



The Woman Behind It All

Searching for Social Roles
of Women in Late Iron
Age Central Blekinge

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Abstract

With the aim of widening the picture of a Late Iron Age warrior society in central Blekinge by studying the social role of its women, female cremation burials have been identified and their material studied. Artefacts and their combinations have been interpreted and their suggested meanings compared with contemporary iconography as well as with Anglo-Saxon and Norse literary sources. The grave material being unevenly distributed over time still indicates a concentration of relatively wealthy burials at the cemetery of Kasakulle in the Vendel Period which in the Viking Age spreads to that of Hjortahammar. Among the social roles of women found in iconography and literature, particularly the functions of *mothers of heirs* and *ladies of the house or manor* seem to be well represented in the grave material of the local society. These functions are found to have their ideological roots in Early Iron Age Germanic warrior societies and imply the importance of women for social and political stability, economy, production and reproduction.

Key words: warrior society, social role of women, cremation grave material, Beowulf, Lady with mead cup, Blekinge, Västra Vång

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I. Introduction

How can a warrior society function without women? Obviously, it cannot. Someone has to give birth to new warriors and to new mothers. Was that the only role assigned to women in the Scandinavian Iron Age?

These were my thoughts when working on my earlier paper *Ulvarna i gränslandet* (Hellstam2014), (*Wolves of the Borderland*), which dealt with the enigma of the individuals and the society behind the 'wolf'-names carved on three rune stones in Blekinge, erected in the 7th century. I, as well as many other researchers, came to the conclusion that the names belonged to three men of the local warrior élite, apparently of the same family, an assumption based on among other things the nature of their names. But the women of this society in Blekinge were somehow invisible, except in the context of the ship burial at Augerum which is the only well-known female grave in Blekinge. However, studies on the role of women during the Iron Age has been made lately by several researchers and the question of social gender vs biological sex has again been raised, particularly after the discovery of a female skeleton in a weapon grave at Birka (Price et al. 2019). Unfortunately, inhumation graves are rare during the Iron Age, and in particular in Blekinge, why we have mainly damaged artefacts to go by when trying to detect female presence in the grave material – if we do not have the means to conduct osteological analysis on the cremated bone material, which would anyway be problematic. This means, of course, that as the bodies were cremated together with their possessions or grave goods, the latter are likely to be in a poor state, if they have survived at all. However, it should be possible to find some remaining evidence for a study, which is my venture in the following.

I.1. Aim, Objectives and Research questions

In this paper then, I aim to widen the picture of this warrior society, by looking for its women and studying their role in it, using archaeological grave material. However, I will move eastwards from the Lister area of the above-mentioned rune stones and approach the territory around the fourth rune stone of the same period, Björketorpsstenen, and the neighbouring site of Västra Vång. Since its discovery in 2004 this settlement has been the focus of Iron Age research in Blekinge, due to an unusual amount of gold finds and other artefacts indicating an important central place with a ruling élite. Some items have gained a lot of publicity, while others can only be found in the excavation reports or in the store rooms of different museums. Among excavations made by Blekinge museum in the area since 1917 comparatively few have yielded substantial grave material, why material from earlier investigations, originally included in private collections, has been added to it when investigating female presence.

My main research question is thus:

What can grave material in central Blekinge tell us about the social roles of women in the local Iron Age society?

The interpretation of the material is based on previous studies and evidence in literature and iconography.

To answer the main question I need to split it into the following ones:

How do I identify 'female graves'? How does gender theory influence my study?

This question is essential for my method, therefore it has to be answered before even starting my work. I will do so in presenting my method.

Which are the artefact combinations in the selected graves in the research area?

The combination of artefacts is interesting in itself and can give a clue to the identity of the buried individual, to grave ritual and traditions in the society.

How is the available material distributed over time and space? Can any differences be discerned?

Is it possible to see if changes in ritual, traditions or ideology are reflected in the grave material? Does distribution of finds/types of artefacts reflect social differences?

For the interpretation of the material above I intend to examine the picture of Iron Age women given to us in literature like Beowulf and the Norse sagas, and in iconography on textiles, jewellery and gold foils, and to discuss how this picture may match my material.

1.2. Delimitations

1.2.1. The research area

The research area (referred to hereafter as RA) consists of the 5 parishes of Edestad, Ronneby, Hjortsberga, Listerby and Förcärkla, making up the geographic area between the rivers Vierydsån and Listerbyån with its catchment basin, i.e. all within the municipality of Ronneby, of which the westernmost boundary coincides with that of the parish with the same name. According to previous studies (e.g. Björkquist/Persson 1979) this area constitutes the richest and most varied settlement area of both Early and Late Iron Age Blekinge, but has been little excavated. However, it turns out that of the 97

registered investigations made by Blekinge Museum (referred to hereafter as BLM) in 1917-2017, 59 were conducted in these five

parishes, which is more than half.

The natural

boundaries of the two chosen rivers and their valleys give a logical geographical limit to the local area that may have been dominated by the settlement of Västra Vång. In general it can be said that the parish boundaries follow natural topographic features, which seem to have been decisive for the prehistoric settlement pattern (Björkquist & Persson 1979:8). Only in the case of Listerby parish do the boundaries towards Edestad, Hjortsberga and Förcärkla cut ancient settlements, no doubt due to more recently drawn boundaries (Björkquist & Persson 1979:8f). To the west, the uninhabited and forested plateau of Vieryd was for ages an obstacle for communication, crossed only via a foot- and

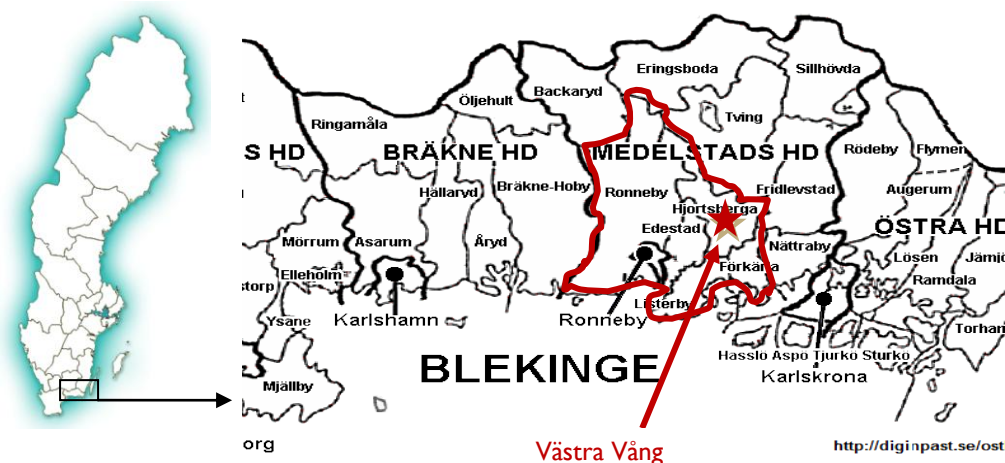


Fig. 1. Map of Sweden and Blekinge with parishes. Red marking for research area

riding path, the 'Via Regia' until the late 19th century (Björkquist & Persson 1977; Hellstam 2014:40). The lack of prehistoric remains to the east of the road between Johannishus and Hasslö seems to indicate poor soil or back country area as a separating line (a stretch of different bed-rock can be seen on FMIS, SGU 402). The site of Augerum, situated in the parish of Augerum, with its female ship burial therefore falls outside of my research area and probably should be seen as connected to another more easterly aggregate. The ship burial will however be useful as an example of a female burial in the neighbourhood area.

The landscape is characterized by the north-south-going boulder-ridges and river valleys, providing fairways to both the inlands and towards the coast. The ridge of Johannisåsen has, indicated by its large numbers of prehistoric remains, been a dominating factor for settlement from the Early Iron Age on, between Hillerslätt in the north to Heaby in the south (Björkquist & Persson 1979:95). During the Early Iron Age an expansion of the core settlement areas takes place, but still remains in the coastal region while the Late Iron Age sees a restructuring of settlements concentrated to villages with a slight expansion northwards and inland along the Johannishus ridge (see fig. 2). The grave fields remain within the core settlement areas (Björkquist & Persson 1979:95f).

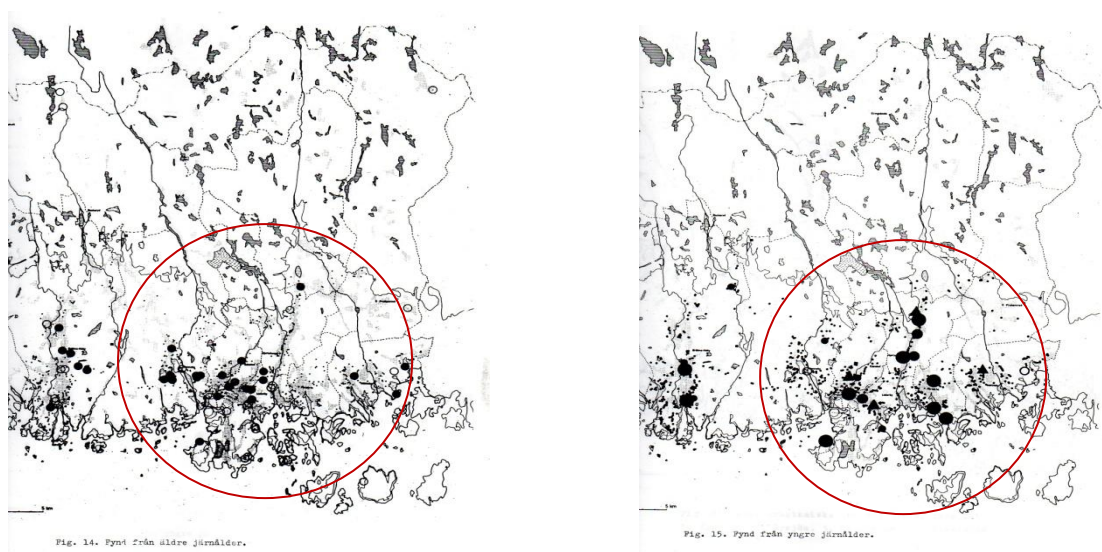


Fig. 2. Finds from Early Iron Age and from Late Iron Age in research area. From Björkquist & Persson 1979, figs. 14 and 15.

1.2.2. The research period

The research period is the Late Iron Age, but as the research is based on available material, this means that the period will start in the Late Roman Iron Age and Early Migration Period with only a few examples, a few more from the Vendel Period while the bulk of the material dates from the Viking Age, so roughly the period covers ca 350-1000 AD. The initial idea of studying only Migration and Vendel Periods needed to be expanded for lack of available grave material from this age in the defined research area. Much of the earlier graves appear to have been destroyed by ploughing, gravel extraction and other human activities as they were situated on arable land or just not understood. On the other hand, Migration and Vendel Period graves have been found as secondary burials in Bronze Age mounds and therefore better preserved. Only one burial dated to the Late Roman Iron Age/Early Migration Period has been found to match my criteria and as this one could as well be from the Early Migration period it has been placed there.

1.3. Material

Definitions of what constitutes female grave goods have been formulated by Pål Nicklasson (1997), Fredrik Svanberg (2003) and Johan Callmer (2008) among others and have been discussed by e.g. Tove Hjørungdal (1998) and Stig Welinder (2011), which I will return to in the Theory and Method chapter 1.5. I will argue for a set of different artefacts that indicate a grave of female social gender: button-on-bow brooches, pairs of brooches, large numbers of beads, hair or dress pins, combs, spindle whorls, sewing needles and other textile production tools as well as knives and sickles – some of these only in combination with others. The female ship grave of Augerum will serve as an example of what can be expected in a female burial of high status, but other social levels will also be discussed. We can suppose that those individuals, whose burials have been discovered, were of a certain importance. Not anybody was considered worthy of the enormous work of building a stone setting or mound as those to be found at the Blekinge cemeteries. However, social hierarchy in the Iron Age had its degrees, and the cremation tradition allowed for several burials in the same monument (i.e. stone setting or mound). A few of the selected burials do not seem to have had any visible monument at all, which suggests a simpler role in life. Yet, how can we know anything about what is not visible to us? We cannot know what kind of objects were buried along with the deceased that have not been preserved or able to withstand the fire of the cremation, maybe there were many valuables among them, like fine textiles, leather or carved wood. Or maybe some people were only buried/cremated with one or two artefacts and did not own jewellery, people of common status? The remains we can analyze are almost always either of metal, clay, stone or glass, and even these materials are frequently badly damaged, mostly by fire. Throughout my inventory I found a lot of burials with only one or two recognizable objects (if any), which I had to exclude because they did not live up to my criteria, but which may be interesting anyway. Therefore, I will present some of these in a separate chapter (see ch. 2.4).

As the context of the finds is essential, the focus is on grave material, mainly from excavations done by BLM from 1917 to 2017, but valuable material has been collected by early archaeologists in the late 19th century, and where the find context has been more or less documented, these are included in the study as well. Settlement finds and some of the rejected material are discussed separately. Out of 97 investigations made by BLM and another 20 earlier investigations, more than 73 burials were listed and of these, 32 burials were finally selected for the study, i.e. nearly 50%.

All the artefacts included have not been available for closer study, neither in person nor through photos, in which case I have had to rely on descriptions in written material.

Reports from the excavations above have been necessary, and inventories made by both Karl-Axel Björkquist and Thomas Persson in their study of settlement history in Blekinge (Björkquist/Persson 1979) and the latter in unpublished inventories, have been of much use for understanding the context of each investigation and its finds. Thomas Persson has also clarified documentation made by earlier investigators in the 19th century, such as C.D. Pettersson, J. A. Jørgensen, M. Söderström and C. Wibling in his inventories (Persson 2019a). Also in conversation and through e-mail contact, Thomas Persson has contributed with much information, knowledge and advice (Persson 2019b).

Iconographic examples of female costume (on gold foils, bracteates, textiles) as well as examples in Norse and Anglo-Saxon literature will help to interpret and perhaps understand the different roles an Iron Age woman was expected to play and how she was ideally supposed to appear. Ulla Mannering has done extensive research in this line, and her book about *Iconic costumes* (Mannering 2017) gives detailed descriptions of Iron Age clothing and jewellery for both men and women.

Susanna Bromée has studied Iron Age clothing for more than 20 years, mainly based on finds in Western Europe and Scandinavia, e.g. inhumation graves on Bornholm (Bromée 2014, 2018). Studies of how textile production in the Iron Age was organized, which tools and material were used and how much work there was behind it are necessary for the understanding of everyday life in this society, studies that Eva Andersson Strand has specialized in. I will return to this material in the Previous Studies part.

Many efforts have been made to interpret and analyze the 1000-year-old Old English manuscript of *Beowulf*, to understand the society it relates to, and academic research has been divided as to the value of the poem as a historical source, ever since Tolkien in 1936 concluded it is 'only' a literary work of art. Lately, however, the majority of scholars seem to recognize its validity as a source for historical studies, and I will use some of their examples and discussions about how the role of women in a warrior society can be understood through *Beowulf*, mainly Michael Enright, Anders Nordberg and Dorothy Carr Porter. Several scholars agree that the archaic language with its stereotypical 'kennings' (attributes) and references points to the ancient roots (back to the first century of our era) of Germanic oral tradition and a world view and ideology of idealized aristocratic life (Enright 1996:5,36; Lönnroth 1997:32f; McNamara 2005:xxiii). Quotations from and references to the original poem in this paper are from the translation by John McNamara, 2005. The story revolves around a Danish king and a warrior of the 'Geats' (who live in an unspecified region of present southern Sweden) who helps the Danes get rid of the monster Grendel and his mother and fight the Swedes. Most research agrees on the period being the 6th century AD, although the poem was composed a couple of hundred years later. A rather surprising and recent analysis is the one by Bo Gräslund (Gräslund 2018) who concludes that the 'Geats' must have been from Gotland. Whatever this statement involves, the fact is still that it is a question of Scandinavian warrior societies, although written by an Anglo-Saxon Christian, and therefore of relevance to a study of the woman of the same. And Gotland is not very far from Blekinge... Actually, both would be part of a South Baltic culture from the early Migration Period and on (Näsman 1998:17; Wyszomirska-Werbart 1991:244).

Finally, references will be made to the Norse sagas, which, although written down by medieval Christian monks, bear with them both ideology and social foundations connected to the Norse mythology of the Scandinavian Iron Age. They have been the subject of many studies, and Gro Steinsland (Steinsland 2007) is one of the most known authors for comprehensive course literature in Norse mythology and ideology. Neil Price has specialized in Viking Age mythology and religious practice (Price 2002 and 2008), and other scholars dealing with Scandinavian Iron Age society from different aspects are Stefan Brink, Carol Clover, Maria Domeij, Lotte Hedeager and Kristina Jennbert, whose work has been useful to this paper.

1.4. Previous studies

As the research behind the studied burial material in this paper has been both extensive and lengthy, it is necessary to present its foundations. National interest in Iron Age Blekinge was not a priority before the 19th century, but in the 1820s the admiralty pharmacist Moses Söderström was appointed representative in Blekinge by the National Antiquarian. Söderström's letters to the N.A. report of his travels throughout the province, the destruction of ancient monuments due to the ongoing partition reform, and of his own excavations. He and his contemporary, the naval officer C.D. Peterson, acquired both with time extensive collections of ancient objects from their investigations, more or less well documented, now kept by the National Historical Museum (SHM). A survey of ancient monuments in Blekinge was also written by Söderström in cooperation with the county governor S.V. Gynther. In the 1840's Jens Jakob Assmussen Worsaae visited Blekinge and his account and

descriptions of prehistoric monuments are still useful. More archaeological activity took place towards the end of the century, when Oscar Montelius, Carl Wibling and the Danish amateur J.A. Jørgensen performed excavations in the province. The latter even left behind an unusually detailed report of his investigations at Kasakulle and Hjortahammar. (Björkquist & Persson 1979:11ff).

Not much happened before the latter half of the 20th century when in 1969-72 an inventory of ancient monuments was made by the National Board of Antiquities for the national economic map and later compiled in a report by Åke Hyenstrand (RAÄ 1984:7). This inventory was to be the basis for the regional history and inventory by Kjell-Åke Björkquist and Thomas Persson (Björkquist & Persson 1979), where they focused on the central hundred of Blekinge, Medelsta härad, with the addition of the parish of Bräkne-Hoby, aiming to give a complete picture of Bronze Age and Iron Age settlements and monuments. The result of their work is the only complete account of the human settlement history of the region, with detailed information on landscape, geology, monuments and excavations, as well as finds and their location. Needless to say, it has been of great use for the present study.

Another inventory of a different kind is the one by Pål Nicklasson, *Svärdet ljuger inte* (1997), focusing on weapon graves from the Early Iron Age on the mainland of Sweden. He has included seven weapon graves from Blekinge, of which two were found in the RA of this study, in Leråkra, parish of Edestad, and Johannishus, parish of Hjortsberga. Nicklasson's work has given clues to what *not* to look for when identifying female graves, and he also gives his definition of how to recognize one (see above, in Material, ch. 1.3).

The third inventory was written by Fredrik Svanberg and deals with death rituals and burials of the Viking Age in south-east Scandinavia (Svanberg 2003). His included catalogue is very complete and follows both Björkquist & Persson and reports from early and later excavations, as well as SHM and BLM inventories. Descriptions of different styles of brooches, combs and other artefacts are very useful, as well as his account of different equipment categories, including 'burials with jewellery'. Of this category he found 23 burials in Blekinge, and these seem to roughly correspond to mine from the same period, i.e. what I have supposed to be female graves.

The daily work of textile production has been explored in detail by Eva Andersson Strand in her thesis *The Common Thread*, where several works are included, among others the article *Invisible Handicrafts, the General Picture of Textile and Skin Crafts in Scandinavian Surveys*. In the latter she is critical to the lack of discussion concerning textiles and their production in archaeological contexts as opposed to other crafts. She argues that female weavers must have been equally specialized and skilled in their work as male smiths, but that as their work is associated with the domestic space, their craft has become 'invisible' (Andersson 1995:15ff). As the prehistoric textile techniques, like spinning, weaving on a warp-weighted loom and tablet weaving, are traditions still well known and applied in our days around the globe, they are a source of knowledge about daily life in prehistory even if the textiles themselves have gone lost in most cases. Andersson also examines the use of the spindle whorl, the importance of its model, material and weight for the thickness and quality of the thread, which implies that we may be able to get an idea of what kind of textiles they have been used for (Andersson 1996:13). This is essential, in view of the large amount of spindle whorls found in graves. Their symbolical, or even magical, meaning has been discussed by Ellen Höigård Hofseth and later by Elna Siv Kristoffersen (Hofseth 1985; Kristoffersen 2013).

