrietas*) wages battle against Sensuality (*Luxuria*) and overturns Sensuality's chariot by thrusting the Cross in front of the rushing horses; Sensuality is thrown out and crushed under the wheels, upon which her minstrels Jest (*Iocus*) and Wantonness (*Petulantia*) "are the first to throw away their cymbals (*cymbala*), for they play war with such arms, trying to wound by strumming their *sistra* (*sistro*)."[140] Examples of these instruments have been drawn as below (**Pl. 43b**), the *sistrum* here showing a form like a Byzantine pandura:

Plate 43b: Valenciennes, Bibliothèque municipale, Ms. 412 (393 bis), fol. 22: detail of *sistrum* (l.) and *cymbala* (r.).

Why did the artist represent the *sistrum* in this way? The shape of the Byzantine pandura may have been inspired by, or consciously connect to, the shape of the *sistrum*:

[140] Psychomachia, lines 433-435: *nugatrix acies: Iocus et Petulantia primi / cymbala proiciunt; bellum nam talibus armis / ludebant resono meditantes vulnera sistro.* Original text and translation are taken from Snider 1938, 72-73.

Plate 44:, Naples, National Archeological Museum, two *sistra* from Pompeii (1st. c.).[141]

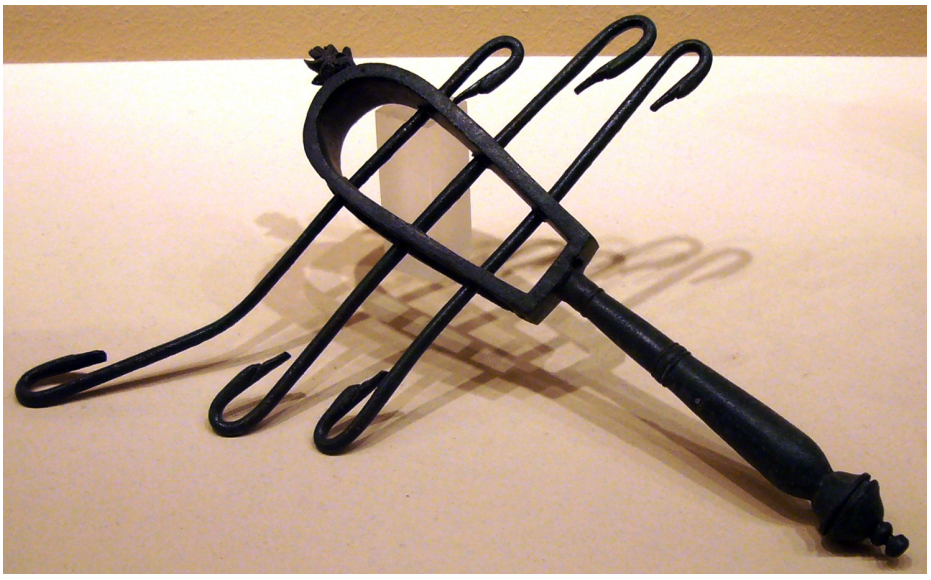


Plate 45a:, Rome, Exhibition 2007 "Memorie dal sottosuolo. 25 anni di scavi a Roma," *Sistro romano*.[142]

[141] Photo: https://vico.wikispaces.com/Leisure+Activities (accessed 17.08.2017).

[142] Photo: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sistrum#/media/File:Mostra_Olearie_-_sistro_1010384.JPG) (accessed 17.08.2017).

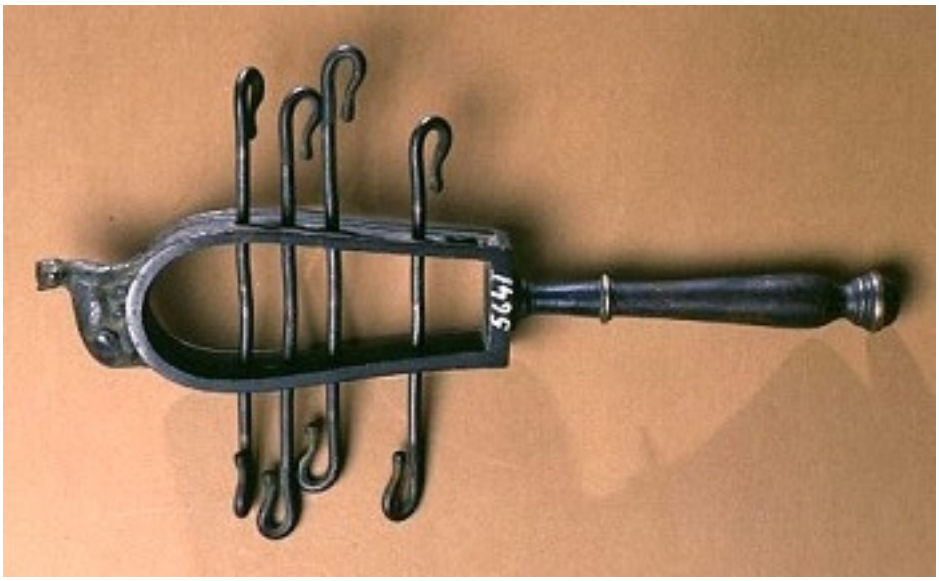



Plate 45b: Roman *sistrum*.[143]

The association between the *sistrum* and war noise was touched upon in the text of Isidore, and we can assume that the ancient Egyptian instrument had a similar function. It also had a funerary function, which it shared with the pandura, and like that instrument, it was exclusively played by women.[144] The common morphology of the two instruments is surely not coincidental, and the appearance of the Byzantine body shapes of the pandura seen on the surviving examples and in the iconographical monuments of their period - shapes which are all varieties of the spatulate form - points to a shared *inventio et usus* of both instruments.[145] Antelami's cetra uses the shape and thereby shares in a Mediterranean chordophone heritage that encompasses a time span and geographical range as expansive as the Roman and Byzantine Empires.

---

[143] Photo: www.globalegyptianmuseum.org/glossary.aspx?id=354 (accessed 17.08.2017).

[144] See Marcuse 1975, 87-90.

[145] It is also surely not coincidental that some common names for the cittern since the Renaissance are etymologically derived from Latin *sistrum*, i.e., cistre, sistre (French), Cister, Sister, Zister (German), cister (Danish). See Ivanoff 1995, 886.

