



HELSINGIN YLIOPISTO
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UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI

THE CHANGING BRONZE AGE IN FENNOSCANDIA AND AROUND THE BALTIC SEA

The 11th Nordic (& the 1st Nordic & Baltic) Bronze Age Symposium

ABSTRACTS (latest update Oct. 3rd, 2009)

Henrik Asplund, Terttu Lempiäinen, Jukka Luoto, Jaana Riikonen & Leena Tomanterä

The dating of a shaft fragment from a bronze celt found in Paimio, SW Finland (POSTER)

A bronze axe which had been found approximately 40 years ago was delivered to a local museum in July 2009. The type of the axe resembles a simple type of socketed axe that is regarded as being cast in Finland. A remarkable feature is that a piece of a wooden shaft was preserved inside the axe. The artefact had been found in SW Finland, in the municipality of Paimio. The site (Paimio, Sähköyhtiöntie) is on a low elevation which indicates that the axe had originally been deposited in water and later it was preserved in clayey soil.

The axe was catalogued at the National Museum in late August 2009 (catalogue number KM 37946). After this an XRF (x-ray fluorescence) examination of the surface was made. The analysis indicates that the metal is mainly copper (Cu) and tin (Sn; ca 22 %, measured from uncleaned surface).

A sample of the preserved wood was taken for analysis. The tree was identified to be ash (*Fraxinus excelsior* L.). The sample was sent for radiocarbon dating, the result of which hopefully will be available at the symposium. The radiocarbon dating – if successful – will be the first of its kind in Finland.

Sven-Gunnar Broström, Kenneth Ihrestam & Roger Wikell

Rock Art in Eastern Middle Sweden Case study area Södermanland (POSTER)

In Eastern Middle Sweden rock art has long been synonymous with the area around the town Enköping. The area is rich in rock carvings. Rock art sites like Rickeby and Hemsta are frequently cited in literature. What makes the area of Enköping famous

and calls the researchers' attention is the fact that there are so many pictures and in many cases they are very lively. The efforts have thus been concentrated in this core-area. But how does it look like in other parts of Eastern Middle Sweden?

The Project *Södermanlands Rock carvings* has given promising results. In the county of Södermanland only three sites with figures were known, besides 70 localities with cup marks. In our project we challenged the picture that had been given before in the maps of distribution of rock art in Sweden. Our special survey has yielded 100 new sites with figures like ships, foot soles, ring-crosses etc, and over 2000 sites with cup-marks. The survey shows clearly that a considerable number of rock art exists outside the traditionally known core area.

The project *Södermanlands rock carvings* will be published in the near future as a monograph. The sites with rock art figures as well as the major / interesting sites with cup-marks will be presented. A number of issues like the components on the rock, figures, terrain position and relation to other ancient monuments will be discussed.

In the county of Södermanland there is a sparse appearance of old limestone. The bedrock is usually of Precambrian gneiss. In many cases the rock art is made in this limestone. Three of the largest rock art sites in the county are situated in this kind of bedrock. For sure it was easy to carve in the limestone compared to gneiss, but we are going to stress some more aspects like the fertility of surrounding soil and the strategic position of the place from a communicative perspective. The large sites seem to be of central importance on local level.

Heidi Nordqvist, Markku Oinonen, Vesa Palonen, Pertti Tikkanen

Radiocarbon dating of bronze – is it possible? (POSTER)

The technique for the radiocarbon dating of iron has recently been introduced in Finland (Oinonen et al 2009). It is based on a tiny (0–4%) charcoal contents which were integrated into the iron matrix during the iron smelting process. This bio-fuel is used for the age determination.

Our experience shows that carbon can be extracted out from metallic samples (iron) with high efficiency. The integration of carbon into the metallic matrix depends from temperature. It decreases with the decreasing of the smelting temperature (Pleiner 2000, p. 134–135). Despite this, obtained experience encourages us to examine the similar process for bronze artifacts.

We have made an attempt to radiocarbon date Chinese bronze coins. The reference ages are provided by the dynasties Hsin (AD 9–22) and Northern Sung (AD 1086–1100). We discuss the capabilities of the method. Are there possibilities to apply it through the Metal Ages?