Fashion, costume and appearance of women and men during the Late Iron Age, is the subject of Ulla Mannering's PhD dissertation *Iconic Costumes, Scandinavian Late Iron Age Costume Iconography* (2017)

based on the iconography of gold foils, helmet plates, bracteates and tapestries. It is in this rich iconography that we can find clues to understanding both formal clothing and ritual practice or metaphorical presentations of mythology.

The boat grave at Augerum in Blekinge has been analysed by Birgit Arrhenius, and her observations of the origin and quality of the jewellery and other objects accompanying the woman in the Vendel Period grave are obviously relevant to this study, as well as some other of her articles dealing with jewellery of the Vendel period (Arrhenius 1960a; 1960b; 1962).

Johan Callmer has studied female display jewellery from the 8th and 9th centuries from the point of view of religious beliefs, arguing for a difference in emphasis between male and female spiritual culture, based on their different gender roles, and visible in the development of ornamentation on brooches and buckles. According to him, animal ornamentation appears on female jewellery only when it becomes obsolete for men's weaponry (Callmer 2008).

The ideology, rituals and cosmology of the Germanic warrior society and the importance of women in it, has been discussed by a number of scholars, among others by Michael Enright in *Lady with the Mead Cup* (1996), using the Anglo-Saxon poem *Beowulf* as a source, opposed in some matters and from a feminist and anthropological angle by Dorothy Carr Porter in her paper *Social Centrality of Women in Beowulf: a New Context* (2001). The same subject is treated by Andreas Nordberg in his doctor's thesis *Krigarna i Odins sal* (2003), but referring mainly to the Norse sagas. Neil Price has focused on Old Norse sorcery, *seiðr*, and its connections with Sami shamanism in *The Viking Way*. The role of Scandinavian women in prehistoric times, from the Paleolithic to the Middle Ages, has been studied and presented by Catharina Ingelman-Sundberg in *Fortida kvinnor* (2004). The enigma of Viking Age understanding of the dichotomy of gender roles and the seemingly tolerant attitude towards female crossing of its boundaries has been studied and analyzed by Carol J. Clover, based on both Norse literature and Early Medieval laws. Her article *Regardless of Sex: Men, Women, and Power in Early Northern Europe* (1993) puts into words and clarifies much of the questions raised in the encounter of 'strong women' in a predominantly male world.

In her article *The Heroized Dead* (2006), Kristina Jennbert presents the idea of Pre-Christian burial rituals as a kind of 'staging' where lifestyle attributes for the dead become metaphors with different connotations. She suggests that this materialization of mythology and the past were acts of political manifestation and social identity, the heroizing of the dead ensuring remembrance and maintaining power relations and networking. War and violence, hunting, negotiation and communication, personal attraction, working experience and wealth, are the connotations suggested.

1.5. Theory and Method

The first theoretical starting-point in this paper is that it is *possible* to interpret the social identity of an individual by studying his/her grave material. It assumes that the person was buried/cremated in his/her own clothing and together with possessions having a close connection with his/her life and status. This can be objected to in several ways:

- It is not the deceased person who organizes the burial
- Those in charge of the burial may wish to change/conceal the apparent identity of the deceased
- The relations of the deceased may wish to impress by exhibiting their own possessions

- The objects placed with the deceased may have a purely symbolical meaning

And supposing that none of these objections need to be considered:

- The cremated individual may have had a number of possessions to identify her/him by, but that were completely destroyed on the funeral pyre

All these objections are of course valid and have to be taken into account, but my aim is to see what the *expected social role* of a woman could be – not to find the actual individual personality of the human being behind the cremated bones, which is close to impossible. In other words, I assume that the surviving kin of the deceased should wish to let material possessions represent the role the person played in the context of the family and its social status, as well as in the ideology of the surrounding society. The ‘staging’ of the dead, with its different connotations (Jennbert 2006:136) is therefore a useful concept for getting closer to this ideology and its understanding of the female role.

First of all, however, it is necessary to identify what constitutes a ‘female’ burial. As seen in the previous chapters 1.3 and 1.4, archaeological experience has proved certain items to be common or uncommon in female burials. Svanberg has presented his view on different burial equipment for men and women, based on the idea of ‘men’ and ‘women’ being social constructions applied commonly in south Scandinavia, and Stig Welinder’s study of children’s graves at Birka is here used as an example among others with osteological evidence (Svanberg 2003:20ff, 120f). That sex differentiation in grave gifts is a general rule throughout Scandinavia is further confirmed by Steinsland (Steinsland 2007:379) and Neil Price (Price 2002:149).

Traditional classification has however met with critique. The gender issue has been treated among others by Tove Hjörungdal in her thesis *Kvinnors posisjon under elder jernalder - bidrag til feministisk kritikk av arkeologien*. Some of her arguments are presented in the article *Kan man identifisere kvinners arbeid utifra graver?* (Hjörungdal 1988), in which she presents her investigation of burials in Vestlandet, Norway, from the Roman Iron Age and Migration Period. She categorized her material in two larger groups, ‘graves with working utensils’ and ‘graves with no working utensils’, thereafter into female and male graves (although she is sceptical to this method, but as the graves had not been osteologically analyzed there was no other way) using the following ‘traditional’ criteria, as she says:

- Female: more than one piece of jewellery and no iron weapon, apart from knife or axe.
- Male: weapons of iron, apart from knife or axe

She discovered this is not enough for defining all graves, but also that graves traditionally understood as female, more often contained tools for definite work processes than traditionally identified male graves. In the ‘female graves’ were to be found a lot of textile production tools, like spindle whorls, sword beaters, bone needles, needle cases. There would also occasionally be bone knives, possibly used for preparing hides, and bone arrows for hunting. (Hjörungdal 1988:115ff).

I have taken note of her observations in my own study and in the choice of my selection criteria, and in general been made aware that, at different levels of society, gender differentiation may look different, as Svanberg also points out (Svanberg 2003:23) .

Hjörungdal’s main critique of the established archaeological interpretation of prehistoric societies is that it is misogynist and stereotype while power and politics seldom are brought to analysis. She also calls for an alternative interpretation of grave material, i.e. using it for understanding the *ideology* of a prehistoric society rather than the actual daily work. The ‘visibility’ of men’s and women’s activities in relation to their ‘production’/‘reproduction’ (= division of labour) is the theme she believes we ought

to focus on, rather than extraordinary, imported artefacts demonstrating power. What role did the different kinds of work play for the preservation and stability of the society? She underlines the problems I mentioned above: Does the grave material reflect what the *individual did* in life, or what a woman was *expected* to do? Or even, what she would have had *someone else* do? (Hjörungdal 1988:118). Her thesis was written in 1988 and since then quite a lot has happened. Today, much of archaeology revolves around interpreting and understanding different prehistoric societies, their ideologies and women's role (as well as men's) in them. In interpreting my material the ideology of a warrior society is therefore an essential issue, and is best understood reflected in iconography and literature.

Ever since the creation of *Gendergruppen* at the Department of Archaeology in Lund in 1993, gender research and issues have become a natural part of archaeological studies at Lund university, and the difference between sex and *gender* much discussed (Caesar et al. 1999) (see ch.1.6. Definitions).

Stig Welinder is one example. Together with a group of other researchers at the Mid-Sweden University at Härnösand he has continued in the direction of 'archaeology of gender' by looking more closely at the relations between men and women and the way their chores, the landscape and the material culture formed the ideal norms and gender order in the society under his study, in this case pre-industrial mid-Sweden and in particular the summer farms, presented in *Visible men and elusive women* (Andersson et al. 2011:11). The group argues that the material culture of a society is the materiality of the gender identity, that the activities of men and women formed these identities and relations. What they call 'gendered garbage' is thus the material remains of these 'gendered activities', and the study of it consequently the 'archaeology of gender' (Andersson et al. 2011:12). In their study they conclude that female work (in this case dairy maids tending the cows in the outlying lands) left less traces in the landscape than that of the men (quarry work, forgery etc), but based on narratives by both men and women his study shows that there was much interaction and flexibility in everyday life and that both men and women crossed the boundaries of their 'gendered chores', women in particular (Andersson et al. 2011:16). That this was possible also in the Iron Age societies is stressed by Johan Callmer (Callmer 2008:186). Carol Clover goes even farther, arguing for a 'one-sex' concept in the Iron Age mind (i.e. the male sex) being the reason for a certain tolerance towards women who showed courage, initiative and strong will – and therefore were conceived as living up to the *male* ideal. The Scandinavian laws (based on Germanic tradition) and conventions would permit exceptions to the rule, as in reality women had to take over a man's role if there was no man to live up to it. In fact, women who did this were much more respected than men accused of 'unmanliness' (Clover 1993:6ff; Steinsland 2007:414f). The Norse literary sources portray women who achieve great wealth through marriage (or even as mistresses) and end up as widowed or divorced landowners with a great deal of power, the reality of which can be seen on rune stones (Hedeager 2011:119; Ingelman-Sundberg 1999:52f, 58ff; Steinsland 2007:418).

In his article, *Between two Worlds: the Meaning of Women's Ornaments and Ornamentation*, Johan Callmer argues that the "feminine gender, i.e. the chosen sex role, was elementary in a society, in which the maintenance of the family line and kin was of utmost importance" (Callmer 2008:185). Whether this role was 'chosen' by the woman or by the family around her is an interesting question, but with the above studies in mind, it is clear that a woman *could* play other roles, like that of a warrior, of a priestess, a seeress or a landowner. I have chosen to focus on material which makes it *possible* to suppose the buried individual was a socially identified woman, and from this starting-point try to find variations in the material which may indicate different social roles and status. However interesting the finds of women in warrior graves may be (e.g. the Birka woman warrior, see ch. 1.6.

Definitions) my study therefore excludes weapon graves, as there is no way to identify the biological sex of the cremation graves I am studying. During the selection process, however, I came across quite a few graves that could be called weapon graves and that most likely belong to men, which made me reflect on the importance of the *relationship* between men and women, the relative frequency of their burials and the number of artefacts in them, but there has not been enough time or space for such a study in this paper. However, when obvious, I will comment on such issues.

In other words, my main criteria for selecting a grave supposed to be female are:

- At least *two* of the following categories: brooches (oval brooch, trefoil brooch, equal-armed brooch, button-on-bow brooch etc.), armlet, pendant, a larger amount of beads (5 or more) of glass, glass paste or amber, spindle whorls, key, dress pins
- Together with any of the items above: comb, pin, needle, awl, knife, sickle, whet stone, loom weight, finger-ring
- Not used for selection: mounts of different kinds, single beads, weapons (other than knife or arrow points), shield bosses, strap buckles, riding gear
- Documented context (as far as possible)

The first group of criteria is based on what both Pável Nicklasson and Fredrik Svanberg have suggested as the most common grave goods found in female graves (Nicklasson 1997:165; Svanberg 2000:32ff; 2003:21f), as well as on material from the Augerum boat grave (Arrhenius 1960a, see ch. 3.2) and well documented boat graves in Tuna, Badelunda and Gamla Uppsala (Hildenborg 2018:7, 17ff). In the latter cases the female sex was proved by osteological analysis. The second group consists of tools and implements that can occur in both male and female graves, but that together with any of the objects from the first group would be likely to have been used by a female. Needles and pins normally belong to textile production and therefore traditionally to the female realm, but as they are often difficult to categorize properly because of corrosion, I have put them in the second group, except for identifiable dress pins (e.g. polyhedral ones). Scissors or shears would also belong to the textile production tools, but there were no recognizable such in my material. Burials with one artefact only were not selected as they would not be able to tell much about social roles, the spindle whorl being an exception, see ch.2.4.

Osteologically sex-determined graves have shown that a large number of beads (i.e. more than a 'hand-full') would belong to either a woman or a child (Lundqvist 2018:14ff; Svanberg 2000:40f). That girls could be given at least the same amount of 'female' grave goods as adult women, has been observed both at Birka and in Scania at the cemetery of Fjälkinge (Svanberg 2000:40f).

This choice of criteria consequently falls into at least two of Kristina Jennbert's connotations (see ch.1.4): *personal attraction* and *working experience*, but the individual burials will prove to include others apart from these.

Excavations and investigations performed by Blekinge Museum since 1917 to 2017 are listed according to parish. I started by going through these and examining closer the reports from the relevant parishes. *Matching* them with museum find lists and with information on FMIS has been the basis of the study. Compiling and sorting the relevant data in Excel files for the creation of a table of the selected burials, has taken much time. In the resulting table (Table I of burials) the burials are sorted according to parish, while my presentation of them will be as chronological as possible. I have

visited the Blekinge Museum (BLM) storage rooms at Rosenholm, Karlskrona, to examine the relevant artefacts and photograph them and had very informative discussions with archaeologists Thomas Persson (former curator of BLM) and Mikael Henriksson (present curator of BLM). As for the finds kept at Statens Historiska Museum (SHM), I have, for economic reasons, had to limit myself to the photographs available digitally on their site or ask them to send a few to me. In order to get a relevant idea of the proportionate importance of the predefined female graves, they would have to be compared to the number of excavated graves in the same grave field that are *not* possible to define as female. This is only applicable when there has been an extensive excavation at the same site, which is rarely the case in the chosen area. Likewise, the type of grave and all the material documented in the selected graves are noted, as this is part of the context and may help interpretation. Pottery as well as bone material and charcoal are also part of the context and may be useful for future dating/analysis.

The 32 burials are presented with their finds and contexts in ch. 2 and followed by a presentation of the different categories of items to be found in the research material, both as to their practical use and to their possible symbolical meaning in ch. 3.

The entire material under analysis has been mapped and categorized according to distribution and chronology. Tables of the selected and numbered burials are to be found in the Appendix (Tables I-III).

Finally, I am attempting to make a comparative analysis by interpreting and comparing the finds with what has been said about their significance and with what has been expressed in literary sources and in other research as to the social role of the woman during the Late Iron Age. How does the material match or relate to this picture? For this purpose, I will use Fredrik Svanberg's method of grouping burials into categories according to the number and type of artefacts found in them (Svanberg 2003:27ff), but modify it for my purpose, as there cannot be any of his category I (i.e. without any objects) in my already selected material. I will also have other points of focus as to the artefacts themselves and their meaning.

1.6. Definitions

Chronology, abbreviations and terminology occurring in this paper need defining:

By the *Late Iron Age* I mean the period from about 350-1000 AD. For the chronological periods mentioned I am using the abbreviations IA = Iron Age, RIA= Roman Iron Age, MP= Migration Period, VP= Vendel Period and VA = Viking Age.

Other abbreviations are: BLM = Blekinge läns museum, Karlskrona; SHM = Statens Historiska Museum, Stockholm and RA =Research area.

The terminology used for the burials under study is based on the assumption that those I have selected actually are female burials, consequently I also refer to the buried individual as *woman*, *she* or *her*, although this is a supposition, not a 100 % fact.

I differentiate between *biological sex* and *social gender*, the latter being understood as a social construct (see Conkey and Gero's theoretic perspectives 1 and 2, Willemark 1999:15). In this context it is also necessary not to confuse *social identity* (the social group you belong to) with either *social role* (the social function you have been given) or *sexual identity* (the sexual variety you subjectively identify with – a modern concept).

The *Birka woman warrior* refers to grave no. Bj. 581 at Birka. In 2017 new genomic data were published concerning this high-status warrior grave, ever since 1878 assumed to be male, causing much debate as it was in fact proven to belong to an individual of female biological sex (Hedenstierna-Jonson 2019; Price et al. 2019).

Finally, the *photos* of artefacts, when not labelled otherwise, are taken by the photographers at SHM, mainly Sara Kusmin. Ola Myrin took the ones of a few finds from Kasakulle I asked for specifically. At BLM the photographer is Morgan Olsson.

1.7. Source criticism

A certain inexactitude and even subjectivity of the material at the base of this study cannot be avoided. Investigations and finds made in the 19th century did not follow the rigorous rules applied by archaeologists today, why it cannot be taken for granted that finds collected in this period actually represent what initially was intended to accompany the dead. Like in a case mentioned in ch.2 (no. 4), where a rusty belt buckle was not considered interesting enough to keep, many other objects may have gone lost together with valuable context information. Needless to say, the material coming from cremation graves must be incomplete as some materials have been consumed by the pyre, others much damaged or corroded and therefore unrecognizable. Sometimes it is not quite clear – even in modern time excavations – whether artefacts belong to this or that cremation layer, or to any such at all, bones or charcoal missing or not being accounted for. Reports have been missing in some of the older cases, and when they had been of help, they were difficult to get hold of (e.g. the Wibling travelogue). The final selection of the burials has followed given criteria, but these could well have been slightly different as well as their application in some cases. I hope to have made some amends to this by adding the chapter 2.4.

In some cases there has been a lot of confusion as to which finds belong to which feature as they all have the same inventory no. and cannot be seen. This was particularly confusing when I thought I had detected a female weapon grave in P. Nicklasson's inventory (Nicklasson 1997), as it contained both weapons, a sickle and a large set of beads. However, when carefully examined, it turned out that two different features from neighbouring sites had been *combined* as they had the same feature no.! This illustrates the difficulties of navigating among different systems of inventory and registration.

The next step being the analysis of the material, it would ideally have involved studying the artefacts with my own eyes, but with the limited time scope it has not been possible to visit SHM in Stockholm, where most of the finds are kept. Not all finds have been available as photographs. I have also needed secondary sources for the analysis of jewellery and had to draw my own conclusions according to these. The categorization of the burials according to type or number of finds, could have been done in many different ways, my way being subjectively chosen for visual clarity and overview. As the tables are included in the Appendix, the basic data are available for anyone to rearrange according to needs.

The interpretation of the results in the context of Norse literature is out of necessity based on what knowledge I have managed to glean through mainly secondary (but expert) sources, as there was no time for studying all this vast material myself.

Finally, it needs to be said that with the above mentioned criteria, burials with no artefacts at all, or only one, have not been represented in the study, apart from some with a spindle whorl (in ch. 2.4). Likewise, those with seemingly 'male' artefacts, like belt buckles, weapons and no jewellery, are not included. This obviously leads to a disproportionate representativity of the social status of the

population in the RA, but as long as no *complete* excavation of an entire cemetery has been undertaken, with following analyses and statistics, this will always be the case.

2. Grave material in the research area

Here I am presenting the selected burials in chronological order (according to dating of finds, as far as possible) with finds and comments. The numbers refer to the list in the *Table I of Selected Burials* in the Appendix, which is according to parish. Relevant sources and reports are noted in the comments.

Almost all the burials were made at the following cemeteries, why they need a short presentation (nos. refer to Map B in Appendix):

1. *Edestad, Byrum, Nötanabben, RAÄ 97*: Approximately 90 features consisting of 1 cairn, 25 mounds, 3 round, filled stone settings, 18 ship settings, 8 four-sided stone settings, 1 oval stone setting, 1 tricorn, 1 stone circle, about 10 unfilled stone settings and 19 standing stones (FMIS 2019). The cemetery was rediscovered and cleared after a storm in 1967 and 5 features were investigated and restored in 1970-72 (FMIS 2019; Persson 1976).

2. *Förkärla, Hjortahammar, RAÄ 12*: Approximately 110 features consisting of 10 mounds, 60 round stone settings, 8 four-sided stone settings, 5 tricorns, 8 standing stones and 5 stone rows (FMIS 2019). Already in the 1820's gravel was extracted west of the cemetery which has caused damages to the graves. Several investigations were made towards the end of the 19th century, but in the 20th century only a damaged grave was examined (see ch. 4.3., no. 9), and in 2017 an inventory was performed of the damages as well as a metal detector investigation. Unfortunately, illegal metal detection has also occurred recently. (FMIS 2019).

3. *Förkärla, Lilla Vambåsa cemetery, RAÄ 16*: 55 visible features consisting of 20 mounds, 9 ship settings, 6 unfilled four-sided stone settings, 9 unfilled round stone settings, 2 filled, round stone settings and 8 standing stones (FMIS 2019). A northern part consists of mainly round stone settings and a southern part of mostly unfilled stone settings (Svanberg 2003:318). A cairn was investigated in 1895 and another investigation took place at the grave field in 1939, but no further information can be found.

4. *Hjortsberga, Hjortsberga cemetery, RAÄ 8*: Approximately 110 features, consisting of 19 ship settings, 13 four-sided stone settings, 1 oval stone setting, 11 tricorns, 6 standing stones, 55 mounds, 5 round stone settings and remains of stone settings. The cemetery was investigated by C.Wibling in 1893 and by T.J. Arne in 1917. (FMIS 2019).