## 1.11 Morphology of the Cithara : Italo-Byzantine Forms

We shall now return to the Carolingian period to continue the narrative of the developments leading up to the establishment of the cetra by c. 1100 in Italy. The usual modern history-book formulation of the "Carolingian Renaissance" as a conscious revival of Classical Greco-Roman learning is a somewhat sleepy way to describe the explosion of the Christianizing of Western Europe in a new wave of creatively-charged energy as a direct correlation to the power ambitions of the New Holy Roman Emperor. Manuscript illumination literally instills light and color into books as a new graphic medium is cultivated with an effect a bit like the birth of the cinema or the rise of computer graphics in the 20th century. Weaving a tapestry of geometric form and color primarily around letters, insular illumination of the 6th to 9th c. was the first wave of a new visual book culture in Western Europe. The Carolingian school of book painting brought a new level of naturalism - of people, figures, faces, objects and movement - to celebrate the wonders of the heroic deeds of the Bible and Classical stories. Among the depicted objects were musical instruments, mainly related to King David. But music as a science also came into increased focus during the 9th c., as a growing need for a theory of what was being sung in Church arose, and the study of music theory became a legitimate and necessary complement to actual singing. The 9th c. in this sense saw the birth of the medieval *musicus-cantor* pairing which became the fundamental "complete musician" right through the centuries to our own day. And, as will be argued in the next chapter, no instrument was more central to this science than the *cithara*.

Instrument depictions in Carolingian works will be found primarily in illustrated Bibles or in illustrated sections of the Bible, most typically, the Psalter. Among the novelties in 9th-c. art are elaborately illustrated Psalters using a complete program of visual images, it is thought, for the purpose of education; one of the first enterprises for the schoolboys in monastic education was to memorize the 150 Latin Psalms, and seeing pictures that illustrated them was a simple mnemonic strategy. Book covers made for the so-called Psalter of Dagulf, commissioned by Pope Adrian were carved of ivory in the palace workshops of Charlemagne, showing King David and musicians, one of whom is playing a type of lute that we have not seen before (**Pl.46**):

Plate 46: Paris, Louvre: Ivory cover of Dagulf Psalter, 783 - 795.[146]

The Dagulf Psalter ivory cover gives us the important information that the short-necked, oval-bodied lute with a clearly articulated neck joint - otherwise undocumented in the Mediterranean cultures, and a fundamental piece of the puzzle to prepare for the cetra - was cultivated in Byzantine Greece by the mid 8th c., perhaps before, and that the Carolingians in northern Europe chose to be identified with it (among other Byzantine instruments, starting

[146] Photo: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Dagulf_Psalter#/media/File:Plaques_reliure_psautier_Dagulf_Louvre_MR_370-371.jpg (accessed 12.12.2017).

with the hydraulis or water organ) later in that century.[147] It is no surprise, then, that we meet forms of this ovoid lute in 9th-c. Carolingian miniatures of King David, as in **Pl. 47** and **48**.[148] This instrument had surely been seen in Lombardic culture in Italy by the 8th c. at the latest, and had manifested itself in north Italian illumination - hardly without Byzantine influence - by then also; Lombardic miniatures, in turn, were used by Carolingian illuminators as models.[149] Note, too, the clustered sound-hole groups which were seen on the Metropolitan Museum lute in **Pl. 36-37**, as a subtle yet clear marker of heritage:

[147] For references citing the account of Notker Balbulus describing musical instruments brought to Aachen by Byzantine ambassadors in 812, see Van der Horst 1996, 6.

[148] Among many reproductions, see Steger 1961, 162 - 163, and Tafel 2.

[149] No surviving examples of early Lombardic art specifically with musical instruments are known to me. The theme of Lombardic models influencing Carolingian art has received considerable commentary in art history research; a good starting point for discussion is the work of Meyer Schapiro (see items in Bibliography).

Plate 47: London, British Library, MS Add 37768 (Lothar Psalter): f. 5, King David (c. 840).[150]

[150] Photo: http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_37768 (accessed 12.12.2017).

Plate 48: London, British Library, MS Add 37768 (Lothar Psalter): f. 5, King David, detail (c. 840)

We note the similarity of Byzantine-influenced garments between this figure and King David in **Pl. 10**, also the softened spade-shaped body with a projecting string holder at the bottom for the three strings. The arrangement of the peg-head is a bit unclear, although it seems to show two frontal pegs (?). Although the side indentations or incurvatures are lacking on this cithara, the general shape and fingerboard-to-body proportion on this instrument reminds one of the Byzantine pandura specimens shown previously. Do any artifacts (later than those) exist that could confirm that **Pl. 48** shows a 'real' instrument of the 9th century? From the 10th c., or perhaps c. 1000, comes the following surviving example (**Pl. 49**):

Plate 49: Corinth, Archeological Museum, Object MF 10169 : chordophone found 1961 in excavated well in Corinth (late 10th c.). Top: drawing (Crane 1972, 79); middle: side view of restored lute; bottom: lute back before restoration.[151]

[151] Photos and description on museum website:
http://ascsa.net/id/corinth/image/bw%208599&q=references%3A%22Corinth%3AObject%3AMF%2010169%22&t=&v=icons&p=1&s=4&sort=rating%20desc%2C%20sort%20asc&size=full
accessed 11.08.17

The instrument in **Pl. 49** is an historically significant artifact, an ovoid Byzantine lute from c. 150 years after the miniature shown in **Pl. 48**.[152] Its soundboard and peg-head have not survived, and the neck of the one-piece instrument had already been repaired in antiquity; found separated, it was rejoined to the body in 1961. From the same era comes an illustrated manuscript of Rabanus Maurus copied at Montecassino (**Pl. 50**):

Plate 50: Montecassino, Codex, Rabanus Maurus De encyclopedia (1023).[153]

[152] This monument remains hardly known in organological literature; see Anoyanakis 1965, Crane 1972, 15, and Vendries 2012.

[153] Photo: Cavallo 1994.

Regarding Montecassino, art historian Meyer Schapiro has pointed out that in the mid-late 11th c., the monastery at Montecassino held "works ordered from Constantinople by the abbott Desiderius," as well as "products of immigrant Greeks who had helped to form a native group of monk-artists at the urging of the same Desiderius."[154] Schapiro described a second manuscript of the period containing a short-necked lute as done by "artists painting in the Italo-Byzantine manner, whether Italians or taught by Italians."[155] This image of David's musician Asaph (**Pl. 51**), shows an instrument held in a vertical position, of similar form to the Montecassino chordophone in **Pl. 50**. The context of the two illustrations is entirely different, with the first being a visual gloss on the section of Rabanus' treatise concerned with stringed instruments, and the second being a David portrait from an 11th-c. Psalter produced at Amiens. Of interest is also the rectangular instrument in **Pl. 50**, presumably an Antiquity-inspired cithara with two circles (see pp. 75-76 above for comments on the cylinder kithara, which according to Lawergren, was known in Lucania, a region not so far from Montecassino), with the word *musica* inscribed between the strings. To the right, a triangular / delta-shaped harp (?) with the label *cithara*, and further to the right, the lute with an illegible label (also *cithara*?).