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Mattias Pettersson & Roger Wikell

Bronze Age in the Stockholm archipelago (POSTER)

In our presentation we emphasize the need for more field survey. Many archaeologically white spots have proven to contain ancient remains if just they were surveyed properly. At the present state of research, the Stockholm Archipelago is such a white spot on the Bronze Age map. This is mostly due to lack of research. There are some finds from there, though, and they indicate a more intensive occupation during the period in question.

For example a cluster of Bronze Age remains were discovered on the island Ornö in the southern Stockholm Archipelago in 1977. Today Ornö is a large island but in the Bronze Age there were many smaller islands at the fringe of open sea. The observations include several features like grave cairns and heaps of fire-cracked stone. Both the ancient topography and the finds are reminiscent of the Bronze Age settlement at the island of Kökar in the Åland archipelago, Finland.

Although the above-mentioned finds from 1977 are known, any special survey has not been done in the archipelago since the 1970s. But occasional field tours by the present authors have recently revealed promising finds of fire-cracked stone and Bronze Age ceramics from present-day islands, both in the outer and inner archipelago. This indicates that the archipelago was used for fishing and seal-hunting purposes during the second and first millennia BC.

In summer of 2009, we plan to excavate a heap of fire-cracked stone on the Ornö island. The investigation is part of our research project *Archipelago through 10 000 years* which we have launched recently.

In Stone Age, in the Late Iron Age and during the historical times, the ancient archipelagos of the Stockholm area constituted an important resource area for the core settlements on the coastal mainland. The archipelago provided seal, fish, and sea fowl. This allows us to sketch a settlement model in which the archipelago is part of the spheres of the known core settlements. This concerns for example the Bronze Age and Bronze Age sites of interest.

We believe that the core settlements were not solely agricultural. They had a mixed economy based on agriculture, terrestrial hunting, and maritime fishing and sealing, all sewn together by the use of good boats. There would be a lot to learn from the testing of this model on a local scale. This is relevant in terms of contacts, communication, and the question of transition zones between centres and peripheries. The archipelago was no doubt also the scene of more long-distance travels along the coast, and perhaps cross the sea. The mainland, the archipelago and the open sea form clear zones, all within a distance of 25 km. This geographical setting is ideal for the study of the themes which were mentioned above.

Thomas Eriksson

Climatic Change and the end of the Bronze Age

There have been a lot of discussions about the climatic deterioration during the transition between the Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age. Archaeologists and geologists have studied the topic since the 1910s. The phenomena have sometimes been associated with the *Fimbulvetr* or Fimbul winter, as it is known from the Icelandic Sagas. Today we have better knowledge about climatic changes in Scandinavia and in the northern Hemisphere. The new data makes it easier to do more detailed studies on the climatic impact on human behaviour and the conditions for human life.

I have collected about 1600 results of ¹⁴C-datings from the time period 4000–1000 BP. The samples are from the northern part of the basin of Lake Mälaren, Central Sweden. All the collected ¹⁴C-datings are calibrated together. The result is a sum of combined probabilities of datings. The assumption is that this sum reflects the extent of the human impact in the environment. Of course there are a lot of methodological problems but nevertheless, the result is both striking and clear.

There is strong correlation between changes in climate and changes in the amount of combined probabilities of the collected samples. There is also a good correlation between these data and other cultural manifestations. The results give a more detailed and better basis to understanding the quite fundamental cultural changes, especially around 800–400 BC. Furthermore, this gives insight in the interpretations of manifestations of human culture in the above-mentioned region in a long-term perspective.