5. *Hjortsberga, Västra Vång, Kasakulle, RAÄ 45-46*: 85 visible features consisting of 10 ship settings, 8 tricorns, 17 square stone settings, 8 rectangular stone settings, 28 mounds and 15 standing stones (FMIS 2019). At the end of the 19th century (1885) about a dozen graves were investigated resulting in finds from the Vendel Period and Viking Age (Björkquist & Persson 1974:55). Later investigations (in 1927, 1974 and 1978) show that the cemetery was used already in the Roman Iron Age, but settlement remains prove habitation in the Bronze Age and Early Pre-Roman Iron Age (Nagmér 1982). The cemetery is cut in two by the main road and the south-western part has been damaged by gravel extraction (FMIS 2019).

Apart from at these cemeteries, a few selected burials were also found in features at Hillerslätt (RAÄ 78) and Johannishus (RAÄ 12/20?) in the parish of Hjortsberga, at Bökenäs (RAÄ 73-76?) and Kartorp (RAÄ 114) in the parish of Listerby, and at Hulta (RAÄ 127) and Bredåkra (RAÄ 9) in the parish of Ronneby (these places are marked on Map B).

2.1. 350-600 AD

There are only three selected burials of this period, the earliest one may be of a somewhat earlier date. In the *Table I of selected burials* they are Nos. 1, 25 and 31.

No. 1. Edestad, Anglemåla, RAÄ 85: 24-25 beads of amber and of red, blue, green and white glass, 2 fragmentary whetstones of slate and quartzite respectively, burnt bones, pottery and charcoal (Persson 2019a; SHM 9410:63a).

Comments: This grave was excavated in 1893 by C. Wibling and is a secondary burial in a Bronze Age cairn, dated to RIA – MP, so it is the earliest burial in the selection. There were 2-3 secondary burials in a broken cist but nothing left of the original one (Björkquist & Persson 1979:32; Persson 2019a). The finds were made in the ‘top layer’, while another burial was found under it at the bottom of the cist together with iron fragments and pieces of a spindle whorl (SHM 9410, catalogue).

No. 25. Hjortsberga, Hillerslätt 1:4, RAÄ 78: 21 beads of turned amber, glass paste and glass (BLM 25334:1-67) (fig.3) .

Comments: This is the exception to the rule, as there are no other finds in the context but the beads, but as these are so many and well preserved, and there are so few burials from this period, I have chosen to include it anyway. The beads were found by K-A Björkquist and Th. Persson in 1972-73 when investigating a damaged round/oval stone setting from the Late Bronze Age, named ‘Högarör’ on a map from 1775. A large number of pottery shards, burnt bones and flint shavings were found spread out near the surface within the setting, possibly stirred by the earlier road constructions. The pottery was dated to the Late Bronze Age and a few to Early Iron Age. The beads were found north of the central boulder, spread out in the gravel layer with no other finds in the exact context. 13 of the amber beads were well preserved and shaped by turning. This method indicates import from East Prussia or Pomerania and is usually dated to Late Roman Iron Age or Migration Period (Björkquist & Persson 1970:16; Persson 2017:16).



Fig. 3. Beads of glass and amber (BLM 25334:19-22). Photo: BLM.

Comments: It is not clear whether this is a burial or an offering. If the beads had been worn during the cremation, they would not have been this well preserved, but they could have been added to the urn after the cremation or deposited as an offering some time later (see Beowulf's funeral, ch. 5, also Price 2008:260). It is likely that they should be connected to the shards of pottery dated to the Early Iron Age mentioned above, although the damages done to the stone setting have separated them.

No.31. Ronneby, Hulta, RAÄ 127: 27 beads of glass, glass paste and turned amber, of which one large and disc-shaped one, twisted bronze wire, bronze ring (BLM: 17244) (fig. 4).

Comments: This round stone setting was investigated in 1969 by K.-A. Björkquist and Th. Persson, together with three other stone settings south-east of Ronneby, from the Bronze and Iron Ages. All four stone settings were each placed on what would have been vantage points with a good view of the surroundings. The relevant stone setting turned out to be of an unusual type for the region and was badly damaged. The beads found just west of the central cairn can be dated to the Early MP. In the central cairn was a layer of burnt bones and near the western edge, another glass bead was found of the same kind, which suggests that the beads belonged to the main burial. Around the central cairn

another five bone layers indicated secondary burials, but only one mixed with charcoal (Björkquist & Persson 1970). The large turned bead (4,2 x 0,9cm) may have been worn together with the other beads on a string (in the centre?), but could also have hung separately as an amulet. It looks very much alike one of the two amber beads found at Västra Vång in 2014 (Report BLM 2016:6). In fact, these large discs may even have been used as spindle whorls – the size and the holes would be just right! The little bronze ring may have been used as a spacer or as a device between the strings and a brooch or pin. The spiralled wire is probably the remains of a type of bead common in this period and in the Vendel Period. Similar beads have been found to be worn as links in a chain together with other beads (Björkquist & Persson 1970:17).



Fig. 4. Beads of glass, glass paste and amber, BLM 17244. Photo: Antonia Hellstam

2.2. 600-800 AD

There are nine selected burials belonging to the Vendel period.

No. 17. Hjortsberga, Västra Vång, Kasakulle, RAÄ 45-46: 3-4 fragmented brooches: 1 equal-armed (fig.5), 1 bird-shaped with animal ornamentation (fig. 35), 1 bird-shaped with no ornament; fragment of bronze armlet with round section, 35-37 glass beads (mainly blue, some polychrome), 1 fragmented composite bone comb with linear ornamentation, 1 bronze round pendant with cup-shaped front, 1 bronze mount with animal head, fragments of iron sickle/knife, fragments of bronze plate (some ornate), fragments and smelts of bronze and iron, slag, pottery, piece of resin, burnt bones and charcoal (SHM 30963:110).



Fig. 5. Equal-armed brooch SHM 30963:110

Comments: In 1974 road widening caused extensive damage to some of the graves of the cemetery of Kasakulle, which called for an investigation. It was conducted by K.-A. Björkquist and Th. Persson. An unusual find of a presumably Christian inhumation grave of Late Viking Age date, containing nothing but a tall, male skeleton, was discovered in a low mound (feature 44), his head towards the west. Under him, a cremation layer (feature 110) contained objects from this female burial from the 7th century. During the road work, some hearths and cultural layers were found, indicating a settlement a little older than the grave field (Björkquist & Persson 1974). In the report, three bronze fragments are mentioned as 'almost spherical', 5-7 mm in diameter – beads? Most of the glass beads were damaged by fire, but of varied shape and colour, although mainly blue. (Björkquist & Persson 1976:24).

No. 23. Hjortsberga, Västra Vång, Kasakulle, RAÄ 45-46: 1 bronze beak-shaped brooch (fig. 6, type G2b/c according to Ørsnes, Early VP?, Hårdh 1999:146f), 1 equal-armed brooch, 2 glass beads, 1 slate spindle whorl, 1 whetstone, 1 knife?, bronze plate, iron fragment, nails, pottery, burnt bone (SHM 31708:53).

Comments: In 1978 two Iron Age cemeteries were investigated by UV-Syd due to widening of the road 699 along the ridge of Johannishus. One of them was Kasakulle where 13 stone settings were

excavated and 15 cremation layers were discovered, as well as settlement remains (Nagmér 1982). Of these, 6 burials were selected, of which this one is feature 53, a cremation layer under a round stone setting. The brooches date the layer to the VP (see 3.2.1. Brooches). According to SHM, the iron fragment may be part of a cauldron.



Fig. 6. Beak-shaped brooch, SHM 31708:53

No. 12. Hjortsberga, Västra Vång, Kasakulle, RAÄ 45-46: 1 fragmented button-on-bow brooch, 1 fragmented bronze/silver (diverging information) armlet, 1 fire-steel-shaped bronze pendant, 1 cylindrical bead of twisted bronze wire, 1 cylindrical, flat slate spindle whorl, 1 fragmented chain of double bronze rings, glass melts of 5 beads whereof one segmented one and three with glass threads of different colours, pottery (Björkquist & Persson 1979:53; SHM 7869:4).

Comments: This feature 10, cremation layer 4, was excavated in 1885 by Johan Andreas Jørgensen who investigated altogether four four-sided stone settings at Kasakulle that year (three of them, nos. 12, 13 and 14 have been included here). The button-on-bow brooch of bronze and iron consists of three fragments, badly corroded, but the footplate has impressed ornaments and two circular iron foil frames for inlays (which most probably were garnets). The open armlet (at SHM mentioned as of silver) has thicker ends with impressed ornaments and two parallel beads (see No. 15!). Together with the fire-steel-shaped pendant this should date the burial to the transition from the Vendel Period to the Viking Age. (Björkquist & Persson 1979:53; Persson 2019a).

On the other hand, the flat cylindrical shape of the spindle whorl would, according to Svanberg's table, indicate somewhere between 400 and 600 AD (Svanberg 1997:168) and according to Callmer, the button-on-bow brooch disappears at the beginning of the Viking Age (Callmer 2008:195). The badly damaged fire-steel-shaped (or lunula/pelta-shaped?) pendant (which is not to be found under the above-mentioned no. at SHM) may have had the symbolic meaning of associating the bearer with the 'home-fires', with fertility or with the transition to the other world (see ch. 3.2.3).

No. 15. Hjortsberga, Västra Vång, Kasakulle, RAÄ 45-46: 1 bow of bronze brooch, 1 fragmented silver armlet with impressed ornamentation and thickened ends/middle, 4 beads: 1 of rock crystal, 1 polyhedral bead of bronze, 1 cylindrical bead of twisted bronze thread and 1 of bronze; L-shaped key (fig. 7) of iron with hole to hang it, possible whetstone (lost), pottery, burnt bone (Persson 2019a; SHM 7869).

Comments: An unidentified ship setting was investigated by Jørgensen in 1885. Under the central stone a cremation layer was found containing the finds. According to Björkquist & Persson (1979) there was also a lead weight, but this is not mentioned in Persson 2019a, or in SHM. Opinions diverge concerning the dating, based on the armlet and the pottery, but roughly around the end of the Vendel period and beginning of Viking Age should be possible. A secondary burial was found at one end of the ship setting containing an iron arrow-head, which is thought to date from the same period. (Björkquist & Persson 1979; Persson 2019a). On the other hand, it may very well be of a later generation or two. The key may be of the kind married women would hang from their brooches as a sign of their household responsibilities and dignity (Callmer 2008:185; Ingelman-Sundberg 2004:57).



Fig. 7. Iron key, SHM 7869.

No. 19. Hjortsberga, Västra Vång, Kasakulle, RAÄ 45-46: Fragments of 1 bronze armlet?, 1 knife, 1 slate whetstone, fragments of a bronze spiral, iron fragments, 1 rivet, 1 loom weight of fired clay, burnt bone, slag, pottery (SHM 31708:6).

Comments: One of the features excavated in 1978, this was a cremation layer (no.6) in a round stone setting. The cremation had seemingly taken place on the spot, as large pieces of charred branches were found in the layer. The SHM find list mentions the armlet with a question mark, in the report only as 2 rods of bronze (Nagmér 1982). In this burial is the only specimen of a loom weight. What can the meaning of a single weight be? Either it is purely symbolical, like a 'pars pro toto' for the whole loom or the craft of weaving, or it had quite a different purpose. Loom weights could be used as heaters, for weighing down fishing nets or as plummets when building etc. (Andersson 1996:20). The reason this burial is classed as a VP burial is the round stone setting it was found in, the bronze armlet and the bronze spiral that indicates a spiralled bead like those found in several of the VP burials.

No. 22. Hjortsberga, Västra Vång, Kasakulle, RAÄ 45-46: 1 stone spindle whorl, 1 knife, burnt bone, slag (SHM 31708:42).

Comments: Another of the features excavated in 1978, this was, like the one above, a round stone setting, A 42. There is no dating of the spindle whorl (although its shape suggests MP-VP, Svanberg 2003:168), but the round stone setting suggests the burial is of the same period as all the other round stone settings in the selection, i.e. VP.

No. 24. Hjortsberga, Västra Vång, Kasakulle, RAÄ 45-46: Fragmented brooch, bronze fragment with relief ornament, 1 bead of glass, 1 bead of bronze, faceted with stamped circle ornament, pottery, burnt bones and charcoal (SHM 31708:68).

Comments: This burial is feature A68 from the above excavation, a cremation layer found in a rectangular stone setting (Nagmér 1982). Unfortunately, no pictures of the objects have been available, but according to description the bronze bead may indicate Late VP.

No. 28. Hjortsberga, Johannishus, RAÄ 20/12? Fragments of a composite antler comb, 2 bronze polyhedral pins (both broken but with ornamentation, type ATS 22:4, fig 8.), 1 bronze dress pin with ornamentation, rivet, rivet plate, 1-2 bone objects with ornamentation, 1 animal tooth, burnt bone, charcoal (SHM 20127, catalogue).

Comments: The investigation of a damaged round stone setting at Johannishus in 1932 was undertaken by curator S. Leander. No details of the excavation itself are available although a report is supposed to exist. The SHM catalogue mentions a cemetery in the western part of the railway station village, which seems to correspond to either of the two RAÄ numbers above. However Thomas Persson's inventory confirms the catalogue at SHM. (Persson 2019a).

According to an investigation of dress pins in the Mälars valley and their connection to women and men in the Migration and Vendel periods, the polyhedral pins belong to the VP and were worn mainly by women (Waller 1986:148, 150ff), and Birgit Arrhenius includes polyhedral pins in her study of VP jewellery (Arrhenius 1960b:73f), which is also confirmed by the Augerum boat grave find set (see ch.3.2. Jewellery). On these grounds, I place the burial in the VP without specification. It looks like this individual has been using three pins at once in her/his (?) clothing. Normally one would imagine two pins for a string of beads and maybe a third one for a cape/shawl, but here are no beads at all, only an ornate comb. It is not impossible this individual is a male, but not likely. It would be interesting to have the animal tooth osteologically analyzed!



Fig. 8. Bronze polyhedral pin, SHM 20127.

No. 30. Listerby, Kartorp, RAÄ I 14: 1 bow-shaped brooch (M433), 2 fragments of another brooch of the same kind, 2 beads: 1 of red glass paste and 1 spherical bronze bead, 2 fragments of a bone comb with simple linear ornament, 1 disc-shaped spindle whorl of fired clay, rivets, iron fragments (of mounts?), pottery, burnt bone, charcoal (Persson 2019a; SHM 9824:6, catalogue).

Comments: Wibling investigated at least three round stone settings with mounds in a cemetery at Kartorp in 1894. This one he called 'Grafkulle B I' (another one, 'Grafkulle B II' seems to have contained a male grave with a bronze shield boss, a mount with animal ornamentation, game pieces of bone, a fire-striker of flint and bones of human and horse, among other things (SHM 9824:7), while a third one had a horse shoe, a comb and bones of dog (SHM 9824:10). The pair of brooches of the same kind are likely to have fastened a woman's costume, on the shoulders or on the chest. The iron fragments and rivets may have belonged to a wooden box.

2.3. 800-1000 AD

The majority of the burials fall into this group, 20 burials.

No. 27. Hjortsberga, Hjortsberga, RAÄ 8: 2 fragments of bronze equal-armed brooch with animal ornamentation, 3 glass beads (1 segmented, 1 colourless, 1 pale green), 1 cone-slice-shaped spindle whorl of sand stone, fragment of iron sewing needle, pottery, charcoal (Björkquist & Persson 1979:50; Persson 2019a; SHM 16031, catalogue).

Comments: In 1917 T.J. Arne investigated four small cairns within a ship setting at the cemetery of Hjortsberga, of which this (feature No. 50) was the only one with finds. The ornament of the brooch dates the burial to the beginning of the Viking Age (Björkquist & Persson 1979:50).

No. 32. Ronneby, Bredåkra, RAÄ I 44: Bronze armlet with thick middle and overlapping ends and impressed dots (fig. 10), 1 mosaic glass bead, fragments of a cylindrical/flat spindle whorl of soap stone (fig. 9), iron fragments, a heart-shaped arrow-head of flint stone (BA), pottery (BA), flint flakes, charcoal (BLM 17160:3-19; Björkquist & Persson 1972).

Comments: The round stone setting with central cairn was investigated by K.-A. Björkquist and Th. Persson in 1972. It appeared to have been damaged by recent digging for electricity posts and by motor cycling etc. Most of the finds were made just under the central cairn, but the spindle whorl was discovered among a lot of shards just north of the cairn, while two silver coins of later date (13th century) were found among another lot of shards south-east of the cairn (Björkquist & Persson 1972). This indicates there may have been



Fig. 9. The bronze armlet, BLM 17160:3. Photo: K.-A. Björkquist.

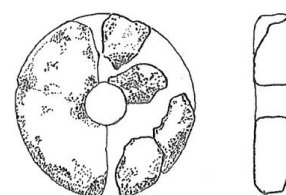


Fig. 10. Fragments of spindle whorl of soap stone, BLM 17160:12. Drawing by K.-A. Björkquist.

several burials and secondary ones, why it is not certain the spindle whorl belongs to the central cairn. However, according to a time chart in Svanberg 2003:168, its flat, cylindrical shape suggests Migration/Vendel Period (Svanberg 2003:168), while the arrow-head and some pottery point to Late Bronze Age and the armlet to Early Viking Age (Björkquist & Persson 1979:39) as well as the bead. The diameter of the armlet being 6 cm, it seems impossible it could be worn on anything but a very thin arm of a woman or a child, especially with its overlapping ends.

No. 16. Hjortsberga, Västra Vång, Kasakulle, RAÄ 45-46: 1 equal-armed brooch (Aagård IA:2, fig. 12), 1 trefoil brooch (lost, fig. 11), 1 polychrome bead of glass paste (SHM 7869:2; Svanberg 2003:319).



Fig. 11. Equal-armed brooch SHM 7869:2

Comments: Three tricorns were investigated at *Kasakulle* by Jørgensen in 1885 and the finds are from a cremation layer in one of them (Jørgensen's No. 2).



Fig. 12. The lost tre-foil brooch. Drawing in Jørgensen 1885:29.

The bead is damaged by fire and the trefoil brooch has unfortunately gone lost, but the equal-armed brooch can be dated to the Early Viking Age, as it has datable equivalents among the Birka finds (Björkquist & Persson 1970:44).

No. 2. Edestad, Gö/Byrum, RAÄ 97: Fragments of 1 round bronze pendant with relief ornament (fig. 13), 5 beads of glass (one with fluted surface) and limestone, slate whet stone with hole and bronze wire loop for hanging, burnt bones, all badly damaged by fire (BLM 16923:1-4).

Comments: In 1972 K.-A. Björkquist and Thomas Persson investigated five different stone settings at the cemetery also called *Nötanabben*.

Cremation layer 57 lay in a four-sided stone setting. Within the stone frame were nine post-holes of which eight formed a square around the cremation layer, suggesting a construction of some kind covering the burial, possibly a so-called 'death house' (among other places found at Vätteryd, Scania, over a female burial from Late VP – Early VA, Strömberg 1959:68-69). Near one of the post-holes was found a 'grave stone sphere', one of the two found in the cemetery, the first to be found in Blekinge. Most of these are considered to be from the Migration or Vendel period. The cremation layer finds are dated to Mid-Viking Age based on the moulded ornamentation of the pendant. The latter is unusual, imitating filigree work, but with likenesses in the Birka material (Björkquist & Persson 1979:53; Persson 1976:12, 15f). The ornamental volutes originate in Carolingian art (Hårdh 1977:33).



Fig. 11. Fragments of round pendant BLM 16923 (photo: Antonia Hellstam), and reconstruction in wash drawing of the same by K.-A. Björkquist

No. 13. Hjortsberga, Västra Vång, Kasakulle, RAÄ 45-46: 2 fragmented oval brooches (JP51), fragments of an iron object, burnt bone (SHM 7869:3a).

Comments: This is another of the four four-sided stone settings (nos. 12, 13 and 14 excavated by Jørgensen at *Kasakulle* in 1885). It has one side in common with the stone setting of burial no. 14 (see below), and like the latter it has a central mound in which the cremation layer (3a) was found. They can both be dated to the Mid-Viking Age. One of the oval brooches has gone lost. (Björkquist & Persson 1979:53).

No. 14. Hjortsberga, Västra Vång, Kasakulle, RAÄ 45-46: 1 damaged oval brooch (JP51), glass melts (lost), double-conical ornate spindle whorl of fired clay, 2 pieces of an iron handle and mounts for a hanging vessel (fig. 14), 2 rivets (Björkquist & Persson 1979:53; Persson 2019, SHM 7869:3b). In the SHM find list are also an awl and a buckle-pin under 3b, but there is no mention of these elsewhere.

Comments: As no. 13 (above), this four-sided stone setting was excavated in 1885 by Jørgensen and shares one of its sides with it. They two burials may have taken place at the same time, or maybe with only a generation between them, as the brooches are of the same type. The brooch type belongs to the Mid-VA. The wrought iron handles would have been attached with the mounts to a wooden vessel. (Björkquist & Persson 1979:53).