Like the Montecassino lute, an 11th-c. miniature from a Psalter in Amiens, **Pl. 51,** shows three pegs. The upright playing position on the knee, together with the length of the plectrum, might suggest that this is a representation of a bowed instrument, as in **Pl. 74**, although the object in the player's hand in the Amiens Psalter is not a bow. For the moment, we should simply take note of the similarity of plucked and bowed forms of this oval short necked Byzantine chordophone:

---

154 Schapiro 1964, 49.

155 Schapiro 1964, 49.


Plate 51: Amiens, Bibl. municipale fonds escalopier 2. (11th c., Amiens)[156]

[156] Photo: http://www.enluminures.culture.fr/Wave/savimage/enlumine/irht3/IRHT_063762-p.jpg (accessed 22.07.2016).

Plate 52: Detail of Plate 51

Iconographical sources, in sum, support the proposal that there was a short-necked lute in Greece by the 8th c., which was known in Italy, at the latest, by the 11th century. The form we encounter in **Pl. 46-52** is *not* a literal continuation of the much earlier B-type lute described by Higgins / Winnington-Ingram from the Classical Greece of the 4th c. BC (see p. 41-49 above, including **Pl. 20**).[157] The Byzantine instrument imported into Italy during the Carolingian / Ottonian periods had a wider body, with an articulated neck joint, a broad three-pointed peg-head and (following **Pl. 46-49**) an end projection to fasten the strings to.

In describing the Lothar Psalter lute shown in **Pl. 48**, the surviving Byzantine-Roman lutes were mentioned above by way of comparing body length to fingerboard. Lothar's body shape hints at a slightly more spatulate profile than the other oval instruments. In fact, an elongated spade shape with clearly cornered shoulders has been mentioned above in connection with the *sistrum*, turning up in 9th-c. manuscript illumination. These monuments were created in Carolingian workshops of northern France, and while it has long been accepted that the illustrations were copied from Lombardic or Roman models showing Byzantine influence, the implications for the instruments represented therein have not been clearly recognized in the general organological community.

[157] Higgins 1965, 64.


Plate 53: Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbiliothek, Cod. bibl. fol. 23: Psalter, c. 820 - 830, Abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Pres.[158]

The surviving Byzantine *pandurae* (the Roman name is long gone by the 9th c.) are strongly evoked by the cithara held by David in this miniature from the Stuttgart Psalter (**Pl. 53**). According to Meyer Schapiro, "the model of the miniatures of the Stuttgart Psalter was a work of the seventh or eighth century from the Milanese region. The initials contain traces of Byzantine art which may be paralleled in Italian manuscripts of the eighth century."[159]

[158] Photo credit: see footnote 121.

[159] Schapiro 1980, 111.

Plate 54: Stuttgart Psalter, f. 55 (left); f. 69 (right)

Plate 55: Stuttgart Psalter, f. 83 (left); f. 97v (right)

Plate 56: Stuttgart Psalter, f. 108 (left); f. 112 (right)

Plate 57: Stuttgart Psalter, f. 125 (left); f. 163v (right)

Plate 58: Stuttgart Psalter,  f. 161

Plate 59: Stuttgart Psalter, f. 155v

The trefoil ornament sometimes found at the end of the neck of the pandura now has appeared as a string-holder on the bottom end. The artists have been lazy in terms of consistency of number of strings, often showing an inaccurate number of pegs (from four to seven), or vice versa. The number of strings depicted varies between three and six, but the in total ten images present a strong graphic concept of a cithara. The body has consistently clearly articulated, cornered shoulders; the upper edge of the soundbox is not at a

perpendicular angle to the neck as was the case on the Byzantine *pandurae* found in Egypt, but is somewhat slanted.

Psalters are one of the highly cultivated art forms of the Age of Charlemagne. There are different types. Some, like the Lothar Psalter mentioned above, have a prefatory miniature of King David, perhaps reflective of an earlier Byzantine or early Christian tradition of manuscript illustration.[160] Others, like the Stuttgart and Utrecht Psalters, have ongoing scenes throughout the Psalter which illustrate the Psalm texts in their ongoing sequence. This seems to be a tradition of illumination which begins in the 9th c. and continues with later Psalters and historiated Bibles.

The miniatures in the Stuttgart manuscript, then, are not random depictions of King David, but rather scenes which illustrate a specific text. What about those texts with stringed instruments? In the Vulgata version of the (Latin) Psalms, *cithara* occurs 14 times, *psalterio* occurs 8 (when *psalterio* is mentioned, it is always grouped in the same clause as *cithara*, with one exception, Ps. 143).[161] The cithara, for the Stuttgart artists, means a necked chordophone, i.e. a lute, which they will have modelled on 8th c. Italo-Byzantine miniatures, now lost. That this represented a "real" instrument in the music culture of the time is confirmed by a second type of instrument, depicted in one miniature: an organ, with three assistants pumping wind pressure; such an organ existed, in fact, at Charlemagne's court. A total of ten miniatures showing David with his cithara are found in Stuttgart (Ps. 42, 56, 70, 89, 91, 97, 107, 140, 146, 150) including Ps. 140 which has no mention of any instrument in its text.

With **Pl. 60**, we have a detail of one of the many musical instrument images from one of the most famous Carolingian monuments, the Utrecht Psalter.[162] The sources we have been looking at have shown King David and/or his four temple musicians. The Utrecht Psalter does something different: it shows large numbers of unspecific musicians in the act of giving praise, suggestive of perhaps a Byzantine court scene.

---

[160] Van der Horst 1996, 87.

[161] The Psalms with stringed instruments are as follows: *cithara* = 32, 42, 48, 56, 70, 80, 91, 97 (twice), 107, 136, 146, 149, 150; *psalterio* = 32, 56, 70, 80, 91, 107, 143, 150.

[162] Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS Bibl. Rhenotraiectinae I Nr 32 ("Utrecht Psalter").