Vesa-Pekka Herva, Janne P. Ikäheimo & Kerkko Nordqvist

On the occurrences of metal in Fennoscandia before the Bronze Age

This presentation considers native copper finds from Neolithic (4th – 3rd millennium BC) contexts in Fennoscandia. Some dozen finds are known to date. A majority of them comprises small, indeterminate pieces of sheet metal, many of which have been tentatively identified as later intrusions. "Proper" artefacts are rare but they are

often showcased in literature. Due to the discrepant nature of the evidence, copper finds and their significance in Stone Age contexts have not been seriously discussed. This paper opens with an overview and critical re-evaluation of the copper finds from Fennoscandia and NW Russia. It is argued that the significance of Neolithic copper finds has been marginalized and misrepresented in Finnish archaeology. This is largely because early copper finds have appeared to conflict with the traditional notions of technological and cultural change in prehistoric Finland. The present paper argues that the origins and the “special” properties of copper provide a key for understanding the adoption of the metal before the Bronze Age. The early occurrences of copper can also be connected with a number of other changes in the material culture of Neolithic (northern) Fennoscandia. The continuity of copper-use from Stone Age into the Bronze Age remains to be demonstrated (or refuted). Nevertheless the “northern Chalcolithic Age” is briefly discussed for heuristic purposes.

Flemming Kaul & Preben Rønne

Is it possible to find a northern border of the Nordic Bronze Age culture?

The issue of this paper is to review the find material from the Nordic (Scandinavian) Bronze Age (BA) in Northern Norway, and to discuss how far to the north the BA can be followed as a culture complex. In the coastal areas of Nordland, close to the Polar Circle, there is good evidence of BA activity. Even though the cultural remains are relatively few in comparison with Southern Scandinavia, a broad spectrum of find categories is represented, particularly around Sandnessjøen in Helgeland. There are burial cairns with stone cists containing grave furniture with typical bronze objects, including a razor with a handle in the shape of a horse head; there are depositions of bronze objects, also from bogs, and we find rock carvings clearly belonging to the South Scandinavian tradition, including renderings of ships and horses. Pollen analyses give evidence of agrarian economy, including the growing of barley. Already in the Late Neolithic, agrarian economy expanded here, and a number of finds from this period demonstrates, that this area became part of the Southern Scandinavian world.

Further in the north, towards Troms and Finmark, there are still objects which belong to the Nordic BA Culture. But the finds are extremely scattered, and we cannot speak of “the full cultural package” like that in Helgeland. However, it seems conspicuous that almost as far north as you can get, at Alta, there are a few representations of ships among the rock carvings of the hunter’s tradition. Such carvings are related to the Nordic BA. Instead of speaking of a border we are seemingly dealing with a huge border zone.

The westernmost objects that are related to the Ananino culture have been found in the above-mentioned North Norwegian region. Now a recent find from Nordland gives a supplement to these. The finds of “eastern” bronzes and crucibles occur in inland areas and it is so in the case of corresponding ones from neighbouring Northern Sweden, too. Thus, the North Norwegian BA is divided by two lines of influence from two large Bronze Age cultures. In the coastal zone (in Nordland), with patches of land

suitable for agriculture, the Nordic BA Culture related to Southern Scandinavia is well evidenced, while in northernmost Norway and in the forested or mountainous inland areas where cereal growing was no option, we find objects of “eastern” type that are related to the Ananino culture. The same picture seems to emerge in Finland. The economical potentials of the lands of the North – and different contact lines through different landscapes – seem to be closely related with the general picture of material culture.

Lise Harvig

Danish Bronze Age cremations seen from a bioarchaeological perspective

Religion and cosmology in the Bronze Age has recently regained international interest. Namely, the graves are unique in this context, since they are tangible remnants of religious acts in prehistory. Previously it has not been possible to gain much knowledge about religion and religious practice from Late Bronze Age cremation burials and the cremated bones alone because they are fragmented in character. However, the number of excavated sites increases rapidly in Denmark, and the many Bronze Age cremation burials that have been excavated recently are a unique resource if they are studied in their proper context.

The aim of the study of cremation in a bioarchaeological perspective has often been the sexing and aging of the buried individuals. In Denmark, the majority of cremated bones have hitherto been studied after they have been cleaned and sorted, this is to say detached from their original context.

Despite a tendency towards a more interdisciplinary interest in prehistoric cremations, the research is still insufficient in many areas. Modern national borders play a significant role in this matter. When comparing results from various regions and laboratories it is crucial to consider the varying national and interregional methodological traditions.