Fig. 12. Two pieces of iron handle and mounts for a vessel, SHM 7869

The spindle whorl has 10 impressed crossed circles around the hole (Persson 2019a) - a wheel symbol? The fourth stone setting of the same kind (not included in this selection), excavated in 1885, contained a piece of silver plate, part of a finger ring, another piece of bronze plate with linear ornament and an iron knife (Björkquist & Persson 1979:53).

No. 3. Förkärla, Hjortahammar, RAÄ 12: 1 round bronze pendant (fig. 15), 9-10 glass beads (SHM1453:186)

Comments: Four four-sided stone settings with central mounds were investigated in 1820 at the cemetery of *Hjortahammar* by C.D. Pettersson. Two of them are included here, nos. 3 and 5, the others not quite living up to the criteria but still interesting. The latter contained a glass bead (lost), and a spherical bead of rock crystal (a second identical one was crushed by the spade) and a double-conical spindle whorl, respectively (SHM 1453:187 and 188). This stone setting, which may be identified as feature no. 26 on the grave field map, shares sides with a ship setting to the west and another four-sided stone setting to the north. Telling by the fire-damaged beads, the finds are from a cremation layer. However, they can be recognized as being of various types: melon-shaped, triple- and double-segmented as well as a couple of polychrome beads. The pendant is of 'borre'-style with animal motif, dating it to the 10th century (recalling the 'compact animal' motif in Callmer 2008:194). (Björkquist & Persson 1979:54).



Fig. 13. Pendant SHM 1453:186

No. 4. Förkärla, Hjortahammar, RAÄ 12: 2 oval brooches (JP57), 6 glass beads (fig. 16), 1 iron belt buckle (SHM 1453:189).

Comments: Also investigated by Pettersson in 1820, this low mound was one of several excavated on the site, 'an almost invisible mound without stone setting' (SHM1453:189, catalogue) and most finds are lost. One of the two brooches was given away to 'Thomsen in Copenhagen' (Persson 2019a). They were however both of 'jellinge'-type and dated to the 10th-11th century (Björkquist & Persson 1979:37). According to Pettersson's report the rusty iron belt buckle 'was not worth picking up' (Persson 2019a).



Fig. 14. Beads SHM 1453:189

No. 5. Förkärla, Hjortahammar, RAÄ 12: Fragments of 1 silver finger ring (lost), 2 beads of glass and carnelian, respectively, 1 silver ear-ring (lost), 1 silver filigree button (lost) (Björkquist & Persson 1979:53; SHM I453:192).

Comments: This feature no. 192 belongs to the second of the four four-sided stone settings with central mounds investigated by Pettersson in 1820 at Hjortahammar (see no.3 above). Only the two beads are now listed at SHM, and without any closer descriptions, the burial can only be generally dated to the Late Iron Age (Björkquist & Persson 1979:53).

No. 6. Förkärla, Hjortahammar, RAÄ 12: 1 round silver brooch (fig. 17), 1 oval bronze brooch (JP51 or 52), 2-3 fragmented silver plate finger rings (fig. 18), 3 spindle whorls: 1 hemispherical one of soap stone (fig. 28), 1 conical one of sand stone and 1 disc-shaped one of fired clay; 1 bronze knife-sheath mount, burnt bones, charcoal (Persson 2019a; SHM I452:34-40).

Comments: In 1828 M. Söderström investigated two ship settings that had been damaged by gravel extraction, both of which are included here, nos. 6 (ship setting 1) and 7 (ship setting 2). It is not possible to see which one of the quite similar oval brooches belong to which burial, but both belong to the Mid- Viking Age. Since they are not of exactly the same type, they most likely belong to different burials. The finger



Fig. 15. Silver finger rings, SHM I452:37

rings have stamped impressions of triangular shape (in pairs, which gives an hour-glass impression on one ring), which seems to be a common type in the 10th century, and the round brooch fits in well too. Apart from the double lock, this brooch has a moulded loop at the back. (Björkquist & Persson 1979:51; Persson 2019a).

As the three spindle whorls are of different material and shape, the same person could have needed them all for different qualities of thread, but it is possible that one of them actually belongs to the other burial, as the finding circumstances are not entirely clear.

No. 7. Förkärla, Hjortahammar, RAÄ 12: 1 oval bronze brooch (JP51 or 52, fig. 19), 6 glass beads, burnt bones, charcoal (SHM I452:34-40).

Comments: Together with no.6, this ship setting (2) was investigated by M. Söderström in 1828 (see above) and although the finds are said to be made in cremation layers, the brooches are remarkably intact, with locks at the back. On the JP51 specimen there is an impression from some textile on the inside (Persson 2019a), and the iconography around the edges would be worth studying closer (see fig. 19). Dating to 900-1000 AD.

No. 10. Förkärla, Lilla Vambåsa, RAÄ 16: 6 beads of glass and clay, 1 bronze penannular brooch or ringed pin, 1 iron arrow head, 1 iron key, 2 iron handles, 1 iron hook, nails, iron fragments, pottery shards from 2 vessels, flint flakes (Persson



Fig. 16. Silver brooch SHM I452:38



Fig. 17. Oval bronze brooch JP51, SHM I452:40

2019a; SHM 9991, catalogue).

Comments: Unfortunately, all the finds are lost from this excavation of a cairn in 1895 and no further descriptions of the finds are available. The arrowhead indicates hunting activities, the hook maybe angling and the key house-hold responsibilities along with the handles probably belonging to wooden vessels. Depending on the size, the key could also belong to a casket together with the nails and fragments.

No. 11. Förkärla, Lilla Vambåsa, RAÄ 16: 1 equal-armed bronze brooch (Aagard group III, fig. 21), 2 oval brooches (JP51B), top shell of oval brooch (JP51A) (BLM 12703:a-d).



Fig. 18. Oval brooches JP51B, BLM 12703:b-c. Photo: Antonia Hellstam

Comments: There are no details about these finds from the grave field at Lilla Vambåsa in 1939, dated to 900-1000 AD, but they are said to have been found together (Svanberg 2003:316). The remaining top shell of a third oval brooch is not likely to have belonged (or been worn) by the same woman, maybe here are two burials/individuals represented.



Fig. 19. Equal-armed brooch, BLM12703:d. Photo BLM

No. 18. Hjortsberga, Västra Vång, Kasakulle, RAÄ 45-46: 1 fragment of equal-armed brooch, 2 oval brooches JP51 (one in fragments), 2 glass beads, 1 bronze plate with animal ornament and three holes, 1 conical spindle whorl of clay, 1 whetstone of slate with hole (SHM 31708:2).

Comments: This is one of the many features excavated in 1978 by UV Syd at Kasakulle. Feature A2 was a four-sided stone setting whose western half had been damaged during the construction of a ship setting next to it. A2 shared one side with another four-sided stone setting (A1). A cremation layer (feature 38) was found in the south-eastern corner of the stone setting, while the artefacts were discovered in the northern area, in the filling. The undamaged oval brooch has animal ornament imitating chip carving technique. Dating to 900-1000 AD. (Nagmér 1982).

It is unclear whether the finds were part of a cremation layer, there are no bones. The bronze plate with drilled holes, could it have been a mount for a wooden box, a bead separator or a sewing-on piece?

No.26. Hjortsberga, Hjortsberga grave field, RAÄ 8: 1 oval brooch JP51 (fig. 22), 2 beads of glass and rock crystal, respectively, glass melt (bead?), 1 piece of iron needle/pin (SHM 9410:64 a-c; Svanberg 2003:318).

Comments: C. Wibling investigated this mound in 1893, as well as at least two other features on the grave field of Hjortsberga. There is different information as to the distribution of finds, I have here chosen Svanberg's interpretation. The needle may belong to the oval brooch, in which case the burial does not fit my criteria, but this is not certain. The burial is dated to 900-1000 AD (Svanberg 2003:318).



Fig. 20. Oval brooch SHM 9410:64a

No. 29. Listerby, Bökenäs, RAÄ either of 73-76: 2 oval brooches JP52D of gilt bronze (BLM 1590 and 1591, fig. 23).

Comments: The find was made in 1899 in a cairn at Bökenäs by Olof Gustavsson on his own grounds (Svanberg 2003:321). According to FMIS there are four cairns just north-west of the village of Bökenäs, it ought to be one of them.



Fig. 21. Oval brooch BLM1590

The following burials have a general date to the Viking Age:

No. 8. Förkärla, Hjortahammar, RAÄ 12: 1 penannular and ornamented bronze brooch, 3 fragments of a cylindrical bead of twisted bronze wire, 1 small knife, 1 whetstone of sand stone, 6 nails, 1 iron object with barbs, burnt bones (Björkquist & Persson 1979:44; SHM 7869).

Comments: Two tricorns were investigated at *Hjortahammar* by Jørgensen in 1885, but only this one (feature 76) contained finds. They were found spread out in the cremation layer which reached over the extension of the feature. The brooch, of 6,3 cm in diameter, has impressed rhomboids on the faceted surface and the needle is 8 cm long but as the ends are damaged by fire, it is dated to Viking Age in general (Björkquist & Persson 1979:44; Persson 2019a). The object with barbs is of unknown use – fishing gear?

No. 9. Förkärla, Hjortahammar, RAÄ 12: 1 or 2 fragmented bronze pendants of Birka type, 58 beads of glass (fig. 25), most of them badly fire-damaged, 2 (or more) polyhedral bronze beads and 1 fragment of a bead of spiralled bronze wire, 1 'Lady with Mead Cup'-pendant/amulet of bronze (fig. 24), 1 round bronze brooch, part of a bronze key, 1 bronze strap-end mount, 2 nails, iron fragments, pottery, flint flakes and burnt bones, BLM 13631 (Atterman 1956:22; BLM 13631; Persson 2019a). Svanberg mentions a sewing-on mount of bronze (Svanberg 2003:316), but this could not be found at BLM. On the other hand, the female amulets have been said to be sewing-on mounts (Nordberg 2003:179).



Fig. 22. 'Lady with Mead Cup', bronze amulet, BLM 13631



Fig. 23. Most of the badly fire damaged beads BLM 13631. Photo: Antonia Hellstam

Comments: This excavation in 1955 of features 114 and 115 by Ingemar Atterman, seems to be the only investigation made at *Hjortahammar* in the 20th century, and then because of road work along the cemetery. The first of the two features turned out to be a cairn empty of burials, probably due to early pillaging, and contained nothing but waste of later date. The other feature, grave 115, was a cremation layer probably belonging to a mound destroyed during earlier road work. (Atterman 1956:22).

This burial is unusual, although the finds are badly damaged by fire, being the only one with so many beads and other jewellery. The female figure is one of a number of similar figures used as amulets and presented in ch. 3.2.5. This one had been beheaded for some reason, on purpose or by accident? This fact means we cannot tell whether the

figure was a pendant, a sewing-on piece or an amulet with no hole. The key is of bronze, which must have given it a higher value than an iron one.

No. 20. Hjortsberga, Västra Vång, Kasakulle, RAÄ 45-46: 1 trefoil bronze brooch of 'Borre-style' (fig. 26), 6 glass beads (4 with silver foil), 1 conical spindle whorl of fired clay, 1 iron needle, 1 whetstone with hole, 1 rivet plate, burnt bone, charcoal (SHM 31708:8).



Fig. 24. Trefoil brooch of 'Borre-style', SHM 31708:8

Comments: Feature A8, also excavated in 1978, was a rectangular stone setting with no frame. Both the trefoil brooch and the spindle whorl are damaged. (Nagmér 1982).

No. 21. Hjortsberga, Västra Vång, Kasakulle, RAÄ 45-46: 1 pennanular iron brooch, 16 glass beads, iron rod, slag, burnt bone, charcoal (SHM 31708:14).

Comments: The cremation layer A14 was discovered about 1,5 m north west of feature A8 (see above), with no visible stone settings above ground level. (Nagmér 1982).

The beads are nearly all of blue glass (one is blue-green and another is polychrome with blue) and a couple are melon-shaped (SHM 31708:14). Can the iron 'rod' be the needle belonging to the brooch?

2.4. Material not included but of interest

Spindle whorls have been found in many burials, sometimes with not much other grave goods, why these burials have been left out. There may originally have been artefacts that have not been preserved as well, but it is also possible that these burials belong to what Svanberg has put in his category II, burials with 1-2 simple artefacts (Svanberg 2003:27f). In either case, though, they show the importance of the spindle whorl and its function – i.e. textile production - for the Iron Age society, as well as its metaphorical values in burials. Here follow the spindle whorls not included.

At *Anglemåla*, RAÄ 85, in 1893, bottom layer of secondary grave (see no. 1): spindle whorl of sand stone, pottery, burnt bones (SHM 9410:63b).

At *Nötanabben*, RAÄ 97, in 1970-72, a cylindrical spindle whorl of fired clay (BLM 17066:1) together with burnt bones in feature A9, a round and filled stone setting, Together with a couple of similar features the stone setting is located in the northern part of the cemetery and differs from the rest of the cemetery, which indicates they belong to the earlier part of it (Persson 1976:11). The shape of the spindle whorl suggests a dating to 400-600 AD (Svanberg 2003:168, fig 72).

At *Hjortahammar*, RAÄ 12, 1820, spindle whorl of stone (SHM 1453:188) of double-conical shape, with two beads of rock crystal (one broken) in the central mound of a four-sided stone setting (see ch.4:3, No.3); in 1828 a hemispherical one of soapstone (SHM 1452:75) turned up in the cast up soil together with 7 glass beads and pieces of resin (Persson 2019a).

In *Hjortsberga parish* in 1893, a spindle whorl of soapstone, with two holes (SHM 9499:23). No find context.

At *Kasakulle*, RAÄ 45-46: In 1978, in cremation layer A12 in a round stone setting A4, a spindle whorl of fired clay together with pottery, burnt bones, slag and charcoal (SHM 31708:12).

Of course, spindle whorls have been in use at the settlements, one of sandstone was found in 2007 (BLM 26610:1-131), and only in 2014 five of them were found at *Västra Vång*, all of fired clay. Other implements, like a great many *loom weights*, as well as *awls* and *needles* indicate that textile

production was one of all the crafts practised here. Even a glass *smoothing stone* has appeared. (Henriksson 2016:6).

An interesting find is that of a disc-shaped spindle whorl in the wheel tracks close to an overhanging rock shelter, 'Fårastenen' (RAÄ 295), on the west side of the river Vierydsån, in the parish of Bräkne-Hoby (Persson 2019b). It falls just outside of the RA, but may indicate spinning activities in the Migration or Vendel Period while tending cattle or sheep – a summer camp?

Other burials not selected are:

Kasakulle, 1978, cremation layer 38: 5 beads (3 of glass), iron rod, iron button, nails, bronze fragments, pottery, burnt bones, slag; cremation layer A 50: beak-shaped bronze brooch (VP), burnt bones, slag (SHM 31708); 1885, cremation layer 10 in tricorn: 2 bronze finger rings, 1 bronze bead, a whetstone, fragment of belt buckle, nail (SHM 7869).

Yxnarum, 'Jättebacken', 1878, a vanished cemetery: swastika-shaped bronze brooch with 4 horned animal heads, 1 red glass paste bead, decorated pottery (RIA/VP, information diverges) (SHM 6636:l, m).



Fig. 25. Swastika-shaped brooch, SHM 6636:l or m

The burials above could, in my opinion, very well be male burials. The single brooches would fasten the cape, for a man or a simply dressed woman – although one would think the swastika brooch to be quite unusual!

In this context, it may be said that at least seven IA weapon graves were encountered in the RA during my research, whereof two are dated to RIA (Listerby SHM 23577 and Hjortsberga SHM 31708), two to the transition RIA/MP (Edestad SHM 1452:152 and Ronneby BLM?), one to the MP (Edestad SHM 28741), one (Listerby SHM 9824:7) to the VP (see no. 30 above) and the seventh (Listerby SHM 23577) generally to IA. Apart from these, one from the Early RIA at Johannishus (Hjortsberga SHM 31708) (included in Nicklasson 1997).

At *Västra Vång*, cremated human bones have been found on the hill supposed to have ritual functions, a possible indication of sacrifice (Henriksson 2016:5:19ff). Within the settlement a stone setting has also been found to contain both burnt and unburnt bones from humans and animals (Wilhelmson 2017:24:6) which implies death rituals were not solely localized to cemeteries.

The three treasure hoards that have been found in the research area must be mentioned, as one can suppose that they represent the wealth, craftsmanship and trading contacts of the surrounding neighbourhood, but they do not help much in understanding the roles of women in this society. They were all deposited in the 10th century or later, at *Yxnarum* (SHM 11618), *Johannishus* (SHM 3491) and *Gärestad* (SHM 8503). One interpretation of these hoards is that the accumulated wealth was intended to be enjoyed by the depositors in their own afterlife (Price 2008:270).

3. Presentation of artefacts and their meaning

3.1. Textile production implements

3.1.1. Spindle whorls

It is certainly remarkable that this, usually very inconspicuous and simple little object, turns out to be of essential importance for the preservation of Iron Age society. Not only is its existence at the very base of textile production as spinning the thread is fundamental to all consecutive steps in the process, but also its shape, size and weight affects the quality of the thread and its use for anything between fine and thin clothing for the aristocracy, via every day clothing and blankets to keep warm in a cold climate, to coarser and more solid fabrics like sails for the ocean-going Viking ships. This fact, of course, was quite clear to the Iron Age society itself, and the symbolism of spinning a thread much used in both mythology and real life. I will, however, begin by summing up the practical use of the spinning whorl in the textile production process and then proceed to symbolical meanings.



Fig. 26. spindle whorl of soap stone, SHM 1452:36.

Practical use



Fig. 27. Transylvanian spinning woman. Photo: Dagmar Hellstam

1999a:6; Andersson 1996:13).

The spun yarn on the shaft will add more and more weight why it may be necessary to change the whorl after a while to keep the same quality of thread.

A distaff could be used while spinning to hold the unspun but combed wool. It would be fixed to the waist, stuck under the arm or hung in a loop by the shoulder (see fig. 29).

To produce cloth with a density of 12 threads/cm it is necessary to use spun wool with a thickness equivalent of

A spindle is composed of a spindle-whorl fixed on to a spindle shaft. Both components can be of different materials: wood, bone or metal for the shaft; stone, burnt clay, iron, bone, glass or even amber for the whorl. In prehistory, most shafts were probably made of wood, why they are seldom preserved. Preservation conditions at Hedeby, however, have been favourable, and several wooden spindle shafts have been found there of different sizes, nearly all of *Taxus* wood (yew-tree). The whorls come in different shapes, and with different sizes of the hole for the spindle, usually depending on the material they are made of. Conical or double-conical if of clay and flat or hemispheric when of stone or bone. The whorl can be placed at the bottom, top or middle of the shaft, in all cases the spindle needs to hang freely. The weight and diameter of the whorl determines the thickness and the density of the yarn, i.e. for a thin and fine thread you need a small and light whorl, and for coarse, tightly spun yarn a heavy and broad whorl. (Andersson

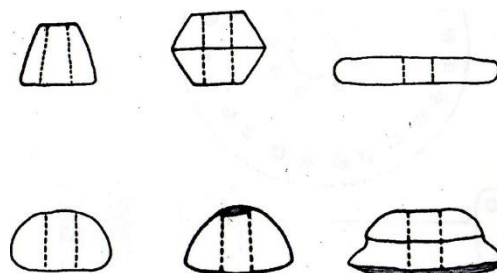


Fig. 28. Spindle whorls of different shapes. Top from left: conical, double-conical, flat/cylindrical. Bottom from left: plane-conical, hemispheric, other. From Andersson 1999c.

6 500 meters of thread/kilo. The whole process, including combing and preparing the wool, spinning, winding and stretching the skeins of spun wool can be calculated by experiments to an output of 20 m of spun thread/hour. For two sets of clothing, one female and one male, 6 kilos of wool would have been needed, the equivalent of 3-6 sheep. Spinning and preparing the wool would take between 98-163 days, working 12 h/day, whereafter the mounting of the loom (two days), the weaving and sewing would follow. On a vertical loom experiments indicate it would be possible to produce 70 x 70 cm of cloth/day, using about 1 680 m of spun wool. (Andersson 1999:9ff).

In short, textile production was a time-consuming activity!

The homogenous design of some tools found at Haithabu and Birka, as spindle whorls and bone needles, suggests they were produced by a professional workforce (Andersson 1999:33).