Plate 60: Utrecht Psalter, fol. 18v.[163]

Like many sources mentioned in this chapter, the Utrecht Psalter could easily provide the focus of a separate in-depth study on musical instruments; it is a treasure trove of a variety of forms of stringed instruments in particular. My intention, however, is only to provide an overview of the material - forms, concepts, surviving instruments - which come together as the manifestation of the cetra around 1100. In order to place the miniatures of interest here in a context, a quick look at the provenance of the manuscript will be helpful. The psalter now

[163] This and all other photos of the Utrecht Psalter come from http://www.utrechtpsalter.nl/#about-the-psalter (accessed 10.05.2017).

kept at the university library in Utrecht is thought to have been copied near Reims c. 815-840.[164] Its vellum leaves measure approximately 33 x 25 cm and it has numerous detailed drawings populated with a myriad of figures involved in much activity. There are plentiful instrument depictions but they are physically very small. The images reproduced in the plates here are therefore greatly magnified. A total of twelve Psalm illustrations contain stringed instruments of four types which we could call pandurized lute (1), Roman-Byzantine kithara-lyre (2), triangular harp (3) and Alemannic lyre (4). Whereas the contemporaneous Stuttgart Psalter always uses a lute to represent the cithara of the Psalms, the Utrecht manuscript does not follow the same consistency. All four of these types are possible candidates to illustrate a Psalm text with cithara; of a total of 33 instruments shown, there are 12 kithara-lyres, 11 lutes, 8 harps and 2 Alemannic lyres.

Opinions vary regarding the number of scribes who produced the miniatures, but the number eight seems to have found some scholarly agreement.[165] Meyer Schapiro is among those who have proposed that the Psalter copied illustrations from a Late Antique manuscript; apart from an original perhaps of the 4th or 5th centuries, details of the iconography led him to believe in an intermediary "Latin model" of after about 700.[166] That the miniatures are in large part based on an earlier manuscript, seems to have gained general acceptance, though the precise nature and dates of earlier postulated versions vary.[167]

The 11 lute depictions in the Utrecht Psalter break down into five types, A - E. **Pl. 60** above is an A type as are the following **Pl. 61 a,b,c**:

---

[164] Van der Horst 1996, 24.

[165] Van der Horst, 1996, 47 - 54.

[166] Schapiro 1980, 77, 110.

[167] Mütherich and Gaehde 1976, 20, mentions that “one hypothesis holds that the drawings are more or less faithful copies from an 8th-c. Greco-Italian Psalter which transmitted a late-4th- or early-5th-c. archetype”.

Plate 61: Utrecht Psalter, fol. 24v (above left 61a); fol. 27 (above middle 61b); fol. 40 (above right 61c), illustrating Utrecht Psalter lute Type A.

**Pl. 60** and **61a - b** are long-necked lutes with spatulate bodies with markedly pointed shoulders and apparently no end projection at their base. **Pl. 61c** is the same but with a rounded rather than a three-pointed peg-head. **Pl. 62** exemplifies Type B, with rounded, out-curved shoulders, end projection similar to a kithara, and trefoil peg-head with three pegs.

Plate 62: Utrecht Psalter, fol. 25, illustrating Utrecht Psalter lute Type B.

Type C (**Pl. 63**) presents a spatulate body form with a perpendicular-to-the-neck upper body edge, plus a widish fingerboard, seem to foreshadow the Antelami cetra shown at the beginning of this chapter; here we have a similar body form to the Byzantine-Roman lute pictured in **Pl. 36** on p. 70, somewhat widened, with a neck about twice as broad, in other words, a general resemblance to the *sistrum* shape previously discussed[168]:

Plate 63: Utrecht Psalter, fol. 48, illustrating Utrecht Psalter lute Type C.

[168] For an instrument of similar shape, with a thinner neck, see the image from the Cappella Palatina in Palermo, now believed to have been painted by Coptic artists in the 12th. c., see Appendix I, Ex. 5.

Like Type C, Type D is shown in only one miniature in the Utrecht Psalter (**Pl. 64**), yet it seems distinct enough from other types to warrant its own category. An elongated spade shape ends in a projection at the bottom of the instrument, and the neck is somewhat shorter than on the closest other instrument Type A. The indistinct peg-head seems roundish (?). This particular miniature generated discussion in the early 20th c. around the object which the musician holds in his right hand, which was thought to have been a kind of bow or a sword, until Emanuel Winternitz confirmed in 1961 that it represents a measuring stick mentioned in the Psalm text.[169]

Plate 64: Utrecht Psalter, fol. 48, illustrating Utrecht Psalter lute Type D.

[169] Winternitz 1961, 227.

Type E (**Pl. 65-66**) echoes the body shape of what we took the liberty to call *spadix* or palm branch earlier in this chapter (**Pl. 29**). A tulip-shaped body with large, outward-curving shoulder arms, suggestive of a Classical Greek chelys-lyra; no body "base" or end extension; rounded pegbox of three strings. Two of the four Type E instruments show six frets on the neck, also making it clear that the fingerboard occupies most of the neck length, in contrast to what we have seen on the existing Roman-Byzantine lutes of the 5th-7th centuries.

Plate 65: Utrecht Psalter, fol. 76 (left 65a); fol. 81v (right 65b), illustrating Utrecht Psalter lute Type E.

Plate 66: Utrecht Psalter, fol. 81v (left 66a); fol. 83 (right 66b), illustrating Utrecht Psalter lute Type E.

The earliest analysis of the Utrecht Psalter instruments came from Kathleen Schlesinger, who wrote in 1910 that

> "the musical instruments bear distinct traces of Oriental influence such as the Greeks of Asia Minor, Syria and Northern Egypt would be likely to have felt in their intercourse with the Persians, Arabs, etc., who used the instruments of the older Asiatic civilizations, from which the neck finger-board and pegs were borrowed, whilst the sound-chest of the instrument remained essentially Greek in contour, and the instrument itself retained its Greek name of kithara, in Latinised form cithara.... as to the nationality of the handiwork and more especially of the drawings, which are outlined with a pen in bistre, some say they are the work of an Anglo-Saxon artist, some that they are copies from an old classical MS., whereas Sir Thomas Duffus Hardy considers they bear unmistakable signs of Oriental work, and that the scenery, fauna, flora, implements, furniture and costumes are such as would be familiar to an artist living in Alexandria before the burning of the library in 638 A.D., the scattering of the theological schools, and the destruction of the city by the Arabs."[170]

[170] Schlesinger 1910, 344.