The aim of my PhD project is to improve the methods which we use for the study of ritual practice, religion, life and death in prehistory in case the source material comes from the cremation burials and the cremated bones. In many cases, traditional osteological methods can be applied to the late Bronze Age material with a high rate of success. This is because the degree of fragmentation and variation in stage of combustion is evidently lower in this period. There is further a general tendency towards a larger and more uniform sample of cremated remains present in the Bronze Age cremation graves. Hence, the graves have an individual and personal appearance. Therefore the cremations from the late Bronze Age are an obvious material for a methodological, critical and comparative evaluation of options and limitations within previous and modern methods.

Peter Holmblad

Centrality in the semi-periphery.

A rise of the political economy and networking polities in the North-Eastern Baltic during the Late Bronze Age

This presentation deals with issues concerning how a political economy was activated in the Ostrobothnian settlement districts by the western coast of Finland. Finnish coast during the Late Bronze Age. Some evidence show that the coastal settlement districts formed small local polities with centralised forms of surplus-orientated production. At the same time this semi-peripheral zone was increasingly connected with external centres. The area was integrated into a network which extended around the Baltic, but also to the adjacent inland areas. I attempt to show how a Late Bronze Age polity could base its functions on traditional, collective subsistence patterns, but also on innovations that were promoted by the ties to the new external network. My study is focused on the changes which took place within the settlement district of Laihia near the present day town of Vaasa.

Zsófia Kølczé

Motivation and movement. Centre-periphery model or cultural exchange networks in Early Bronze Age Europe

For several decades archaeologists have tried to deal with the problem of the static nature of empirical data by employing theoretical models for economic exchange and social interaction in order to understand the mechanisms behind the production, use and distribution of material culture. One of these models is the centre-periphery model that has been used and abused in connection with the interpretation of the material culture of Bronze Age Europe. But in recent years new theories of mobility and cultural exchange have posed fundamentally different approaches to an understanding of prehistoric societies (Helms 1988; Kristiansen & Larsson 2005; Urry 2007).

Should a Bronze Age society still be perceived so that it was divided into central, peripheral and marginal areas? Or has the time come to revise and refine our theories? What can the distribution and stylistic features of material culture tell us about the economic and social interactions of the societies that produced the items? What motivated people to establish connections over vast geographic distances, and why did they interact in the way they did?

Based on my current PhD project about the economic, social and ideological connections between Southern Scandinavia, Central Europe and the Carpathian Basin, my aim is to throw some light upon the questions above and similar problems. By analysing weapon hoards that contain battle axes and swords from the above mentioned areas, I want to encourage the debate about the nature of social and cultural networks and interactions in Early Bronze Age Europe.

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Heidi Luik

Bronze Age bone pins in Eastern Baltic – for fixing the garment or identity?

In relation to the Neolithic, the Bronze Age bone pins constitute a chronologically new artefact type in the archaeological record of the Baltic countries.

Many of the Baltic pin types resemble those bronze pins which spread in the Central and Northern Europe. The aim of the paper is to give a survey of the making and use of such bone pins. Raw material for the pins as well as tools and methods for the manufacture of them will be discussed. As for the use of the pins, answers will be sought to the questions who wore such pins, and could the pins have some other significance or meaning besides their practical function. Was the introduction of pins caused by a new style of garments, requiring pins for fastening, or was the main reason the necessity to fix new identity, new social relations, new roles in an altered community – in times when fortified settlements and monumental graves had appeared in the settlement pattern? Do different pins mark different social strata, certain groups of people, expressing the identity of the group (e.g. on gender basis, age, rank, etc.)?

Kristiina Mannermaa & Vivi Deckwirth

Wild or domestic? Osteological evidence of animal livelihoods in Early Metal Period Finland (ca. 1500 BC–200 AD)

Bones of domestic animals are rare at settlement sites from Late Stone Age and Early Metal Period (ca. 1500 BC–200 AD). The time of the first appearances of animal husbandry in Finland is uncertain. This matter has never been subject to systematic research. The aim of this paper is to present the actual state of knowledge of early animal husbandry and discuss different animal livelihoods in different parts of Finland. The actual osteological evidence of domestic animals from Late Stone Age and Early Metal Period is very scarce, and the dates remain uncertain.