Symbolical meanings

According to E. H. Hofseth the spindle-whorl is also the symbol for the whole process of spinning – not only the thread for material fabric but the thread of life, i.e. the natural and eternal cycle of life, death and rebirth. The rotating movement of the wheel of life (the Norwegian word for 'whorl' means 'wheel'), which the woman was expected to keep up by reproducing the family line. The Scandinavian expressions "spinnsidan" and "svärdsidan" (Swed. corresponding to 'distaff-side' and 'spear-side') have referred to the matrilinear and patrilinear ancestry since the Early Iron Age, and the spindle whorl followed women in death already in the 4th century when tools were still unusual in graves (Hofseth 1985:213ff). So Hofseth believes the spindle whorl is an indication of the female gender and her duty in life – as well as in death, as life continues on the other side in Norse belief (Steinsland 2007:375). An interesting question is if the spindle whorl was a symbolical gift at a ritual of passage, maybe an engagement gift? It would then symbolize the future main role of the woman who now would enter a new stage in life – matrimony and reproduction. Hofseth mentions a spindle whorl found in Sola, Norway, with four runes signifying "handshake" and interprets it as a vow, maybe of marriage (Hofseth 1985:215)? As betrothal and marriage were the most important social and legal events in Iron Age society, i.e. the union of two families and their property, the vow (or symbolical "handshake") was a serious and binding contract, witnessed most probably by members of both families (Steinsland 2007:371,374). This could be compared with the gift of a hand-made and decorated scutch (the implement used to beat out the coarse fibers from the flax in the linen production process) that a man would offer his betrothed before the wedding, according to Swedish tradition.

According to Hofseth many spindle whorls are found with an ornament of lines in the shape of a cross, like a wheel, the symbol of production and reproduction (Hofseth 1985:215).

In Norse myth, the three Norns represent Fate and spin the threads of life of each individual as well as that of Time (Kristoffersen 2013:144ff; Steinsland 2007: 275). The feminine gender is here associated with powers of the other world, of life and death and the ability to see beyond everyday life.

In iconography, a woman holding a staff is interpreted as a *vǫlva* (which actually means 'staff-bearer', Nordberg 2003:101; Steinsland 2007:344), an aristocratic woman or goddess (Mannering 2017:23ff; Watt:156). The staff is usually seen as a sign of high dignity, e.g. the sceptre of a bishop or of royalty. In some cases though, it looks very much like a distaff, the staff used to hold the wool while spinning (see fig. 29). Metaphorically, a distaff can be seen as used to 'spin' on the souls or minds of people, just like the 'weaving' of Fate, i.e. in the practise of sorcery (see ch.4).

During the inventory of burials in my RA I came across altogether 24 spindle whorls, of which 12 are included in the selected burials. Among the excluded ones one is a stray find, several from a settlement and the rest either single finds in the grave material or combined with objects not chosen for my criteria, see ch. 2.4.

3.1.2. Other implements

For weaving fabric used for clothing and other both fine or coarser textiles like blankets, covers or sails (in the Viking Age these were made of wool) a loom was necessary. A commonly used type of Iron Age loom was of a vertical model, the warp stretched by *loom weights*. These could be made of burnt or unfired clay or other material of good preservation – that is why they are quite common in the archaeological material. They would vary in size and weight depending on what was woven. For weaving linen, heavy weights are needed (Andersson 1996:14, 69). To pack the weft tightly, you would need a *sword beater* or a *comb beater*, made of bone or iron. These two tools only occur during the Viking Age, though (Andersson 1996:82). The next step in textile production is the cutting and sewing of the fabric to which *scissors* and *needles* are used. The former would be of iron while needles occur of both iron and bone, depending on the density of the fabric and the thickness of the thread. Needles could also have been used as shuttles when weaving and larger needles could be used as *awls* for making holes in e.g. fulled fabrics (Andersson 1996:17). Another implement of which remains are often to be found, is the *wool-comb*, whose iron teeth of nearly 10 cm are all that may be left. This was used to prepare the wool before spinning (Andersson 1996:11). At Birka, among other places, *smoothing stones* of glass for smoothing linen have been found (Andersson 2010:28f), but no such have yet been found in the RA.

Weaving tools are common in rich female graves, possibly for their magic associations – e.g. the ‘peace-weaver’ function in a high hall context (see about Beowulf, ch. 4). Finds of weapons and smashed drinking vessels have been made together with weaving implements. The idea of women being able to ‘weave’ the outcome of a battle may lie behind it, a concept known to have existed already among the Celts and Greeks of Antiquity as well as several Germanic peoples (Domeij 2007:127, 131; Nordberg 2003:105f; Price 2002:332f).

3.2. Jewellery sets on female costume

Female jewellery in the Iron Age is much connected to the general costume fashion, they seem to be an integrated part of it, mainly because the brooches had practical functions apart from showing social status. The Augerum boat grave can tell us something of what a woman of high social standing would be buried with. It is a rare case of an inhumation grave in eastern Blekinge from the VP, i.e. the 7th century. The bone fragments were analyzed and found to belong to a woman of over 60 years of age.

This is what was found in the boat grave: (SHM 10037):

1. A large equal-armed brooch of bronze with needle and spring of iron;
2. Two smaller equal-armed brooches of bronze, coated with white metal;
3. A round disc-shaped brooch of bronze, coated with white metal, iron needle
4. Narrow tweezers of bronze with iron ring and links for hanging
5. Ear-spoon of iron
6. Four polyhedral pins, two thicker and two thinner ones, of bronze
7. 2 spiral beads, 6 polychrome mosaic glass beads, two large mosaic beads of black glass paste, melon-shaped bead of colourless glass, cylindrical mosaic bead, ten yellow and two red

barrel-shaped beads of porous glass paste, one small parallelepiped bead of the same material, a number of beads of one or two colours – all-in-all 58 beads.

8. Two small bronze cupped discs
 9. An iron knife
 10. Nine iron rivets
 11. Three iron cramps
 12. Two fragments of female skull bone
 13. Bones from horse (butchered)
 14. Textile fragments: woollen fabric (on the large brooch), linen (on one of the small brooches), fragments of linen and twisted yarn (on the disc brooch), woollen fragments on one of the pins
- (Arrhenius 1960:169ff)

This jewellery set has been used as an indication of what the female costume would look like in this period and the textile fragments have been very useful for understanding the components: a blouse or dress of linen held together by a round brooch at the throat and two equal-armed brooches at the shoulders and a larger brooch to fasten a woollen cloak or shawl. The beads would hang either from the pair of brooches or from the pins attached to the chest. The toiletry - ear-spoon and tweezers - would hang from one of the brooches in a chain. The only other tool the woman in Augerum brought in death was a knife and possibly a wooden vessel or box decorated with the small round bronze discs. The rivets and iron cramps are assumed to belong to the boat construction. (Arrhenius 1960:169ff).

The Augerum boat grave is not exceedingly rich, but it is of earlier date than the well-known boat-graves in Vendel and Valsgärde, and based on the jewellery (the round brooch) it shows Anglo-Saxon connections as well as influences from the continent (the glass beads). The simple stamped ornaments on the bronze beads have equivalents on finds in Uppland and Västergötland. (Arrhenius 1960:169ff).



BZG1
Fig. 29. Bronze foil Vendel Period woman from Sorte Muld, Bornholm. From Mannering 2017.

One component of the costume seems to be missing in this account, as other studies have concluded that women wore a second tunic or outer skirt over innerwear or blouse, attached to it with the pair of brooches, but these studies refer to the Viking Age (Andersson 1999c:22ff). In the Vendel Period, the use of a peplos, attached on the shoulders by a pair of brooches over the underwear is indicated from women's inhumation graves on Bornholm (Bromée 2014, 2018). The small toilet tools may have had their own brooch below the pair holding the dress (Bromée 2014). According to the studies done by Ulla Mannering of Iron Age costumes in iconography, the most common visible combination of female clothing during the whole IA is a long dress – sometimes an 'apron' – and a cloak, open or fastened in the front, or a short jacket. It is difficult to interpret lines on the costumes, whether they represent different layers of clothing or decorative borders (Mannering 2017:185).

Johan Callmer has presented the changes in women's dress jewellery in the 8th and 9th centuries, based on finds in Eastern Middle Sweden. He sees a gradual shift away from the equality of men's and women's animal ornamentation styles in the 7th century continuing in the 8th when the animal ornamentation was almost completely abandoned on men's equipment. For women on the other hand it is still found on the bronze jewellery. The standard set is composed of a button-on-bow

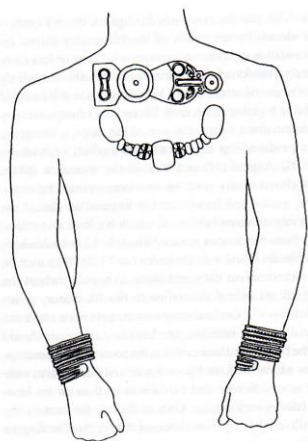


Fig. 30. Standard feminine dress set in Eastern Middle Sweden during the first half of the 8th century. From Callmer 2008.

brooch (signalling high rank), two oval brooches, two armlets and beads. The large button-on-bow brooch held together the cape of fine wool over the shoulders (depicted on figure foils of the 7th and 8th centuries, see above), and this is where animal ornamentation can be found, like birds of prey, a tradition from the MP (Callmer 2008:187f). The oval brooches are small, why they probably did not have a carrying function like the later VA equivalents. On the breast a necklace with glass, rock crystal or bronze beads was carried (probably attached with dress pins) sometimes with bead spacers and a few round pendants. The band-shaped armlets are of bronze or occasionally of silver with simple stamp impressions. Animal ornamentation disappears after about 700 AD (Callmer 2008:188).

In the second half of the 8th century, the female dress jewellery turns much richer. The amount of bronze triples in costume equipment. The button-on-bow brooch is much bigger, the open armlets are of massive bronze with thick ends and wavy lines. The oval brooches have grown and have rich animal decoration. Sometimes there is an equal-armed brooch with animal elements. Ornamental pendants become the most common type of jewellery, often pelta-shaped, fire-steel-shaped, circular or lunula-shaped. Bead spacers come with animal ornamentation. Some motifs appear in a feminine environment only when abandoned in a masculine one (Callmer 2008:192).

In the early 9th century there is a considerable change, button-on-bow fibulae become obsolete and the local oval and equal-armed brooches are replaced by Scandinavian standard jewellery all over Northern Europe. Pendants are seldom carried, while armlets persist (Callmer 2008:189).

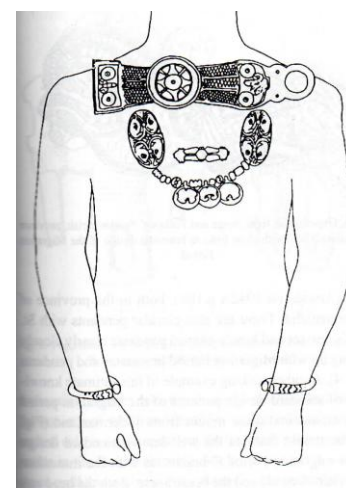


Fig. 31. Standard feminine dress set in Eastern Middle Sweden during the second half of the 8th century. From Callmer 2008.



Fig. 32. Viking women at Hedeby. From Andersson 1999c.

3.2.1. Brooches

Brooches were an integrated part of women's costume during the whole Iron Age and had a practical purpose of holding different garments in place. Two brooches were necessary for the upper part of the tunic or dress/peplos, one for the chest/throat-opening and another, larger one for the cloak or shawl. However, as the clothing changed according to fashion, so did the brooches. The material and artistic appearance of the brooches were in accordance with the social standing of the woman (Hofseth 1985: 213ff).

Equal-armed brooches (see fig. 18) of the simple Augerum type with iron locks and needles seem to have been introduced in Scandinavia during the MP together with the usage of linen for clothing, influenced by fashion on the continent. The higher density of the linen fabric needed thinner and sharper needles, for which iron was a more suitable material than bronze. Just like the *beak-shaped brooches* (see fig. 19), introduced around the same time, they would be coated with a white metal consisting of lead and tin, which would produce a silver-like appearance, some features even being gilt as well (Arrhenius 2010:138f). Both types of brooches seem to have been produced at central places like Helgö and Uppåkra, possibly also in Denmark (Bornholm in particular), with slight local differences, and were meant for everyday practical use (Arrhenius 2010:142; Hårdh 2010:145). The beak-shaped brooch was produced in large quantities by local craftsmen with variations in size and ornament but all with a certain common framework. They can be grouped chronologically into three groups beginning in the Early VP (550-600 AD) and then slowly being replaced by the *bird brooch* and *rectangular brooch* in the 7th century (Hårdh 2010:145ff). Also the bird-shaped brooches can be grouped into three phases, starting at the same time of the Early VP as the former but living on until about 800 AD, becoming flatter and broader with time, maybe to stay better in place on the garment. They developed from a simple stamp ornament to more and more complicated interwoven ribbons and patterns. The bird, most likely a bird of prey, could in some rare cases be equipped with garnet inlays for the eyes and sometimes a human face on its back. Some brooches are coated with silver or gilt. The high artistic quality of these brooches indicates they were produced by very skilled craftsmen, probably for the highest levels of society. They have mainly been found in Scania (Uppåkra and Österlen) and Denmark, while Öland seems to have had a local production of a different type (Branca 2010:163ff).



Fig. 33. Bird-shaped brooch, SHM30963:110

Symbolically, the bird of prey has a long history in Germanic mythology and was an important symbol of power, potency and strength. Odin is associated to ravens in iconography from the MP on (Hedeager 2011:88). It can be found on the *button-on-bow brooch*, which occurs alongside the above mentioned brooches until about 800 AD (Callmer 2010:202; 2008:192). This brooch was according to Callmer of great significance as a social signal. Only women who were able to give birth to a legitimate heir of a major farm or manor could wear it (Callmer 2008:159). In Birgit Arrhenius' article from 1962 a similar idea is expressed. She refers to iconography depicting women with over-sized button-on-bow brooches below the chin, particularly a gilt silver pendant from Hagebyhöga, Östergötland (see figs. 36 and 37). The button in the centre of this type of brooch usually being made of exquisite garnet inlays would have dominated the other, animal ornaments and is therefore the only visible element of the brooch in other iconographic examples. The *Carbunculus* (actually 'glowing coal'), Latin for garnet, was one of the most appreciated gems of Antiquity and surrounded by ancient myths. It was not



GU1

Fig. 36. Gold foil figure from Gudme with button-on-bow brooch. Drawing by Eva Kock, from Mannering 2017



Fig. 37. Pendant from Hagebyhöga, Östergötland. From Arrhenius 1962.

only associated with sovereignty and noble descent, but would also have magic properties and bestow its bearer with e.g. courage, joy and good health. Arrhenius argues that this knowledge must have reached the Nordic regions and that the button-on-bow brooch is referred to in both *Beowulf*, as '*Brosingamene*' – 'the flaming jewel' – and in *Trymskviða* as '*Brisingamen*', a female jewel of high symbolical value, only to be worn by the highest, like the Norse fertility goddess Freya (Arrhenius 1962:79ff; *Beowulf*, ll.1195). Freya was able to shift her shape, and in several literary sources she appears as a bird (Price 2002:108).

During the 8th century, large, *tortoise-shaped/oval brooches* (almost egg-shaped, a signal of fertility?) worn in pairs replace most earlier forms and a new type of large, *equal-armed brooch* appears over all Scandinavia with a fairly standardized shape and ornament, figurative or non-figurative, perhaps influenced by Continental

brooches in Northern France, Belgium and the Netherlands. Some of these equal-armed brooches have an elevated, crown-shaped centrepiece which very much reminds of the button-on-bow brooch disappearing around this time. (Callmer 2010:202,219).

Both of these new types have been classified by different scholars according to their design, the oval brooches by Ingmar Jansson (P25-P57) and the equal-armed brooches by Gun-Britt Aagård (IA-IVA:1) and Johan Callmer (series based on finds) (Svanberg 2003:156ff). *Round* and *trefoil* brooches become more frequent in Southern Scandinavia in the 10th century (Callmer 1999:201).

Dress pins were used to hold different pieces of clothing together, seemingly for both men and women, or to serve as holders for the stringed beads across the chest (for women). The polyhedral type is usually found in VP contexts (Arrhenius 1960a; Arrhenius 1960b:73f; Waller 1986:145ff).

In this context it may be of interest to point out the use of *bead-separators* and *bead holders*, in the VP worn to separate the different strings of beads which would sometimes be so many as to create the look of a magnificent collar. These could come in different decorative shapes (e.g. animal heads) and be sewn on to the garment or attached to the pair of brooches (Arrhenius 1960b:76,80ff). It is logical to think this would provide comfort apart from being attractive, as the many beads otherwise would hinder movement. Maybe these small objects are hiding among all the non-descript bronze and iron fragments found in cremation burials, or among so-called 'mounts'?

3.2.2. Beads

The oldest glass object to have been found in Sweden is a glass bead. Since the beginning of our era beads were an essential item of Scandinavian women's costume (Andersson 2010:25). During the



Fig. 34. Glass bead SHM 30963:110

Late Iron Age – Migration Period they also seem to have been common grave gifts in Southern Scandinavia, which the recent excavations at Odarslöv in Scania indicate. The six graves from the 4th century AD found in the cemetery there before the building of the ESS plant, proved to contain 900 beads of glass and amber, of which 500 were found in one single grave! The reason why a large number of beads are found in graves from this period in Scania is mainly due to the burial practices, i.e. inhumation graves. Glass melts and amber burns in cremation pyres, which leaves little left (Lundqvist 2018:14ff).

Glass beads were imported from the Middle East or the continent to begin with, but Scandinavian production began in the 8th century at several craft centres like Ribe, Helgö and Birka using imported glass material that was melted down and fashioned into beads (Andersson 2010:27), also proved to have been done at Västra Vång (Henriksson 2008:24:6). There are some indications, however, of local production from glass paste already in the MP on Gotland (Arrhenius 1960:83f). All colours were used, and some beads would be veritable works of art, including inlays of metal foil, glass rods or threads to create a multicoloured, patterned surface, sometimes flower-like, why this technique is called *mille-fiori* (a thousand flowers)(Andersson 2010:26).

Amber was to be found in the Baltic and along the Danish North Sea coast, but amber craftsmanship was located on the island of Bornholm (in southern Scandinavia). Amber beads have been made in similar types and worn since the Stone Age, while glass beads developed into a great variety of types from the Bronze Age and on. They are however difficult to date. Glass beads are very long-lived, after 1600-1700 years they may lose some their lustre, but not much, only red and white glass seems to deteriorate more. Amber oxidizes from the inside and its surface turns mat. Because of their longevity the beads may have been inherited for several generations and therefore be much older than the grave they are found in. Not all beads were of first quality, some being of irregular or failed shapes, but they have still been worn. From the finds at Odarslöv it can be said that evidently, the quantity of beads was more important than the quality, as the glass itself was of great value (Lundqvist 2018:24).

The beads have been worn either as long or short necklaces wrapped around the neck, as shorter strings of beads across the chest attached to the pair of brooches or pins, or as long loops hanging from a brooch on the middle of the chest, or even all varieties at once. They could also be worn in extravagant hair-dos or fastened to head-gear (Andersson 2010:25f; Lundqvist 2018:14 ff). Bronze and other material could also be used for beads and both spacers and pendants or amulets of different kinds could be added to the strings of beads (Andersson 2010:26). In the VP, up to twelve strings of beads could be worn like a collar, telling by bead-separators with as many holes (Arrhenius 1960b:81)!

It is probable that the beads had a social function besides being pretty. According to Arabic sources the Vikings would give their wives beads to show their social status. As they may have been given beads at several different occasions in life, the collection would grow with age, and would finally be able to tell something of the woman's life and age as well (Andersson 2010:25ff). Married women can also be supposed to have shown their origin by their jewellery (Lundqvist 2018:24).

It is interesting to note that the woman in the Augerum boat grave was over 60 years old and wore strings of about 60 beads. Maybe she got her first bead as a child at some special occasion?

3.2.3. Pendants

Pendants and amulets could be worn hanging from the strings of beads on a woman's chest (see image). Some of them may have had a symbolic or religious meaning. Amulets with runes (like bracteates) were believed to have a strong magic power, just like the act of carving them (Steinsland 2007:397). The pendants could be circular, pelta-shaped, fire-steel-shaped or lunular-shaped (the latter three can be very similar) with geometrical or figurative motifs. The fire-steel shape may have had the symbolic meaning of associating the bearer with the 'home-fires', i.e. the keeper of the household (alluding to the expression 'to keep home-fires burning', my comment), but as mentioned below (see 3.3.), it may have been included in the grave offerings as a fire symbol for the transition to the other world, like the cremation itself. Another possibility is the making of fire as a metaphor for

reproduction and fertility (Callmer 2008: 195; Gräslund 2008:255). The carrier of several amuletic pendants has been interpreted as having a possible function in the cult, based on two supposed *vølva* among the Birka graves (Gräslund 2008:255).