Schlesinger's reference was Hardy's 1874 publication, "Further Report on the Utrecht Psalter."[171] His work offered conclusions far away from ideas which were more or less universally agreed upon one hundred years later. Hardy insisted the Psalter was, at the latest, a 6th-c. work, with miniatures copied not "from (manuscripts made in) Rome during the seventh and eighth centuries," but rather they were drawn directly by "a dweller in Alexandria well-acquainted with Syria....with 638 A.D. as the latest date that could be assigned to them," but most probably, "the latter part of the sixth century."[172]

Schlesinger was noncommittal on giving agreement to Hardy's conclusions, stating that the lutes in the Utrecht miniatures "were acknowledged descendants of the cithara at the time when the artist drew these illustrations."[173] She drew attention to the similarity between the round-bottom lyres in the Psalter and the body shape of the lutes, looking like the lyre with "cut off" arms and added long neck. The lutes, in her view, were ancestors of the vielle in the Middle Ages.

Winternitz, writing fifty years after Schlesinger, described the Utrecht lutes as having "the body of a kithara, but with a neck in place of the yoke; in other words, a cittern - that is, if we want to project this term as far back as the ninth century."[174] In a later passage,

> "Modern investigations have shown, with almost general consent, that the drawings of the Utrecht Psalter are based on much earlier models, probably Eastern, and quite possibly Alexandrian, antedating the conquest of Alexandria. These drawings would then reflect, not ninth-century, but sixth-century or even fifth-century musical usage. This interpretation of the Utrecht Psalter, however, is based chiefly on the visual style of the drawings. If we had but one more reliable representation of a fingerboard kithara from the sixth century! It would not only push back the origin of the European cittern to the threshold of the ancient world, when kithara and lyre were still in use, as we know from other sources; it would also support the dating of the origin of the Utrecht Psalter in this earlier period. Recent work by British archeologists has enabled

---

[171] Schlesinger 1910, 592.

[172] Hardy 1874, 12-16. Hardy's arguments for the Alexandrian origin of the miniatures rely heavily on a private communication written to him by Howard Payn in 1874.

[173] Schlesinger 1910, 345.

[174] "Cittern" = cetra; see Winternitz 1961, 227.

> me to find this missing link; an unmistakable cittern (sic) with atrophic kithara features…" (see the Qasr al-Lebia instrument, **Pl. 29**).[175]

No source was given for the Alexandrian provenance of the Utrecht miniatures in the 1961 publication of Winternitz; whether he got it from Schlesinger or tracked down her source (Hardy 1874), we do not know. In an article from 1980 on mosaic floor pavements in Cyrenaican churches, the same Qasr al-Lebia instrument was reproduced; a footnote cited a personal communication from Winternitz c. 1961 repeating the possibility of Alexandrian influence on the Utrecht Psalter.[176]

The next miniature (**Pl. 67**), an illustration of the Quadrivium of Boethius, shows Musica on the left holding a cithara of distinct Byzantine influence, close to those in the Stuttgart Psalter (**Pl. 53-59**), yet here with a *sistrum*-style peg-head, as seen on the handle of the *sistrum* in **Pl. 44** on p. 82:

[175] Winternitz 1961, 228.

[176] Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins 1980, 43-44, footnote 158.


Plate 67: Bamberg, Msc. Class. 5, fol 9v: Quadrivium illustration from Boethius, *De institutione arithmetica*, *De artes liberales*, c. 845, Tours.[177]

[177] Photo: https://www.staatsbibliothek-bamberg.de/index.php?id=1491 (accessed 10.03.2017).

Plate 68: Boethius, *De institutione arithmetica*, detail of Plate 6.

The Tours Boethius illustration, under a clear Italo-Byzantine influence like its contemporary neighbor the Stuttgart Psalter, has a special significance in that it is perhaps the earliest visual source aligning the pandura-style chordophone with the term *cithara* in a music-theoretical treatise. This is not an insignificant step in establishing a visual association for cithara in the music theory treatises of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. That is not to say that every treatise understood *cithara* as a lute-family instrument; but a substantial proportion did, and this is the earliest example known to me.

The next example from the *Psalterium Caroli Calvi* might present another case of *sistrum-pandura-cithara* confusion discussed in pp. 79 - 83 above: here are four instruments of the Psalms, *psalterio,* played by David, *cymbala* (Eman) *tuba* (Idithun) *cithara* (Ethan), while Asaph dances (**Pl. 69**).


Plate 69: Paris Bibliothèque nationale, Cod. lat 1152, f. 1v.[178]

[178] Photo: http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b550014234 (accessed 26.02.2017).

In this dynamic scene filled with movement and energy, Ethan, dancing, holds a large instrument of sistrum form and in sistrum playing position, with vertical and horizontal lines sketched on the wide upper part (**Pl. 70**):