The small number of bones from cattle, sheep/goat and pig tell us about a very slow adaptation to cattle breeding in Finland prior to the Iron Age. But is this the correct explanation? Or could it be that domestic animals were important even though there is no osteological evidence of it? Interestingly, it seems that bones from domestic animals are relatively more common in burial mounds than in settlement sites. The reason for this may be that remains from domestic animals were deposited or discarded in a different way from the remains of wild animals, for example, in burial mounds or ritual places.

The Finnish bone material from Stone Age and Early Metal Period is without exception burnt and fragmented, and the share of identified bones does not usually exceed 10 %. Can this be the ultimate explanation for the lack of bones from domestic animals in settlement sites? By taking some examples of Early Metal Period sites and their osteological samples, we will show that a diverse array of livelihoods is represented in Finland during the Early Metal Period.

There is an urgent need for a research project on early animal husbandry in Finland. In the first place, a detailed contextual and taphonomic study, as well as large number of radiocarbon dates would be essential.

Linn Mattsson

The house on the hill – a central place by the pathways to the outer world

During an excavation in 2008, a large house from the Early Bronze Age was discovered in Halmstad, Sweden. By now it is the largest house ever excavated in the Halmstad area. The settlement has been surrounded by a big amount of mounds from the same period. Together with the house they have functioned as strong manifestations of power in the social landscape. The large house implies a strong

farm that has functioned as a central place. The house itself measured 46 x 10 meters. Inside the house certain inner constructions suggest that there may have been a specific area functioning as a stall. Within the house potential traces of bronze crafting was also made.

During prehistory, several paths have crossed the area. Just south of the excavated house, there runs a river and the large amount of grave mounds shows how different paths may have led by the farm. For the farm, these pathways have played an important role in import and export of culture, ideas and trading goods.

Algimantas Merkevičius

Vilnius

Human sacrifice and body rituals in Lithuania in the Bronze Age

Human sacrifice and other rituals, associated with human body were practiced at different times and regions. In Northern and Western Europe huge amount of human bodies (more than 2000) has been found in peat-bogs.

Until recent times very little was known about human sacrifice and other rituals associated with human bodies in the East Baltic region. But in recent years new evidence has come into daylight. Bronze Age human bodies were found in an excavation from a peat-bog in Turlojiskės village, southern Lithuania. Furthermore, separated human crania were found inside settlements at a few sites.

No doubt, in these cases we have evidence of human sacrifice and rituals involving human bodies.

Tapani Rostedt

Turku

Shadows of cultures and “the burden” of archaeological research history in Finnish Bronze Age

It is always difficult to define the term archaeological culture. In many cases, cultures of prehistoric times do not follow modern borders or match with linguistic areas of today. I will shortly describe some ways to define cultures, and also discuss the danger of “getting imprisoned” to cultural definitions.

It is usually relatively easy to look backward in research history, to pick up some of the best fruits, and perhaps even to build some new theories on the top of previous ones. Old theories are not necessary wrong, however, even though scholars usually are prisoners of their own time. This should be consciously noted when we read articles, the backbone of older ideas should not necessarily be rejected. Research history is not only a burden; it can and should be the foundation for new theories.

Finland has been traditionally divided into western and eastern part; the roots of this division can be archaeologically traced to at least the younger Neolithic Stone Age. This same "division" can be observed even in the Bronze Age, or at least it seems to be so. Is this division still valid, or should archaeological material from Finnish Bronze Age be studied in detail again in order to get a better overview, hopefully perhaps even without any nationalistic points of views?

Martin Rundkvist

In the landscape and between worlds Bronze Age sacrificial sites in the Lake Mälaren area

This paper presents a new project focusing on sacrificial customs on the north-eastern periphery of the South-Scandinavian agricultural area in the Late Bronze Age. Its main aims are

- a) to study the location of known Bronze Age sacrificial sites in the landscape in the Lake Mälaren area. The goal is to identify recurring relationships to coeval settlement, burial and rock-art sites, and the local topography and place names.
- b) to make a model and apply it in the field. The goal is to locate previously unknown sacrificial deposits and excavate them under controlled conditions.