3.2.4. Lady with a Mead Cup

This motif is to be seen on amulets, pendants, picture stones (figs 37 and 38) and tapestries as well as

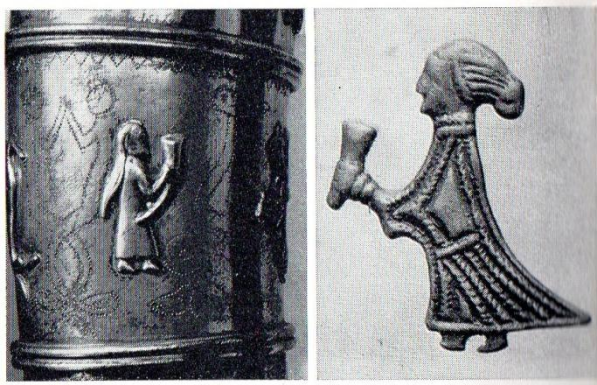


Fig. 37. Figure on the reconstruction of one of the Gallehus horns, and a silver amulet figure from Klinta, Öland. From Broby-Johansen 1972.

on a vast number of figure foils in Scandinavia. The lost gold horns from Gallehus, Denmark, dated to the MP were covered with reliefs showing among other things a female (?) figure holding a large drinking horn (fig. 37) while the majority of the 'valkyrie' pendants studied by Ulla Mannering can be dated to the Viking Age (Mannering 2017:113f; NE 1995: Gallehushornen). It is obvious that this motif must have had an essential meaning to Germanic

people of the Late Iron Age, probably even earlier than that. The Lady has been interpreted as both the lady of a Germanic aristocratic hall, offering a welcoming cup of mead, and as a Valkyria of Odin's hall in Norse mythology. According to the latter, the valkyries are the god Odin's handmaidens and believed to select the warriors who were to be slain in battle and worthy of entering the hall of Odin, Valhalla. They would then welcome the warriors with the cup of mead (Mannering 2017: 116; Nordberg 2003:179; Price 2002:336f). The mead itself was sacred and as all alcoholic beverages considered to be of divine origine and therefore only drunk as a ritual act or communion with the gods (Nordberg 2003:175, 187, 191; Steinsland 2007:303). As the hall of the king or lord can be seen as a metaphorical reflection of that of the gods in Norse/Germanic cosmology (or the other way around), the queen or lady of the house would have the role of welcoming guests and of mediating between them and her husband as well as of encouraging the lord's warriors to do brave deeds (Enright 1996:7; Nordberg 2003:169ff, 179; Steinsland 2007:402). It has also been suggested that the Lady may represent venerated female ancestors, the *disir* (Mannering 2017:116) or the goddess Freya herself, who like Odin would be the hostess of the dead warriors (Price 2002:108). There is however more to be said about these female roles and their meaning. I

will return to this issue in chapter 4.

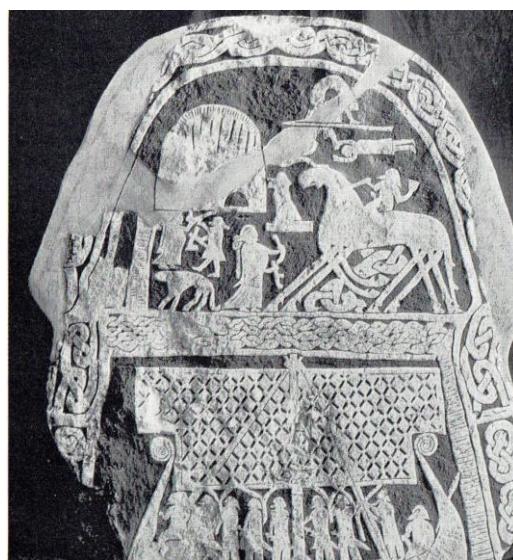


Fig. 35. Picture stone from Tjängvide, Gotland, appr. 775 AD. From Broby-Johansen 1972.

3.3. Other artefacts

The keys to the home, the larder or other storage rooms are generally supposed to symbolize the role of the housewife and her responsibility within the family to keep control of the supplies and economy of the household, as well as authority over the younger family members, servants or visitors, but could possibly also signify the transition between life and death (Arrhenius 1962:91 quotation from *Trymskviða*; Ingelman-Sundberg 2004:57, Nicklasson 1997:130f). The keys would be

worn hanging from one of the brooches on the woman's costume, or from a belt. Smaller keys may have belonged to the wooden caskets or boxes for personal items (Nicklasson 1997:131).

A *knife* would be necessary in everyday life for cutting leather or wood, cutting herbs or any other food preparation work, and would hang in a sheath together with a *whetstone*, presumably from the belt. It may be supposed that the knife symbolically also could signal the woman's right to defend herself and her integrity. Studies have shown that women would have shorter knives than men (Nicklasson 1997:126). In some of the selected burials, there is a whetstone but no knife. This may be because the iron knife has completely corroded or be what remains as 'iron fragments', or else the person was quite simply not cremated with a knife.

Other household utensils found in female graves are the *sickle* (sometimes difficult to distinguish from a knife, due to its state of corrosion), for the reaping of e.g. plants and grain, and the *scissors* or *shears* for among other purposes, textile and leather work, for cutting hair (or beards) and wool. According to Nicklasson, sickles only occur in the Early Iron Age (Nicklasson 1997:128), but in my selection grave no. 17 contains what could be either a knife or a sickle. What could be clearly identified as scissors or shears, on the other hand, do not occur in the selected burials. Vessels of different kinds and material (pottery, wood) when found in graves may have contained food and drink for the journey to the other world. In some of the selected graves only the handles or mounts of iron remain. A *box or casket of wood or bentwood* could contain personal valuables. Such a box may have been ornate and supplied with iron or bronze mounts, and, just like with the above mentioned wooden vessels, the joints sealed water- or airtight with resin, sometimes this being the only remains to be found (Björkquist & Persson 1970:14; Nicklasson 1997:136; Svanberg 2003:27f).

Often found in cremation layers are *flint flakes and slag*. Nicklasson associates these with the symbolism in the cremation act itself and the significance of fire in the transition to the other world (Nicklasson 1997:130). As mentioned above (ch.3.2.3.), the *fire-steel* would probably have this same symbolism as well as that of reproduction and the keeping of 'home-fires'.

4. Scandinavian Iron Age women in literature and iconography

This is definitely an enormous subject and I do not have the intention to go into full depth of it, but restrict myself to a few sources to throw light upon what may have been the mythology and ideology in the societies living in central Blekinge during the Late Iron Age. It is a long period, so naturally there would have been developments and changes during this time, but it seems the basic ideology of the warrior society of the early MP (and earlier) lingered on and even was further idealized in the VA as belonging to a mythical and heroic past (Jennbert 2006:137; Lönnroth 1997:31ff).

One of the earliest written sources we have of Early Germanic societies is *Germania* by Publius Cornelius Tacitus, written in 98AD. Although we need to take his descriptions with a pinch of salt, particularly for the Scandinavian peoples and for the period we are dealing with, some remarks about the role of women are noteworthy, in chapters 7-8, and 18-21. Germanic women 1) accompany their husbands in battle and encourage them, 2) are respected for their advice and prophecies, 3) receive a dowry from their bridegroom consisting of e.g. horse and weapons, 4) are expected to stay loyal to their husbands and share their fate in war and peace. It is also understood that 5) bringing forth heirs is essential and that women share with their husbands the responsibility of safe-guarding the inheritance. In describing different tribes (ch. 45), Tacitus mentions the Sitoni, living among the Suevi (Scandinavians), who are governed by a woman. (Önnerfors 1960:43, 59ff; 99).

In sum, we can suppose that to the Romans, the Germanic societies seemed to give more importance to women than they did.

The Germanic Anglo-Saxons invaded Britain in the 5th century to finally establish several kingdoms within a hundred years. One of their earliest and most well-known pieces of literature is the epic poem *Beowulf*, written in Old English, presumably in the 8th century (Lönnroth 1997:32). Oddly enough, we here meet a Danish warrior king, seated in his high 'gold-adorned' hall, with his queen by his side and his warrior band cheering and drinking. The story is set some time in the 6th century and is full of poetic references to bloody battle, horrific monsters, courageous warriors, drinking rituals, inherited and magical weapons, magnificent jewellery and mighty kings – ancient heroic ideals in what seems like a purely male world. Yet, when looking closer, a few female figures also have important roles: the queen Wealhtheow, Grendel's mother and a funeral mourner and seeress, apart from other queens mentioned. According to both Michael Enright and Anders Nordberg, the scenes where the queen and *hostess* enters the hall of warriors and passes the cup of mead to the men in a specific order, is of essential importance to the understanding of the role of the Germanic/Nordic aristocratic woman (see ch. 3.2.5.; Enright 1996: 2ff; Nordberg 2003:175ff). The ceremony is very formal, as it clarifies to all present the hierarchical order among the men. She greets the king and his warriors and starts by offering the cup to the king and thereafter to the warriors according to how they have been seated by the king, i.e. according to rank, having a word of encouragement to each one of them. In drinking they accept their status and promise bravery and loyalty to her and the king (on receiving the cup, Beowulf promises to kill Grendel, the monster, or die). (*Beowulf*, ll. 611-641).

This is a procedure that is related in the *Historia Langobardorum* by Paul the Deacon, contemporary with *Beowulf*, which proves it was practiced by other Germanic peoples as well. The communal drinking also served to bind the retainers to their lord, in a kind of kinship, why it took the place of blood, and the act of drinking it would have taken a cultic aspect, particularly as the alcohol gave the ecstatic feeling of community with the supernatural, and gave the courage to promise heroic deeds. In being the one to serve this drink, the lord's wife is obviously highly trusted and indispensable. (Enright 1997:12ff).

Not only is the queen's role to establish the king's lordship and the rank of his followers, but also to keep the group in harmony, mend relations and secure continuity between reigns (Enright 1997:34). In *Beowulf*, queen Hygd, after the death of her husband, is the one to appoint the future ruler. She is in this way a 'peace-weaver', although this function is more clearly seen in her position as a wife, an intermediary and instrument of alliance between two families, and the mother of heirs. In the second banquet scene, queen Wealtheow serves Beowulf before her own two sons as the king wishes to adopt him, but offers him precious gifts and begs him to 'always act kindly towards my sons' (*Beowulf* ll.1215-1230). Earlier though, she has within the drinking ritual, entreated the king to choose his nephew for heir, probably as her own sons are still too young, and believes he will protect and hold the throne for them. This is one of the points where D. Carr Porter disagrees with Enright, she does not see the queen as only the instrument of the king, but as a person with certain political power and influence (Carr Porter 2001:4). In expressing opposite wishes to the king she is acting independently, and what is more, her last words to Beowulf are: 'Thanes are mixing together, in peace as a people, in fellowship of drinking: *they do as I ask*' (*Beowulf* ll.1230-1231), which is very close to a threat. Wealtheow is confident of the loyalty of the retainers, and actually, nobody opposes her (accept fate).

In *Beowulf* there is another completely different example of the woman as *mother*, namely Grendel's mother, the monster. Carr Porter takes her and the queen Tryth as counter-examples of what a hostess and peace-weaver should be, acting in a hostile and masculine manner, using violence and weapons to settle disputes (Carr Porter 2001:7). This, in my opinion, is a narrative way to enhance and give importance to the ideal behaviour, but there is another side to it. She deeply greaves the loss of her only son (descendant of Cain) and calls for revenge – a normal reaction in the society of the story – and is ready to accomplish it herself, which would be praiseworthy and admirable, were she not a monster.

The least noticeable female role in *Beowulf* is finally that of the *funeral mourner and seeress*: "So also an old woman, her hair loose and waving, sang in her sorrow a song of lament for Beowulf's passing, repeating her prophecy that she feared invading armies of bitter foes, a great many slaughters, the terror of war-troops, humiliation and captivity" (*Beowulf* ll. 3150-3155). The loose hair here signifies her mourning condition (McNamara 2005:104).

As mentioned before, there are many likenesses between the Anglo-Saxon *Beowulf* and the Old Norse literature as to the mythic heroic ideology and the poetic formulas used to describe different concepts (Lönnroth 1997:36f). The description of Valhall is very much like that of Heort (the high hall in *Beowulf*), the *Brisingamen* of the goddess Freya must be related to the 'neck-ring of the Brosings with jewels in rich settings' (Arrhenius 1962:96; *Beowulf* ll. 1199-2000) etc. Furthermore, Lönnroth suggests in his article that literary descriptions of the Nordic royal hall in e.g. Egil's Saga preserve memories of actual buildings (like the one excavated in Slöinge, Halland)(Lönnroth 1997:36). Since then, we have more recent archaeological evidence of hall buildings and their cultic/ritual functions, e.g. at Uppåkra, Scania (precious drinking vessel and bowl), and at Västra Vång, Blekinge (glass, gold foils) (Henriksson 2016:5; 2016:6; 2018:6). It can also be supposed that cup offering, since it occurs in many literary sources, was a code of behaviour applied to all noblemen's wives (Enright 1996:7), in Nordic environments to the lady of the manor or the wife of the chieftain.

In Valhall, according to Snorri Sturluson, the valkyries are the ones whose duty it is to serve the drink and keep the tables laid. This motif is repeated in several Old Norse accounts, e.g. in *Eiríksmál*, *Hákonarmál* and *Krákumál* (Nordberg 2003:178f). The Lady with the Mead Cup has been mentioned earlier (ch.3.3.4.) as a frequent motif in Scandinavian iconography, on picture stones, amulets and on

gold foils (as well as the mead or 'alu' itself, written in runes on bracteates). These could be the mythical valkyries, but Nordberg, Price and other scholars hold that they in that case reflect the actual aristocratic hall culture and women's central role in the cultic practices of eating and drinking (Nordberg 2003:179ff; Price 2002:336). The valkyries, norns, Germanic/Nordic seeresses and ladies of the world seem to have much in common, particularly in their earlier forms (Domeij 2007:131; Nordberg 2003:99ff; Price 2002:334). A motif in Norse heroic sagas is the encounter between the hero and a valkyria who promises to love and protect him – and sometimes they marry. This could be a parallel to the aristocratic woman who already during the RIA (in Tacitus' *Historiae*, the seeress Veleda, Nordberg 2003:101f), was seen as capable of prophecies and of fore-telling the outcome of battles, in Scandinavia known as the *vǫlva*, the woman with special knowledge of magic, spells and healing (*seiðr*) whose services were valuable for the warrior aristocracy (Nordberg 2003:101ff; Price 2002:329ff). In iconography, e.g. on gold foils, a woman holding a wand or a staff can be supposed to represent this function (Callmer 2008:197; Steinsland 2007:344; Nordberg 2003:101), and archaeologically, at least one female grave, the one in Fyrkat, Denmark, contained the remains of a woman with a staff, an unusual belt, catskin etc (Price 2002:153). In *Ynglingasaga* the Vanir goddess Freya is said to have introduced *seiðr* to the Aesir, and in *Voluspá* she uses it to initiate the war between the gods (Price 2002:108). For several reasons, it is possible to believe that aristocratic women were associated with the worship of Freya (Price 2002:108f), for her aspects of fertility, prophecy and magic (and death?), but apart from that, her aspect of aggression and provocation can be related to what Enright calls the 'Hetzerin', or the 'whetter', women who in the Icelandic sagas provoke conflict. They do so in most cases in order to urge their unwilling men to avenge slighted honour or to 'get things done' (Clover 1993:4; Enright 1996:42; Nordberg 2003:107; Price 2002:111). The poetic metaphor of 'peace-weaver' can also be turned to its opposite. In *Njals saga* twelve women (sorceresses or deemons?) are seen to be working with swords as beaters at a loom with weights of men's heads, 'weaving' with the intestines of men the outcome of future battles, chanting "let us wind, let us wind, the web of war..." (Domeij 2007:127f; Price 2002:332f). The winding and binding of the warp and weft is used as a metaphor for the sorcery of tying down the enemy and obstructing victory. As mentioned earlier (ch. 3.1.), the spinning of the thread itself, i.e. of Fate, is the work of the norns, but the valkyries have these faculties as well, evidently belonging to the female realm (Domeij 2007:130; Nordberg 2003:106).

The woman as *priestess* and link to the otherworld is encountered not only in the sagas, in the shape of Freya, a valkyria or a *vǫlva*, but in another well-known source from the 10th century, i.e. Ibn Fadlan's account of his experience at a Viking chief's funeral by the Volga. It is a woman, by Ibn Fadlan called 'The Angel of Death', who, together with her daughters, is responsible for arranging the corpse and burial of the Viking chief, and she who urges the slave girl to empty the cup of inebriating drink that enables her to look through a gate into the otherworld and see her parents, her family and her master with whom she intends to share death. Finally, it is she who puts the strangling rope around the slave girl's neck and stabs her with a dagger. (Montgomery 2000:17ff). She may have been what is referred to as a *gyðja*, the female form of *goði* in Icelandic context, responsible for the *blót*, sacrifice (Price 2002:63; Steinsland 2007:307). In the private sphere, this responsibility was normally undertaken by the master or mistress of the farm or manor (Steinsland 2007:307).

In this eye witness account we also have the evidence of a young *slave* woman who voluntarily chooses to follow her master in death and is cremated together with him (as well as a number of domestic animals.), which has led to the archaeological interpretation of some double-graves as being parallel examples. Why should a young girl wish to die like this? It has been suggested that only in this

way could a slave rise to the highest possible social status, i.e. as the companion (or posthumous wife) of the chief, sacrificed to Odin (Lund Warmind 1995:134). Her sexual intercourse with several of the chief's men (voluntary?) being part of the death ritual has been the subject of studies and suggestions that this was the way for the chief's followers to give him renewed life and for them to take part in the union with Odin through the medium of the slave girl - a sort of *hieros gamos*. This is a realistic example of the erotic in Viking Age ritual, which is much referred to in the sagas (and in iconography), particularly connected with the *seiðr* (Hedeager 2011:108ff; Price 2002:216ff).

Both male and female thralls occur in Norse literature (and in the medieval provincial laws) and were a natural part of society (Brink 2008:49ff; Steinsland 2007:405). They were of different levels of status and could in some cases gain freedom. In the sagas they appear as stereotypes with foreign looks, frequently seized abroad, e.g. from Ireland, and when female, their offspring with Icelanders would be treated as free men (Brink 2008:49). In reality, only the wealthiest farms would have many slaves, ranging from field and cattle workers to high officials (Brink 2008:54f).

In the medieval sagas, *skaldmeyar*, shield-maidens, are versions of earlier valkyries and as such they do magic on the battle fields (Price 2002:332ff). Women take up arms to avenge family members in the sagas, and warrior women are described in Roman and early medieval sources, e.g. Saxo (Hedeager 2011:121). Among other examples, on the Oseberg tapestry women bearing swords and shields can be seen, and a Lady-with Mead-Cup-figure on a brooch from Hedeby is also holding a shield, while another on a picture-stone in Lilbjärs is wearing a helmet (Price 2002:336f). The image of a blond woman with a helmet on her flowing hair, brandishing a sword and a shield, became a classic depiction of the strong, Germanic/Nordic woman in National Romanticism, and still lingers on.

In conclusion, female functions presented in literary sources and in iconography seem to boil down to the following:

- Mother and producer of heirs (and as such, instruments of alliances)
- Lady of the house (as hostess and delegate of the lord or in her own right)
- Provoker and initiator
- Seeresse/sorceress with magic abilities
- Priestess with connections to the otherworld
- Slaves or servants
- 'Shield-maidens'

Most of these functions are associated to women of higher social status, why their burials would naturally be richer and give more clues than those of ordinary farming women or slaves.

Craftsmanship of more practical nature and textile production seem to be mainly implicated indirectly in the literature, except metaphorically or in the form of sorcery, and not at all in iconography, but this may have been overlooked on my side. Widows, divorcees or young single women obviously do occur, but most often fall into at least one of the functions above (Ingelman-Sundberg 1999:58f). House-wives from farms of some importance can be supposed to have had similar functions and ideology as the 'ladies' of higher status, but in smaller proportions and with more moderate material means (Svanberg2003:22ff).

5. Analysis and discussion

For the analysis of the selected burials it is necessary to divide them into groups or categories, both chronologically and according to their contents. This will give an overview of each period and it will be possible to say something about female presence in the selected material and its nature. However, as the quantity of available material changes very much over the periods, it will not be possible to make a fair or statistically correct comparison between them. The MP is represented by only 3 burials, the VP by 9 and the VA by 20. Yet certain differences between VP and VA material are quite visible.

Three tables (in Appendix) show the selected burials, one (Table I) according to parish, the second (Table II) according to period and find categories, and the third one (Table III) shows how many burials belong to each category and their numbers according to Table I. I will be referring to these in the following.