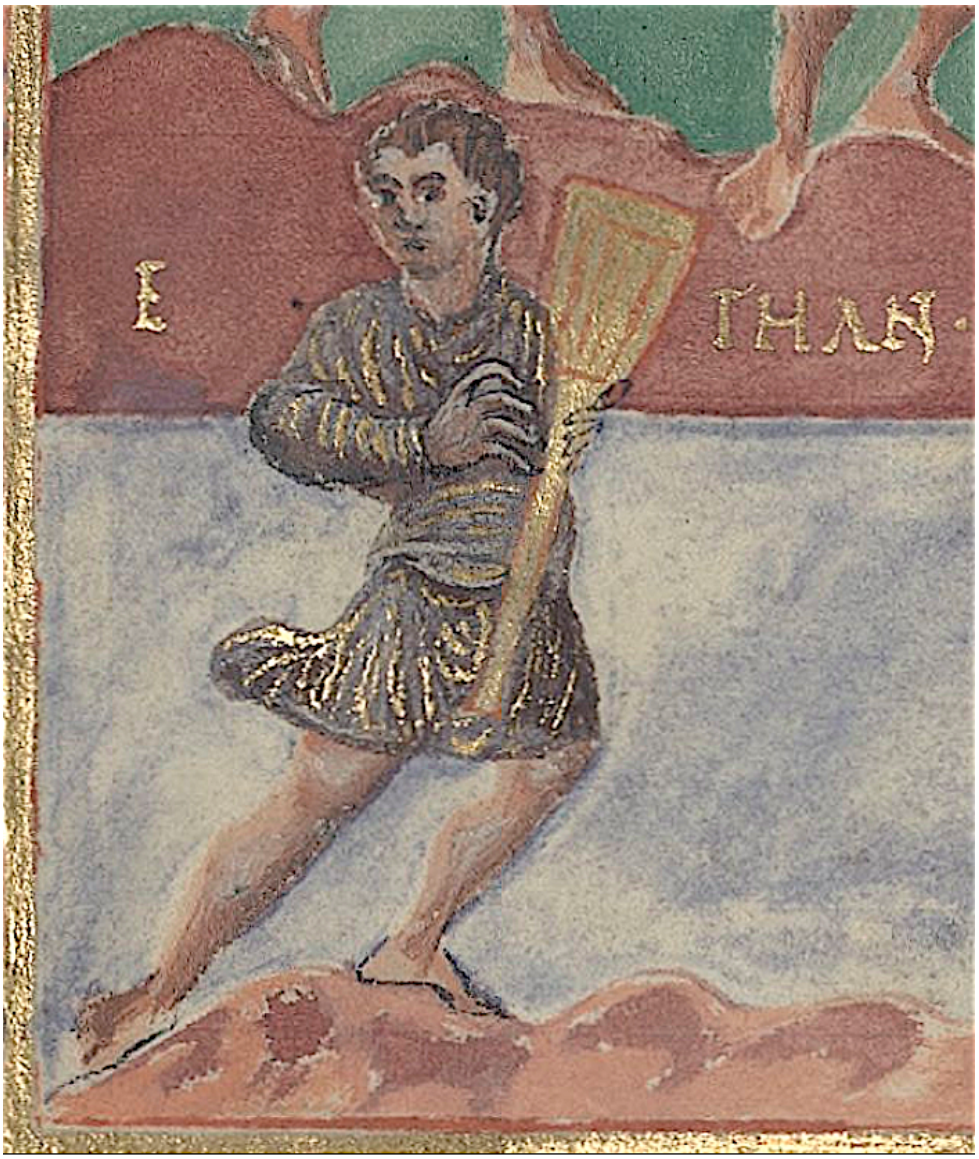



Plate 69: Paris Bibliothèque nationale, Cod. lat 1152, f. 1v, detail.

Hugo Steger saw this instrument in 1961 as "a triangular golden soundbox above a long, thin stem with four strings, in any case a stringed instrument where the left hand clearly plucks the strings; it could be a lute or vielle, but remains unclear…Friedrich Behn considers it to be a harp connected to a long handle."[179]

At the least, it would be highly unusual to find a lute being held and actually played upside down (1), and (2) there are no strings drawn on the "neck".[180] The presence of the *sistrum* in the scene is logical as a rhythm instrument to accompany dance, although the term is not present in the Vulgata text. Thus, despite a vague similarity in shape to a long-necked lute, this cithara in fact turns out to be a large *sistrum*; while the miniaturist has either confused the literal instrument list found in the Psalms, or made a conscious substitution of *sistrum* for *cithara*, but he, unlike the illustrator of the Prudentius drawing (**Pl. 42-43**) does not have the image of a lute in his mind.

A later image of David and musicians from the Ivrea Psalter (998 - 1002) conveys information of consequence for the 12th-c. cetra: frets.[181] Until now, these have been depicted rarely; we have seen them on two long-necked Utrecht Psalter lutes (**Pl. 65-66**), out of a total of eleven in that manuscript, and we know that the surviving Byzantine lutes were fretted with thin wooden frets and, in one case, tied gut.[182] The new aspects of the Ivrea lute are (1) the neck-to-body length is shorter than previous fretted examples just named, (2) the fingerboard is a bit wider, and (3) the frets are drawn as pairs of parallel lines which might - nothing is conclusive - suggest the broad wooden frets that, albeit much later, are a trademark of the cetra (**Pl. 70**):[183]

---

[179] Steger 1961, 165.

[180] Instruments may be held upside down in certain depictions of the Elders of the Apocalypse (see, for example, CE 2). The reason for this artistic convention may be that the Elders are described in the Revelation text as having three objects: crowns, phials (incense vessels) and citharae. They offer their crowns to the Throne of God and hold up incense vessels, which may often resemble the oval form of the citharae (see CE 6 for a 13th-c. example). The two similar objects thus came to be sometimes depicted in an attitude of offering. For further discussion, see Young 2015, 99-101.

[181] Seebass 1973, 177.

[182] See Eichmann 1994 for a discussion about frets on Byzantine lutes.

[183] See Chapter 4 for a discussion of frets on the cetra.

Plate 70: Ivrea, Biblioteca Capitolare, Cod. LXXXV, f. 23v. (998 - 1002).[184]

[184] Photo: http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b550014423q/f8.item.zoom (accessed 22.11. 2016).

## 1.12 Morphology of the Cithara : The Road to Santiago

To a significant extent, the history of stringed instruments in Western Mediterranean areas from the 5th/6th c. going into the 12th c. is about the adaptation of Byzantine elements, culminating in the adoption of the bow c. 1000. We have seen how the long-necked pandura flourished in Rome and particularly in the southeastern sector of the Empire, where the Christian (Coptic) artifacts have been found. Short-necked ovoid chordophones had appeared in Byzantium by the 7th c., possibly earlier, and we noted an example unearthed from a well in Corinth, dating to c. 1000. Meanwhile, mixed types of both the spade-bodied, long-necked Eastern pandura and the short-necked oval forms occur in Carolingian Psalter illustration, from Italian and northern French workshops, the latter consistently referencing Italian morphological prototypes of Byzantine influence.

By the 11th c., bows are seen playing a wide range of stringed instruments which had previously been plucked with plectrum or finger. Lyres, with and without fingerboards, are sometimes depicted with a bow, as in **Pl. 71**:

Plate 71: Vatican, Vat. lat. 5729, (Ripolli Bible, c. 1020).[185]

[185] Photo: https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.lat.5729 (accessed 19.10.2017).

It was, however, another Byzantine instrument, the short-necked chordophone, both ovoid and waisted, which became the big success story for the bow as a new fashion, and which took two forms, oval and waisted, as seen in **Pl. 72, 73** and **74**:

Plate 72: British Library, Add. MS 40731, f. 7v, (Bristol Psalter, 11th c.), showing waisted bowed instrument on the left; to the right of King David in the middle, a plucked oval-bodied instrument might be an Arab-style lute with bent-back pegbox, but the form is not clear enough to be conclusive.[186]

[186] Photo: http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_40731 (accessed 22.11.2017).

Plate 73: British Library, Add. MS 40731, f. 223 (Bristol Psalter, 11th c.): Three instruments hang from a tree next to a group of captive Israelites (left to right: D-shaped harp(?), drum(?), waisted four-stringed chordophone with soundhole and prominent end-projection, suggesting (?) plucked instrument).