Methods include metal-detector surveying on potential dry-land sacrificial sites as well as wetland excavation techniques on watery ones. Data are treated according to the principles of landscape archaeology, applying GIS.

Few of the Bronze Age sacrificial finds known from the Lake Mälaren area have been made by archaeologists. Few wetland excavations have ever been undertaken in the area by archaeologists. All the major categories of Bronze Age sites have recently been the subjects of PhD theses, with the exception of the sacrificial sites. The new project thus has the opportunity to build on fresh research. With an innovative fieldwork agenda, the project aims to advance a field of study which has been neglected for a long time.

Uwe Sperling

Organization and extent of bronze production in the Asva settlement on Saaremaa Island.

New aspects of Bronze Age metalwork and metal consumption in the East Baltic

The Late Bronze Age settlement of Asva represents a profound structural and economical change that took place in the whole East Baltic during the final stage of the Bronze Age and that is said to be caused by an improving utilization and division of resources by Bronze Age people. Several settlements of enclosed and/or fortified character emerged, generally indicating economical potentials that reached beyond pure subsistence from their basic productions (Asva: mixed farming, seal hunting)

and made material surplus affordable. The supply, the processing and the distribution of resources and products implied remarkable organizational and technological achievements. In this respect the large-scale bronze work from sites on Saaremaa and northern Estonia deserve special attention. The outstanding amounts of clay moulds and crucibles in the settlements as Asva (over 1000 single-use mould fragments!), Ridala and Iru (near Tallinn) indicate regular metal exchange via East Baltic and overseas. Today circa 30 Late Bronze Age fortified settlements are known in the territory between Neman River and Gulf of Finland which seem to have had similar economic strategies (incl. bronze production) to Asva and that are supposed to be part of one trade or communication network. One potential mediator of the supposed value and exchange system could be seen in the most frequently manufactured product in East Baltic: the bronze ring or bronze bar.

The presentation will introduce the main results of current research and will discuss the following questions:

- *Does the metalwork in Asva (and Ridala, Iru) refer to the idea of an exclusive or elitarian activity?*
- *Does the local metalwork indicate craft specialization?*
- *Analyzing the clay moulds for metal armrings, neckrings and/or bars – is there evidence of standardization (e.g. in thickness, diameter of the rings) that refer to the idea of a regulated value and exchange system?*
- *Asva metalwork - part of Nordic metal culture or East Baltic culture group?*

Joakim Wehlin

Stranded ships in relation

Results from a correspondence analysis of the Gotlandic ship-settings

I consider the monumental ship-shaped stone-settings on Gotland (and in the Baltic area) as stranded, not only in a virtual manner, but also by the interpretations of them. Since the first accurate archaeological excavations and surveys of the Gotlandic stone ship-settings were conducted by Tom Carlsson and Harald Hansson in the 1900–1920s, almost 50 of them have been excavated. The most probable reason why so many ship-settings (c. 15 % of the total number of sites) have been excavated on Gotland is that there is lack of suitable interpretations. Excavations of ship-settings can still open surprisingly new contents. However, the general picture seems to remain unchanged. They are Late Bronze Age – Early Iron Age graves which contain one or several burials, often cremations, and the human remains are placed in urns together with several small bronze artefacts.

Recent research has focused on the geographical distribution of the ship-settings as well as the continuity of the “ship” in burials over time. The ship as a symbol is often discussed in an attempt to get closer to the society and the humans behind these features. Still, I find no accurate interpretation for the exceptional Gotlandic stone ship-settings. I think that there is a high possibility to achieve a wider understanding of the prehistory by moving between the micro- and macro levels of research.

Relational archaeology and correspondence analysis are useful tools for finding relations between the micro- and macro levels and to find new perspectives to the material. In my paper, I will present the results of such analyses of the Gotlandic ship-settings. It is a study that may throw new light on these features and their position in a Baltic context.