350-600 AD

It is quite extraordinary that the MP should be represented here by three burials with almost the same kind of artefacts, beads of amber and glass, and maybe all from about the same time of Early MP. Only one of them (no. 1) contained bones, which makes it a definite burial together with the whetstones and urn, but if this was a cremation burial, nothing implies the amber beads have been damaged by fire. Since the same goes for the other two (nos. 25 and 31), it has been supposed they were offerings put down after the cremation. They may still have been intended for a specific burial and the offering made in the context of the funeral, though. It calls into mind the funeral of Beowulf, where large amounts of gold and jewels were thrown into the grave *after* the cremation:

*Ten days later, they finished making the monument
to their battle-bold lord, with a wall built around
the remains from the fire, the finest construction
that the very wisest of men might design.
They brought to the barrow precious rings and jewels,
all such adornments as the brave-spirited men
had earlier taken away from the enemy's hoard.
They left the treasures of earls in the earth for keeping,
the gold in the ground, where it still lies,
as fruitless to men now, as it formerly was.
(Beowulf, ll.3163-3168)*

Does this reflect a ritual common in the Migration period? Beowulf's twelve warriors, 'sons of chieftains', continue celebrating and lamenting their lord by riding in circles around the barrow, exactly like it is told that it was done at the funeral of Attila the Hun in 453 AD. He too, was buried with jewellery of gold and silver, although he was not cremated. (Beowulf ll. 3169-3172; Nordin 1997:169f).

Apparently, the addition of grave goods in the context of the grave construction is not quite unusual in the VA (Price, 2008:260).

The beads were undoubtedly of great value, and the women who wore them of high status. Was amber the gold of the north? As the manufacture of turned amber beads is known to be of Prussian or Pomeranian origin (Björkquist & Persson 1970:16), they may either have been imported, or the women themselves had brought them in marriage to Blekinge, thereby showing their origins and identity (see ch. 3.2.2). Scandinavian connections in Pomerania and the existence of a 'West-Balt culture', especially during the MP, have earlier been discussed by Bożena Wyszomirska-Werbart (Wyszomirska-Werbart 1991:231). The burial at Hulta is the richest one, including the large amber

disc. This one and the one at Anglemåla (nos. 1 and 31) are geographically quite close to each other and to the coast, which may indicate a relationship (it is unclear whether the Anglemåla amber beads are of the same type, though), while the one at Hillerslätt (no. 25) stands out as being unusually far away from the coastal area, but still along the communicating north-south pass-way along the ridge of Johannishus, north of Västra Vång (see Map B in Appendix). The river *Angelskogsån* is said to have been sailable up to Anglemåla in prehistoric times, which would have facilitated travels by boat (Hammelin 1950:220).

The idea forwarded by Ulla Lund Hansen that beads would be distributed within a certain area among the families according to their social status (Lundqvist 2018:24), could in that case signify that two such high status families lived side-by-side (or were related), but - once someone was buried with them they would no longer serve as status-markers for the living to carry. Or is the buried woman the last of her line? There are several examples of hoarded amber beads in Blekinge, Scania and on Öland, and they have been suggested to be an example of communal village ownership (Björkquist & Persson 1970:16). In the three cases of this study, however, it would be possible to imagine that women who had come from the other side of the ocean to marry were buried with their beads, as these would be individual identity markers, not inheritance goods.

We certainly need to have more material from this period to have something to compare with. Of the few weapon graves found in the research area at least three may have been contemporaneous and quite close, which indicates a warrior society in the neighbourhood (see ch. 2.4).

600-800 AD

From the Early MP to the VP there is quite a step in the material as well as in time, in the research area. Many of the 9 selected VP burials are hard to date (for me, anyway), but some have been dated to the transition to the VA, which however means they still remain in the VP group. Only two burials were *not* found at Västra Vång, Kasakulle, which implies that this cemetery must have been the most important one in this area during the period. It is also here that most grave investigations have taken place since the middle of the last century, which of course has had an effect on the current selection material. One burial at Johannishus is within the large settlement and cemetery area stretching along the Johannishus ridge, and the other one at Kartorp, not far from the MP burials in this selection (see Map A in Appendix).

Characterizing the burials by categories I-IX (see Table III) gives the following result: 7 burials of 9 consist of *more than 5* artefacts and 4 of these include *remarkable* artefacts. What do I call remarkable artefacts? It is what stands out as different from most other assemblies in the selection, like in these cases a large collection of beads, polyhedral dress pins, a loom weight (not unusual in itself, but the only one among my selected burials) or a key. One find category was *only* found in this period group – *combs*. Three burials contain them, one being among the richest of all (no. 17), the second one (no. 24) contains no jewellery apart from 3 dress pins (which are actually quite simple and for practical use), but an unidentified bone object (or two) and an animal tooth, while the third one (no. 30) seems quite ordinary with 2 brooches, two glass beads and a spindle whorl. These three burials are quite different, and seem to reflect three different types of women, while they all have combs. On the other hand, the combs are also rather different and everybody with long hair (or beard) would need a comb, only not necessarily in the grave. Combs are very personal items and maybe not seen as inheritance goods.

Another interesting item is the spindle whorl, 4 burials of 9 contain one, 2 of slate, one of clay and one of stone. A loom weight in a 5th burial is the only other textile production tool in this period. Neither of these is to be found in the richest burial no. 17, nor in the burial with a key (no.15), but one of the spindle whorls is in no. 12, the second richest burial. Knives or/and whet stones as the only other tools, are found in 5 burials, but not in no.12.

Supposing that the number of artefacts reflect the status of the buried individual, the 9 VP burials have been ranked into the categories I-III, but as most of them fall into category III, there will have to be another sorting for visual clarity. Table A (in Appendix) shows the ranking of category III, i.e. those with more than 5 artefacts, according to number and quality of artefacts. As can be seen, the three richest burials are all from Kasakulle, they all have armlets and at least one brooch, as well as beads.

No.17 with its many brooches, blue beads and round pendant, must have been the remains of a wealthy, well-dressed woman, buried with her knife (or sickle?), comb and possibly a bent-wood case (indicated by the resin) – for the comb? The bronze mount may have belonged to either the dress, the bead strings or to the case and some of the bronze fragments seem to have been additional beads (see ch.4.2). Other metal fragments are impossible to interpret, but the slag, also found in other graves, may be symbolic for the cremation ritual (see ch. 3.3). Nos. 12 and 15 seem rather alike, but if the button-on-bow brooch had the symbolical meaning suggested in ch. 3.2.1., and once was equipped with inserted garnets, the woman who wore it would have been of special importance to her family and its status. Together with the bird brooch this makes at least two associations to the goddess of fertility, Freya, and to power. The fire-steel-shaped pendant with its symbolism of hearth, home and fertility and the chain must have added to the dignity of the lady of the house, the spindle whorl maybe to the good fate of the family (see ch. 3.1.1 and 3.3). The woman in burial 15 stands out as the only one in the period with a key, her armlet is of silver, and her beads of rock crystal and bronze must have been of greater value than glass beads.

No. 23 and 30 have a lot in common and are both relatively moderate in their out-fit, the two brooches being the standard set for the dress (although no. 23 either lost one of the pair, or wore an equal-armed brooch together with a beak-shaped one to hold her dress, according to Arrhenius the combination a common find in South Scandinavia, 1960a:174), but they do not belong to the same settlement. Both of them have been buried with the spindle whorl and another tool, nails, rivets and other metal fragments indicating remains of something made of wood. There may have been an iron cauldron in no. 23. I interpret them as women from the middle level of society, or young, unmarried women.

Finally, nos. 19 and 28 have no brooches or pendants, only no. 19 has a bronze armlet and what may have been a bronze wire bead. The loom weight suggests this woman was seen as a skilled weaver, but it could have had quite different functions. She is the only one with *both* a knife and a whet stone. No. 28 is interesting (see above). This person does not either belong to the Kasakulle settlement (Västra Vång), but was buried within walking distance from it. No status markers or jewellery at all, only the three pins, two of them polyhedral, maybe used to hang different tools or objects on her clothing (there are no beads), and the comb. The bone 'objects' can unfortunately not give further information, but the animal tooth should. Was this woman a seeress with magic faculties, or just a poor person, maybe an 'outcast'? In the latter case, she would not be likely to have any grave goods at all. The rivet and rivet plate indicate that she may have had more in her burial originally (a box?). It is not impossible that it is no woman at all, but a man or a child. In the study by J. Waller, though, polyhedral dress pins were found to belong mainly to women (Waller 1986:150).

There are another two burials in the VP, nos. 22 and 24 from categories I and II, respectively, both from Kasakulle. No. 24 could be grouped with the 'middle' group, but has only one brooch, although ornate bronze fragments imply some other form of jewellery. There are no tools or other metal remains, while in no. 22 a knife and a spindle whorl is all there is.

Compared with the finds of the Augerum boat-grave (see ch. 3.2), no. 17 had most similarities, with a large number of similar beads and a round cupped pendant replacing the round brooch, but as no. 23, it has no two brooches of the same kind. There is no *large* equal-armed brooch in any of the VP burials. On the other hand, the small equal-armed brooches are of a similar type as the Augerum ones, and one burial has the polyhedral dress-pins (no. 28). The only burial with two brooches of the same kind is no. 30 and these are bow-shaped. This differs from the jewellery set in Eastern Middle Sweden (8th century) described by Callmer (ch.3.2), as no oval brooches have been found in central Blekinge from the VP, while the button-on-bow occurs in one find and armlets in four. Surprisingly, the Augerum grave included no armlets. Tweezers or ear-spoons do not occur in any of the selected burials and if there were animal bones, these have not been analyzed.

Going by the finds in these burials, it looks like we have at least two or three levels of society represented in them, an upper class of women with high status and supposed responsibility, a middle class of house-wives/farmers and a class that is harder to define, as they have left so little behind. One individual (no. 28) may be moving between the different levels. As with the earlier period, more material would clarify these categories better.

800-1000 AD

During this period, the burials are more spread out geographically and the cemetery of Hjortahammar takes over much of the burials, although Kasakulle still is important. Lilla Vambåsa is very close to Hjortahammar, and may have been used by the same settlements, and Hjortsberga is in the same way quite close to Västra Vång and Kasakulle. The cemetery at Nötanabben and the burial at Bökenäs are both by the coast on each side of a promontory while the Bredåkra burial is situated farther inland just northeast of Ronneby (the site is actually closer to Kallinge) (see Map A and B in Appendix).

According to the same system as for the earlier periods, 12 burials fall into category III, 7 to category II, and 1 to category I. Both categories II and III need to be further ranked, which is not easy, as the number of artefacts cannot be the only ranking criterion, but also the type and quality of the artefacts, what special value they may have had etc. The tables of categories I-III are to be found last in the Appendix.

A few things can be said generally about the selected burials in the VA:

- The contents are more varied, but of seemingly similar value (therefore difficult to rank!)
- Only one burial had an armlet
- Nearly all had beads
- New items are: finger rings, penannular brooches/ringed pins, oval and trefoil brooches, a different type of equal-armed brooches, wrought-iron handles, iron arrow heads
- Spindle whorls are common but do not appear together with a key (just as during VP)

The most remarkable burial is no. 9 with its once rich grave goods of beads and pendants, as well as brooch and bronze key. This must be the only Lady with Mead Cup-amulet found in Blekinge so far! It shows as link to the idea of the welcoming woman with the ritual drink, either as aristocratic lady

of the house or as valkyria in Valhalla, with roots far back in Germanic tradition (see ch.5). Was this link to the past well known and understood at the time of the burial? This is likely, as the type of figure occurs in many places at this time in Scandinavian iconography. It is puzzling though, that a woman should be associated with a valkyria at death, as these would welcome *warriors*, not women. So maybe it does signify her role as lady of the house (which also the key confirms). But then, why beheaded? It is impossible to know whether or not this was a deliberate act, an act of sacrifice to the gods – to Odin? Broken objects in burials are usually interpreted so (Price 2008:260). The amulet is badly damaged (apart from being beheaded) by the cremation, but a drawing of it shows some of the details, see fig. 41. Interestingly, another one or two pendants may signify a cultic role (see ch.3.2.3), which makes the burial even more ambiguous. The metal fragments indicate a possible belt or strap with mounts (for hanging amulets or tools?) and a casket, the flint flakes evoke the meaning of the cremation ceremony (see ch.3.3). There are no oval brooches, only a round one, which differs from the standard.



20. Hjorthammar

Fig. 36. Lady with Mead cup, Hjortahammar. Drawing by Pernille Foss, in Mannering 2017

Next in rank (according to my subjective judgement) in category III is no. 6, also from Hjortahammar, with her several silver rings. Originally, she must have had *two* oval brooches and the round silver one to hold her cloak, jacket or maybe shirt (see fig. 9). There was probably a knife in the knife-sheath, hanging from one of her brooches, but the *three* spindle whorls are more remarkable. In all other cases there is only *one* spindle whorl. Their different sizes and material may signify they were used for different kinds of thread, but it is also possible they represent three different women as this is a grave and they therefore are to be understood symbolically. Did this woman have others working for her, or thralls?

No. 18 from Kasakulle had a complete brooch set, with the two oval brooches and one equal-armed one. Only one other burial had these three standard brooches, no. 11 in Lilla Vambåsa (in category II). The bronze plate with animal ornamentation and three holes may have been a sewing-on item for her costume, and she would have had her whetstone hanging from one of her brooches. Like 4 other women of the total 20, she had a single spindle whorl with her in death.

Most of the other burials in category III had 1-2 brooches and a few beads, a knife and/or a whet stone and a spindle whorl, only 2 from Hjortahammar and 1 from Nötanabben have no brooches. These have pendants or a belt buckle instead. Two women, one at Hjortsberga and another at Kasakulle, were buried with both a needle and a spindle whorl, as references to textile production.

No. 10 at Lilla Vambåsa must have had special household responsibilities as she was buried with both a key, a wooden vessel, an iron hook and shards from 2 pottery vessels (both could not have been the cremation urn). On the other hand, the arrow head and hook suggest she did her hunting and fishing herself, and she had no other jewellery than a pen-annular brooch, although of bronze, - a practical item. Again, nails and iron fragments indicate some sort of case. Another woman at Hjortahammar (no. 8) may have been good at fishing, the 'barbed object' maybe having some such purpose (the sea being all around), and then of course the knife and whet stone would come in handy. She wore an ornamented penannular brooch of bronze with a long needle, probably for a cloak or other outer garment. The third penannular brooch is only of iron, but on the other hand this burial no. 21 at Kasakulle contains 16 beads, nearly all blue.

In category II there is a burial from Hjortahammar with another silver finger ring, unfortunately lost together with the ear-ring and filigree button which are unique in this context. It is notable that the

only finger rings in the selection are all from Hjortahammar. In categories II and I all the other burials have brooches except no. 32 from Bredåkra, which instead has the only armlet. This burial could be that of a child, due to the size of the armlet, a girl in that case which the spindle whorl indicates. Children would be buried with much the same objects as their adults (Svanberg 2003:21). The second burial with an iron handle is no. 14 at Kasakulle and also includes a spindle whorl decorated with 10 crossed circles, like wheels. Decorated spindle whorls are unusual (Andersson Strand, oral information 2019-05-06), but as mentioned in ch 3.1.1, this motif occurs on spindle whorls in Norway, although these are from an earlier period. The association to the 'spinning' wheel of life, death and reproduction is obvious.

The single burial in category I, no. 29 from Bökenäs, consists of two oval brooches, but the only ones that are visibly gilt and represent the only gold in *all* the selected material.

Results

So, how do these 32 burials match the social functions of women found in literature and iconography in chapter 4? Can I, in my selected material, find indications of women playing the role of:

- Mother and producer of heirs (and as such, instruments of alliances)
- Lady of the house (as hostess and delegate of the lord or in her own right)
- Provoker and initiator
- Seeresse/sorceress with magic abilities
- Priestess with connections to the otherworld
- 'Shield-maidens'
- Slaves or servants

The majority of the burials seem to be those of well equipped women whose relatives buried them with respect and a wish for a good afterlife – or for good reputation. They have been cremated with at least part of their customary jewellery sets, which in some cases are plentiful. Some burials stick out because of objects with supposed metaphorical meanings, like keys, pendants or other special jewellery, while others have more tools for practical use in daily life. Even these probably have a symbolic meaning, though, as they are so few. This can be seen in both the VP and the VA, while the three MP burials are of the same kind with very little variation.

If the spindle whorl really is a symbol for production and reproduction, as suggested earlier (ch.3.1.1), it does not only signify the actual craft of textile production, but also the female faculty of giving birth and keeping the circle of life and death turning – and so the bloodline of the family. In that case, the first function of *mother* is represented in 10 burials, i.e. almost a third of the total. Besides, this function is suggested in the burial with the button-on-bow brooch (no.12), the *Brisingamen* of the goddess Freya, which could only be worn by a mother of heirs. The oval brooches of the VA can also be seen as fertility symbols, which are to be found in 8 VA burials of which 3 also had spindle whorls. A question arises: why do not *all* women have spindle whorls, and why do they not occur together with keys? Maybe the latter is just a coincidence, but the meaning of the spindle whorl remains ambiguous. It should be noted that the boat-grave at Augerum did *not* include either key or spindle whorl, perhaps this lady was above such household matters, and too old for reproduction?

The *lady of the house*-function is implicit in the two VA graves with keys, of which the one at Hjortahammar also has the Lady with Mead Cup-amulet, which is a strong indication of the hostess function. In the VP the same no. 12 mentioned above also has the fire-steel-shaped pendant, which

was said to represent fertility or the keeping of the hearth and home (ch. 3.2.3 and 3.3). As this burial also has a spindle whorl, we can suppose there was at least *one* woman with both motherly and household responsibilities at Kasakulle in the VP.

There is no way of finding the third function of *provoker and initiator* in the archaeological material, but it can be assumed, that if a woman has a good portion of power and dignity, like the ladies above can be supposed to have had, they would do their best to encourage their husbands to keep it and defend it, for themselves and for their family. When a woman was torn between the loyalties towards her original family and that of her husband, or between her children and her husband, she may well have taken different kinds of initiatives or been provocative. A land-owning widow or divorcee would be capable of extraordinary acts to defend her own interests. Yet, her personal battles and preferences would not be seen in her burial material in such cases, as she would not have been the one to choose it.

The grave goods of a *seeress or sorceress*, like e.g. in the find at Fyrkat, Denmark, does not really match any of the selected burials, there is no staff (although a wooden one may have been there) and no extraordinary jewellery like toe-rings, and no metal bowls (Price 2002:149ff). In as much as anyone would have been cremated with a cat-skin bonnet or gloves, a leather pouch, or in embroidered textiles, it would not leave traces in the archaeological material. A 'tool-kit' of magic would be a number of techniques and strategies for communicating with supernatural powers (Price 2008:245), which would not either be visible. The Fyrkat woman had none of the usual female brooches to hold her clothing (like the oval ones, symbolizing fertility), but a few pendants, two glass beads and a dress pin, as well as a sheathed knife, all of which can be found in the selected burials. If burials including spindle whorls (although the Fyrkat woman did have one) or loom weight are omitted, there is 1 burial in the VP (No. 28) and 3 in the VA (nos. 2, 3 and 5) to match that. No. 28 is a good candidate, as the three dress pins stand out, as well as the animal tooth and bone 'object'. In the VA, no. 5 also is unusual, as no ear-rings or filigree buttons occur in any of the other burials. Such an interpretation is very uncertain, though, and sorcery or magic can be found in so much else, both in the animal ornamentation itself on jewellery and in the meaning given to spindle whorls or other textile implements (see ch.3.1.). Yet, the lack of brooches in pairs may suggest unconventional clothing.

It is even harder to find the *priestess or gyðja* in the archaeological material, as this function in many cases was practised by the lady of the house or dominant landowner's hall in the local ritual (or in the private ritual) and this latter function probably was of greater importance (Price 2002:62f). The *völva*, or seeress would also have been seen as a priestess. Nothing particular in the current burials suggests this function, unless the 'Lady with the Mead Cup' amulet (in no. 9) should be seen as a link to Oðin and the realm of the dead (maybe even the fact that she is beheaded?). The supposition that *more than one* amuletic pendant could signify a cultic role (ch. 3.2.3), also points to this burial as it contains one or two more pendants and the pair of brooches are missing, while a round brooch takes their place. This woman would then have had several social roles.