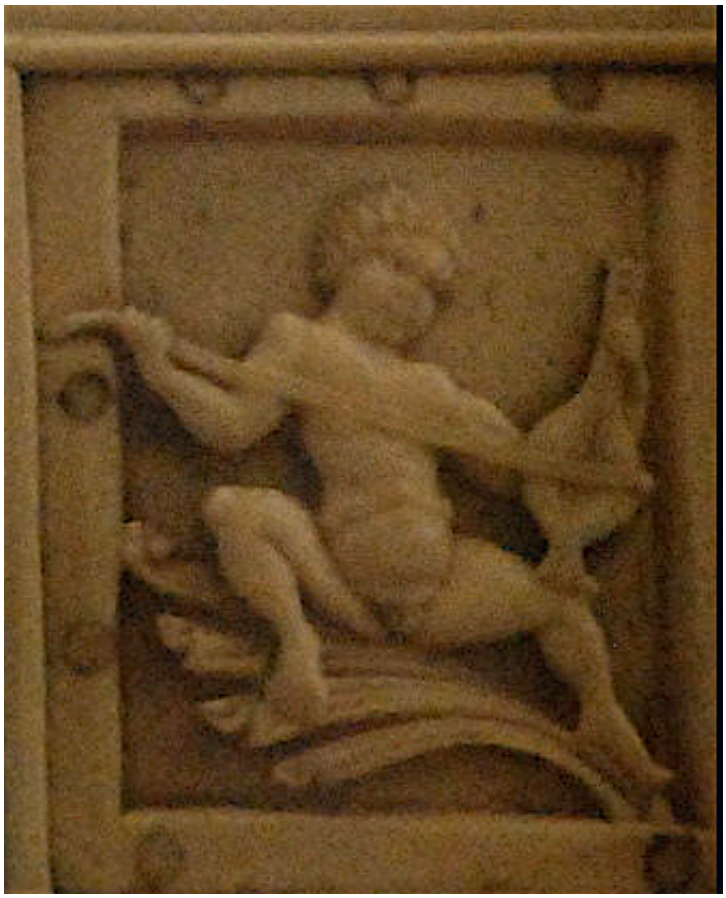


Plate 74: Florence, Museo Nazionale, Coll. Carrand, No.26: relief on an ivory box, *putto* on an acanthus leaf (Byzantine, late 10th - early 11th c., Seebass 1973; or 11th c.?).[187]

[187] Florence, Museo Nazionale, Coll. Carrand, No.26. Seebass 1973, 27, commented that this is the only knee-supported bowed instrument he had seen; compare Pl. 51-52 above. This artifact shows with multiple instrument images, including a Roman-style kithara. Image published in Goldschmidt 1930, Nr. 33; Bachmann 1964, Pl. 9.; Seebass 1973, 29; photo: https://www.flickr.com/photos/61442611@N07/35818599744/in/album-72157685216663764/ (accessed 03.08.2017).

The dispersal of Italo-Byzantine instrument forms into Western Europe is traceable, at least, by their reception and manifestation during the 11th c. along the Great Pilgrim Way to the Shrine of Saint James at the end of the world (*Camino del Santiago*), although Roman settlements and trade had left their mark on northern Spain from far earlier times. The late 11th and 12th centuries saw the construction of the cathedrals and monasteries along the Camino (such as Burgos, Leon, S Millán de la Cogolla and Santiago itself), rich in Romanesque sculpted decorated portals which included musical instruments, typically in the hands of the Elders of the Apocalypse.[188] Necked chordophones, oval and waisted, are abundant in the cathedral sculpture, especially from the 13th c.; although they may be carved without any bow being present, a manuscript miniature c. 1180 from Burgos shows the same two forms consistently played with a bow (**Pl. 75**), raising the idea that the carvings consistently represented bowed instruments, whether they have bows or not:

Plate 75: New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1991.232.14r, (Burgos, Monastery of San Pedro de Cardeña, Beatus Commentary, Seven Plague Angels and the Adoration of the Lamb, c. 1180)[189]

[188] The best single photographic survey of northern Spanish and southern French cathedral sculpture for musical instruments is Seebass 1973.

[189] O'Neill 1993, 300-01 (Plate 153). Photo: https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/466195 (accessed 23.07.2017).

A second earlier example, an ivory carving from the monastery at S Millán de la Cogolla c. 1060-80, features an oval-bodied instrument with a distinct tailpiece (**Pl. 76**):

Plate 76: New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Ivory (1987.89), showing San Millán; (Monastery San Millán de la Cogolla, 1060-80).[190]

[190] Photo: O'Neill 1993, 262.

This ivory plaque shows S. Aemillianus with a cithara of Byzantine influence: oval-bodied and with a tailpiece presumably to facilitate the use of a footed tailpiece-bridge, possibly to allow extended height to facilitate bowing; such a tailpiece raises, again, the question of 'bowed or plucked?', and while it does not provide conclusive evidence one way or the other, it could be suggestive of a bowed instrument, following the (still relatively new) Byzantine bowed fashion.

The importance of the Camino as an *east-to-west* conduit for artistic influence can hardly be overstated:

> "At that time (2nd half 11th c.) the camino was not only a channel for artistic interchange, it was an industry...beginning with his first visit to Rome in 1099, Gelmirez (Bishop of Compostella) carried ideas and models (back from Rome), and he found artisans to carry out his designs in the many lively workshops along the camino. The *ciborium* and the *confessio* he donated to the sanctuary of Santiago and the *paradisus*, or *atrium*, that extended across its north facade were explicit quotations from Saint Peter's in Rome...the camino represented a privileged means of communication in the traffic not only of goods and peoples, but also of information. Everything that was said, preached, sung, recounted, sculpted, or painted along the camino - called the *strata publica*, or public way - reached many people and traveled great distances. Without the pilgrimages Spain would still have witnessed the production of Romanesque art, but that art would have lacked the integrity, monumentality, and consistency that came from its origins"[191]

A genuine plucked, non-bowed necked chordophone found in northern Spanish church sculpture is the citole, as a manifestation of the reception of the Italian cetra along the pilgrim route (**Pl. 77**). Pre-13th-c. Italian cetre (see **CE 1, 2, 4, 5**) antedate the earliest carved citole monuments in Spain (which represent the earliest appearance in Western Europe of the citole with its characteristic thumb-hole construction).[192] The relationship between the

---

[191] O'Neill 1993, 180, 182.

[192] In her excellent study of the citole from 2010, Alice Margerum lists only two Spanish sculptures as dated before the 13th c., and both of these are problematic. Neither can be assigned a conclusive date, whereas the Antelami sculpture in Parma sits firmly at about 1200 and is clearly a different animal than the Spanish thumbhole instruments. Regardless of the Antelami cetra, there is a sufficient quantity of earlier images to confirm the presence of the cetra in Italy *at least* 100 years before the earliest Spanish citole representation.

citole and the cetra has been unnecessarily complicated by modern research, but a close scrutiny of iconographical sources for both instruments - and they are by no means the same instrument - will confirm the citole as a Spanish (Spanish-French) response to the Latin fashion of a cithara that, with many, many other items, journeyed along the starry Way of St. James.[193]

Plate 77: Toro, west portal c. 1240 (Photo: Christian Rault).[194]

[193] This list of music history research publications citing the commonplace of musicology that the citole is the ancestor of the cetra is too long to elaborate here; it may suffice to mention Grove Music Online, "Cittern" (https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.05831, accessed 15.03.2018) and MGG Online, "Cister" (https//www.mgg-online.com/article?id=mgg15261&v=1.0&q=cister&rs=id-07a02502-5f0c-e1df-dbcf-e9b691d84f30, accessed 15.93.2018).

[194] Photo: http://www.christianrault.com/fr/publications/the-emergence-of-new-approaches-to-plucked-instruments-13th-15th-centuries (accessed 23. 06.2017).

In conclusion (and speaking of Spain), a special and distinctive monument in the history of lute-family instruments in Western Mediterranean culture is the group of illuminated manuscripts known as the *Beati* or Beatus manuscripts, transmitting Beatus of Liébana's 8th-c. commentary on the Book of Revelation (*Commentaria In Apocalypsin)*. These works have rightfully been called "one of the most brilliant chapters in the history of manuscript art."[195] According to art historian Peter Klein,

> "The copies of the Beatus Commentary were almost exclusively limited to Spain, only two of the extant manuscripts and fragments originating outside Spain. Ten copies include only the text, but another twenty-four illustrate the text with a cycle based on a fifth- or sixth-century Spanish or North African model. These illustrations, inserted between the Apocalypse text and commentary and probably added already during the lifetime of Beatus, were originally simple, schematic images summarizing the essential elements of the Apocalypse text.....The Beatus Apocalypse cycles continued to be copied into the thirteenth century. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. the Beatus tradition experienced a final revival, probably due to the large number of newly-founded monasteries: the Cistercians especially commissioned new and, at times, richly illustrated copies of this highly esteemed Iberian monastic text."[196]

The Beatus illuminations containing *citharae*, then, span a time period from the 10th - 13th centuries. The manuscripts are grouped into three "families", Family I (c. 930 - late 12th c.), Family IIa (same time period but different painting style), and Family IIb (begins c. 970 but extends to mid 13th c.; different style to I and IIa).[197] 10th- and 11th-c. manuscripts within these "families" share a general, highly mannered painting style often described as Mozarabic, whereas the general style of the later illuminations is Romanesque or, in the 13th c., increasingly Gothic.[198]

How do the instrument depictions in the Beatus illuminations fit in with the story of the cetra?

---

[195] Williams 1993, 17.

[196] Klein 1990, 8-10.

[197] Klein 1990, 11-13.

[198] See Schapiro 1939 for an extended discussion of Mozarabic vs. Romanesque style.

Family I and IIa instrument images show oval-bodied lutes with long, thin necks and T-shaped peg-heads, carrying the stamp of the Byzantine pandura. Furthermore, thanks to the presence of an occasional bowed cithara, a clear Byzantine influence must be assumed concerning the models which were used for the painting. In Williams formulation, "Eastern elements in peninsular art may have often been channeled through Africa...a small group of early Spanish churches employs a special arrangement of basilical space that suggests contact with North Africa."[199] The pandura had also already travelled to Spain, prior to the Byzantine era, in Roman colonies.

A late 12th c. Beatus manuscript from Family IIb, the "Rylands Beatus", has apparently the earliest examples of a plucked, slightly waisted body shape for a cithara within the corpus of Beatus manuscripts (see Appendix I, Ex. 6; similarities to Ex. 6 are also seen in Appendix I, Ex. 2).[200] This source, according to Klein, " might be one of the Romanesque copies of the Tabára Beatus made in the region of Burgos."[201] While the Tabára Beatus does not contain images of instruments (it seems to be missing a number of illuminations), if Klein is correct in considering the provenance of Burgos for the Rylands Beatus, then the prominent position of Burgos along the Camino del Santiago might suggest a possible influence of the Italian cetra, via pilgrim traffic and trade routes, upon specific cithara images in Beatus illumination from the late 12th and first half of the 13th centuries. A second Beatus manuscript (Morgan 429), dated 1220, has also been situated in Burgos, as its place of origin, by Klein.[202] This is precisely the period of the manifestation in northern Spain of the citole, under the influence and in the wake of Latin culture, fashion and artifacts.

---

[199] Williams 1993, 15.

[200] See Klein 1990 for background and description of the Rylands Beatus.

[201] Klein 1990, 13.

[202] Klein 1990, 13.

## Chapter Summary: Main Points

1. The early Christian world view regarding music included stringed instruments inherited from Greco-Roman culture, in particular the Classical kithara/cithara and chelys-lyre.

2. No instrument is more present in the Vulgata text than the cithara, which generated text commentary by the Patristic writers. Their writings represented the first step in the adaptation or Christianization of what were originally pagan stringed instruments; the Church Fathers were not concerned with any real knowledge of ancient Hebraic chordophones, they rather applied Biblical symbolism to instruments of their contemporary culture. This formula continued throughout the Middle Ages with Christian writers.

3. The authority of written Christian commentary and doctrine produced practical manifestations in art and in life; Latin stringed instruments were adapted and identified with Christian symbolism and media purpose.

4. In addition to the two Greco-Roman lyre forms kithara and chelys-lyre, a long-necked lute form from the Eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire, the pandura, was Christianized. Seven surviving examples from Christian Egypt (5th - 8th c.) provide secure evidence of the cultivation and Christianization of the long-necked lute.

5. 9th-c. Carolingian instruments also participated in the further Christianizing process, incorporating Byzantine elements and including lute and lyre forms of the cithara.

6. A new lute type first seen in the 8th c. is the Byzantine short-necked ovoid form, which manifests its influence in Italy by c. 1000.

7. The use of the bow, also of Byzantine origin, becomes fashionable throughout the Western Mediterranean region from the late 10th century. In Italy it was used as an alternate way to play a plucked cithara, especially short-neck ovoid lutes and lyres. Elements of these types - the ovoid short-necked lute and the bowed lyre - are seen in a new type of spade-bodied lute, the prototype cetra, during the 11th century.

8. Pilgrim traffic, particularly to Santiago de Compostella, facilitated the dispersal of Latin fashion and culture to the west and north, including the cetra of the 11th - early 13th centuries. The assimilation of the Latin instrument first in northern Spain and southern France produced local forms as an answer to the cetra: the citole.