As I have not included burials with weapons in my selection, it is impossible to find traces of a possible '*shield-maiden*', or *female warrior* in central Blekinge. One or other may however be hidden in the weapon-graves not selected or among all the non-excavated graves in Blekinge. There is no doubt that *some* women actually would put on armour, for different reasons (Hedeager 2011:121; Price et al. 2019). In a documentary reference to a battle in Bulgaria between the Rus and the Byzantines in 970 it is said that, after their victory, the Byzantines found among the dead Rus a number of women with armour and fighting gear (Price 2002:332). In burials women have been found

with weapons. At Birka, the recently osteologically analyzed warrior in grave Bj581 turned out to be a woman, apparently a commander of high rank (Hedenstierna-Jonson 2019; Price et al. 2019).

We will probably find many more cases of women *taking on the social role of warrior*, (i.e. exchanging their female sex for a masculine gender) for different reasons, although this would not have been the norm. However, if few of them took part in the actual fighting, it seems that they still may have had an important *ritual* role as to the outcome of war and battle, which among other images, the sword- and shield-bearing women on the Oseberg tapestry may suggest (Mannering 2017:127; Price 2002:337,396).

The *slaves or thralls* would be hard to find in the material, as they would belong to the over 50% of the population who did not get any formal burial at all (Price 2008:259; Svanberg 2003:23). In case of them following their masters or mistresses in death, they may have had an extra urn for their bones, or even had their bones mixed with those of their owners, which would not show at all in this selection. Only in one case, no. 6, where the three spindle whorls seem to indicate the presence of several females, can it be understood as a burial of a person who may have been in charge of two (or three) others.

In the end, it seems Tacitus had quite a good idea of the status of women in the Germanic/Nordic society (see ch. 4), and that it was more or less valid several hundred years later and implied in both Anglo-Saxon and Norse literature. Concerning the dowry, Tacitus is surprised at the quantity of goods a man must bring into marriage, but the fact is that both men and women in Scandinavia would be urged by their families to find partners of equal wealth and standing. A Viking woman would bring her share into the deal, and she had the right to keep it all her life, even after a divorce (which she was able to initiate herself) (Ingelman-Sundberg 1999:49f, 55ff). This, and other social regulations, made the Scandinavian woman relatively independent and free, compared to her sisters in the rest of Europe. In fact, it seems wealth and power would have been more important than biological sex, which in some cases gave women the same status as men, or higher.

The selected burials and their remaining goods do however show indications of other roles for women in the Iron Age society than those referred to in literature and iconography: the everyday tasks of making life go around, like *spinning, weaving, sewing, fishing, hunting or preparing meat, vegetables, herbs and skins*, i.e. Jennbert's connotation group of working experiences (ch.1.4). Even if the tools for these activities were laid down to accompany the dead person symbolically, they were objects that had served a practical purpose at some time. The pottery material found in most burials may, besides being the remains of cremation urns, have contained both food and drink for the after-life, but were probably used for the same originally. The bone material, if analyzed, would probably be able to give more information, both as to determine the sex of the buried person and to the eventuality of animals being included (in only a few cases, analysis has taken place), or even if more than one person was buried in the same grave. Unfortunately, in many cases the bone material has not been registered as belonging to a certain feature, which makes such matching impossible.

The account by Ibn Fadlan gives another clue to the seemingly irregular combination of grave goods in some burials. He mentions that when a rich man dies the Rus "gather together his possessions and divide them into three, one third for his family, one third to use for garments, and one third with which they purchase alcohol which they drink on the day when his slave-girl kills herself and is cremated together with her master" (Montgomery 2000:14). If a similar strategy was applied also for women in Blekinge, some of the belongings may have been used for affording the burial ceremonies

themselves, or been saved for the benefit of the remaining family, explaining e.g. why one brooch of a pair would be missing.

In 6 of the VP and VA burials, brooches were missing entirely, in 4 of them they were replaced by armlets or pendants, in one (no. 5) by other silver jewellery, while one (no.28) only had dresspins. If intentional, this may indicate a different type of clothing than the typical female dress, which could have been a sign of a different social role.

All along, selected burials have been discussed as to the social role of the supposed women. Not much has been said about their age. As mentioned in the Introduction (ch. 1.4), children's graves have been found to include about the same objects as those of adults, and only one indication of a possible child or young woman has been seen in the current selection, i.e. the armlet in no. 32 being of a very tight dimension. There may very well have been several children among the described burials, it is impossible to know. In that case they seem to have been seen in their expected social roles as grown women. It is equally difficult to tell whether the number of beads actually corresponds to the age of a woman (see ch. 3.2.2). If that is the case, and this is valid for the whole time scope studied here, the woman in no. 9 at Hjortahammar would have been the oldest of all. I believe, though, that a combination of status and collecting over time is a more realistic interpretation. Some of the beads may have been inherited, some given as gifts at different occasions and for different reasons. They may even have belonged to the surviving family, and added to the pyre as a display of wealth and status during the death ritual (Jennbert 2006:136). The finds of children being buried with large numbers of beads at Odarslöv, Scania, supports this (Lundquist 2018), but customs would certainly have varied in different regions.

There is not much evidence of differences in the material between the different areas, most burials over the whole studied period contained similar types of objects and when in context, they usually included burnt bone, charcoal and pottery, sometimes also slag or flint flakes, all associated with the cremation ritual. However, the richest graves during the VP are to be found at Kasakulle, and in the VA at Hjortahammar, while the two arrow heads are *not* found in either place, which is also the case with the three MP burials.

Over time a few differences can be seen, although much of the same kind of items occurs throughout the periods, the spindle whorl for one. The *amount* of bone and charcoal remains seems to change, the earlier burials including only smaller portions of the cremated bones (Persson 1976:11), which again suggests that not all the material was buried in the grave. What was done with the rest of the bones? It is possible they were scattered with the winds, or in the water/earth, as it seems remains from even inhumation graves could be both broken and redistributed (Hedeager 2011:100), and like it supposedly was done with *all* the remains of cremated people of low status or slaves (Price 2008:259). In the current VA material most burials do not include bone material at all (see Table III), which in most cases may be due to incomplete excavation methods or documentation.

Other changes over time are the lack of combs in the VA, which is surprising, and in the type of jewellery. The fashion in central Blekinge seems to follow the general South Scandinavian dress fashion and combination of brooches, both in the VP and the VA. In the MP we only have the beads to go by, and these also fit into a South Scandinavian/ Baltic norm. Armlets are proportionately much more frequent in the VP than in the VA, while pendants are found in both (see ch. 3.2). Unfortunately, it has not been possible to look more closely at the styles of e.g. animal ornamentation and their possible religious references or changes over time (argued by Callmer 2008), as jewellery with such is rare in the current material, badly damaged, or quite simply not

accessible for ocular analysis. The VP bird-shaped brooches are an exception, though, and typical of their period, and the VA oval brooch in no.7 has well preserved ornamentation probably worth closer study.

Telling by the analyzed material it seems that social differences may have been more pronounced (or just more visible?) during the VP, as the VA material was so hard to rank. It can be interpreted as more varied and complex social roles in the VA.

6. Conclusion

Returning to the research questions in ch. 1.1, I will try to summarize the conclusions drawn in the Analysis and Discussion (ch.5), but in order to answer the main question ***what grave material in central Blekinge can tell about the social role of women in the local Iron Age society***, I first needed to decide how to identify female graves and reflect on in what way the current gender theories would influence my work. I answered this in my Theory and Method (ch.1.5). As it is the *social role*, i.e. the expected part in society I have been looking for, with its norms and ideology, I have chosen to look for burials including certain items that by several archaeologists have been considered belonging to the female realm and proved to occur in female burials. Although women have been found in weapon graves and some must have taken on the role of warriors or other male roles, this was not the norm in a society with strict gender roles. Had I included weapons as possible grave goods, I would not have been able to find the female presence in these cremation graves. Reading articles from a feministic archaeology's point of view has however made me attentive to interpretive errors and in particular to what we may *not* see or look for in the material. It is also important to underline that in true life, men and women are likely to have shared and exchanged more activities than the conventional rules postulated, and particularly women would have crossed the social gender limits and sometimes achieved higher status.

Which are the artefact combinations in the selected graves in the research area?

Three tables (in Appendix) have been composed with the burials, one according to parish, one to chronology and one to categories of artefacts. Besides, each burial has been described in detail (ch. 2), in some cases including photos.

Most burials contained 1-2 brooches, 1-6 glass beads, a spindle whorl, a knife or a whet stone, this obviously being the standard in both VP and VA. The MP, represented by only 3 burials, had only beads and in one case, whetstones. Some burials had additional or remarkable jewellery like brooches, beads or pendants, and a few had other objects like a key, a needle, iron handles or an arrow head. The VP brooches were only in one case two of same type, while in the two other cases, brooches seem to have been combined differently. Oval VA brooches appear more frequently in matched pairs, in two burials together with an equal-armed brooch. Some burials in both VP and VA had no brooches at all, one having no other jewellery in their place (only dress pins). Combs were only found in the VP burials and spindle whorls and keys would not be found together at all. There were no scissors or shears and only one possible sickle. In most burials there would also be pottery shards (in 20 of 32), burnt bones and charcoal, but not in all. Slag and flint flakes occurred in several burials as well as fragments of iron and bronze, and iron and bronze plate, with or without ornamentation. Together with rivets and nails, these fragments may indicate a wooden box or case.

The irregularity in the occurrence of certain grave goods, the lack of one brooch of a pair, or a small number of beads, could suggest that part of the possessions were kept in the family or used for affording the burial ceremony. The complete lack of brooches in 6 VP and VA burials *can* imply an atypical costume and therefore a deviant function.

How is the available material distributed over time and space? Can any differences be discerned?

The distribution of the selected burials over time is very uneven, three from the MP, 9 from the VP and 20 from the Viking Age. As stated in the introduction, this is due to the differences in the location of the cemeteries and many of the older ones having been destroyed by human activities.

Some are however to be found as secondary burials in Bronze Age mounds or cairns, and at Kasakulle (non-arable land) VP burials have been preserved together with later VA burials. Although the available archaeological material is related to the excavation activities and their geographical focus, it seems clear that Kasakulle was an important cemetery for a long time, in both the VP and the VA, for the families of the élite, while Hjortahammar grew to importance only in the beginning of the VA. This may be due to the growing activities around the harbour of Hjortahammar. A similar development may have taken place at Nötanabben, where a VA cemetery developed south of an older one, possibly in connection with more intense coastal activities and a probable port in Byrumsviken (Mattsson 2004; Persson 2014; 23ff). As only 5 features of the more than 90 have been investigated here, due to the late discovery of the cemetery, future excavations would probably alter the proportionate distribution of available material (only one burial from Nötanabben is included in this study). Generally though, the material studied here fits in well with the picture of the two maps in fig. 2.

What picture of the I. A. woman do we get from literature and iconography?

The presentation of women in literature like the Anglo-Saxon *Beowulf* and the Norse sagas permits grouping them into *at least* seven functions, i.e. 1) mother and producer of heirs, 2) lady of the house as hostess and delegate of the lord/or landowner in her own right, 3) provoker and initiator, 4) seeress (*völva*) with magic abilities, 5) priestess (*gyðja*) with connections to the otherworld, 6) valkyries/'shield-maidens', 7) slaves/thralls. In iconography it is possible to find all these except the provoker and the slave, but this may depend on interpretation. Iconography tends to have a cultic or symbolical value, the depiction of gods or goddesses, or ideal figures that would not include slaves. Women portrayed in any of the other functions may well have been understood as provokers or initiators to an IA society – or behaved as such. In general, ever since the RIA, Germanic women seem to have been believed to have special powers for communicating with the supernatural and for influencing the future.

How does this picture match my material? Have I found any traces or evidence in my selected material of an ideology or traditions matching those expressed in literature and iconography?

The functions of mother and lady of the house are well represented in the current grave material, and two artefacts have even been found to have links to both literature and iconography: *the button-on-bow brooch* and *the Lady-with-Mead-Cup amulet*. Mythological associations can also be detected in a few artefacts with animal ornament or shape, in particular the *bird of prey*. A few burials with exceptional artefact combinations may indicate the presence of an individual with supernatural faculties or unconventional equipment/clothing, but these indications are very unclear, the same can be said for the priestess function. The first two functions could very well include those of priestess, seeress and provoker, at least the cultic functions would be performed by women of higher status, but nothing in the archaeological material gives definite indications of this. The 'shield-maiden' has been eliminated from the start, as no burials with weaponry are included. Slaves would not have been visible in the material, but could still have been included in the bone material or ashes. The two above-mentioned artefacts prove a long continuity of an ideology with roots in the MP or earlier, and together with the bird of prey, they associate to the Norse god Odin with his valkyries and the goddess Freya, in line with a warrior ideology where Odin is the god of war and death, while Freya gives fertility and secures the blood-line of the leading family.

On the other hand, *other* functions are clearly visible, although with very few objects: those of household activities and production like spinning, weaving, sewing, fishing and hunting, as well as the

preparation of food and maybe skins. Indications of these activities seem to be a little more common in the VA material, but this may be due to the disproportionate representativity. The burials in the VP fall more naturally into a hierarchical pattern based on the number of artefacts than they do in the VA material. The meaning of the spindle whorl in a large number of burials throughout the periods (and in the material not selected) has been discussed in this paper as being probably mainly symbolical, maybe for the female production and reproduction of life, for the 'spinning' of Fate, and the wheel of life and death – an appropriate symbol in a burial. Still, the combination of this item with other artefacts remains to be further studied for a better understanding of its meaning. Its general practical importance for Iron Age society cannot be overestimated, without it (and the women using it) there would hardly have been any Viking Age!

In sum, the social role of women in IA central Blekinge, based on the artefacts of the selected burials, seems to revolve much around the *continuity of the family, the blood line and reproduction* – supposedly for those of high status - as well as production in a more material sense. Here it must be added that my initial selection criteria, which matched two of Kristina Jennbert's lifestyle connotation groups (ch. I.4), now have resulted in a material that fits in with three additional ones: *hunting, negotiation and communication*, and *wealth*, only war and violence is missing (as no weapons are included). It can be supposed that the social and political status of a family was equally associated with its women as with its men, although in different ways.

The current selection (not including burials with less than 2 artefacts) being out of necessity an overrepresentation of the upper social level, still shows differences of wealth in the VP, and in the VA what probably could be seen as a 'middle' class with more individual variations. Most of the jewellery found in the burials follows the fashion of the period, seen in other parts of South Scandinavia, some pendants and an amulet being more unique. The two grave finds (or possibly three) of turned amber beads from the MP, indicate that this part of Blekinge had connections with the South Baltic coast, which may have implied the import, not only of beads but also of women in marriage. Also the following periods have been found to have had communication of both local, regional and far-reaching nature in all directions by land and by sea which is particularly visible at the settlement of Västra Vång (Hellstam 2014:41f, 49f), the boat grave at Augerum (Arrhenius 1960a:176f) and now proved to a certain extent in the jewellery fashion and beads in the selected burials of the research area. Likenesses in the VP material with the Augerum finds prove the élite of the period had the same far-reaching networks, although local preferences may have changed over time. During the VP and VA, a warrior ideology with its roots in the Germanic RIA/MP, a distant and glorious past, seems to have lived on in the memory of a society much concerned with the circle of life, death and the afterlife, reflected in its mythology and made visible in its iconography. The continuity of this ideology can be seen in some of the artefacts found in central Blekinge and beliefs of sorcery and magic of ancient Germanic date can also be detected here. Women in central Blekinge would not have been isolated from these influences, and whether of the élite or only 'middle class', many of them would have been well-equipped representatives of their families, fulfilling their expected roles as wives and mothers, but probably also as respected contributors to social stability and economy, i.e. both reproducers and producers (of e.g. textiles). They would have had responsibilities that equalled those of men, although usually not the same ones. Some of them may even have had functions as seeresses or priestesses, although this is only vaguely suggested in the archaeological material in this study. These activities are certainly among the many invisible ones. An element of magic and the supernatural can be identified in the frequent presence of the spindle whorl in female burials. Other individuals have left fewer imprints on the archaeological record, but more

investigations of the many hidden secrets may detect also their importance in the future. It is probably at the settlements that these are to be found.

7. Reflections

My intention was to find out more about people living around Västra Vång in the VP, to complete the picture of the warrior society behind the runic spell carved on *Björketorpsstenen* (just a little south of Kasakulle by the road to Västra Vång) and its relationship to those in *Listerlandet* (Hellstam 2014). In the end the time scope had to be extended and the bulk of my material landed in the VA.

Nevertheless, the VP burials in my selection happen to be concentrated in just the area of the ridge of Johannishus (with one exception) and they do confirm the existence of an élite here, most likely with a warrior ideology. Some graves from the period including weapons have been encountered during my research (ch. 2.4), at least one of them here at Johannishus, which is interesting. The many fragments of glass beakers, dated to the MP/VP, found on the hill in the settlement of Västra Vång (Henriksson 2018:6:17f; Näsman 2016:51ff) certainly give associations to an aristocratic hall culture and ritual, where a 'Lady-with Mead-Cup' would fit in perfectly - although the artefact with that association is from a later period and found at Hjortahammar.

Another association is that of the spell mentioned above, or the runic *galdr*, with the implied female spells or sorcery connected with textile production. It has been taken for granted that the magic runes of the four standing stones in Blekinge from the 7th century, carved to protect the territory of a certain family were the art of a male carver (Hellstam 2014:45). That may be so, stone carving having most likely been male activity, in which case there is a gender division of what *kind* of magic belongs to the male or female realm, although both *seiðr* and *galdr* were employed by Oðin (Price 2002:66). It would however not be impossible to think that the spells themselves were first *spoken* or *sung* by a woman – or maybe read out loud from the carved runes, almost as horrifying as what is expressed by the sorceresses in *Njals saga* (see ch.4). The literal meaning of the runic spell at Björketorp – that anyone intruding or breaking the monument would be overrun by *argue*, i.e. homosexual penetration, the most shameful of conditions as it applies a feminine role to a male individual - is paralleled by the chant of the grim sorceresses weaving with the bowels of the warriors the destruction of men and kings, in what seems quite an unfeminine way. It gives rather an unpleasant picture of the tension between the sexes, but somehow it has its logic and expresses a wish for equality of power and influence – and maybe in reality it resulted in cooperation in the end.

As for the future, the most obvious reflection is that more material is needed in order to get a clearer and more complete picture of Late Iron Age society in Blekinge, particularly the earlier periods and of more varied social status. Although my research area covered much wider spaces in e.g. the parishes of Ronneby and Edestad, not enough investigations have yielded material that I could use. Quite a few of the reports I went through included no finds, or concerned only very limited investigations. It was surprising to find that no investigations seem to have been done along the old foot- or ridingpath between Ronneby and Bräkne-Hoby, along which so many prehistoric monuments and graves are located and one of the reasons for my including the parish of Ronneby. As mentioned earlier, many secrets are still hidden in the earth of the numerous cemeteries in central Blekinge. The problems of interpretation connected with burials, due to the implied symbolism and beliefs of the afterlife, will probably never be entirely solved. Evidently, in order to know more about everyday life in the IA, it is the *settlements* with their crafts and commerce that come into focus, and there are plenty of indications of settlements in the neighbourhood of the cemeteries mentioned in this study. At Västra Vång, textile production and metal crafts among others, have obviously taken place, and more material will probably appear there for future research on the work of both women and men. It may then be possible to detect indications of flexibility between the sexes and of crossing the boundaries of social gender roles by the individual.

8. Summary

In order to explore the social role of women in Late Iron Age central Blekinge, an inventory was made of investigations in the parishes of Edestad, Hjortsberga, Förkärla, Listerby and Ronneby, resulting in a selection of 32 cremation burials containing artefacts associated with female grave goods, according to certain predefined criteria not including weapons. This material was sorted, analyzed and categorized according to artefact combinations, thereafter interpreted and compared with accounts from Beowulf and the Norse Sagas as well as with iconography, with the intention of finding out whether there would be any links for the understanding of Scandinavian Iron Age female social roles. Although the grave material in many cases was damaged by fire and sometimes was incomplete, it was possible to create a chronology and a ranking of the burials. The distribution over time was uneven, as only three burials fell into the Migration Period, nine in the Vendel Period and twenty in the Viking Age. The three Migration Period burials consisted of almost only beads of glass and amber, indicating connections with the Southern Baltic, whereas the Vendel Period burials were of a varied nature and concentrated to the cemetery of Kasakulle and the neighbourhood of Västra Vång and the ridge of Johannishus. Some of these imply both wealth and high social standing while others contained goods of less material value, why a certain hierarchy could be detected. The Viking Age burials showed individual variations as well, but the hierarchy was less discernable and the burials were spread to a wider area with concentrations to both Kasakulle and the cemetery of Hjortahammar. Studies of practical and symbolical meanings of the artefacts as well as comparisons with literature and iconography, resulted in the conclusion that in particular two social roles must have been expected of the women of the local society, those of *mothers of heirs* and *ladies of the house or manor*, an indication of the importance of women for the stability and reproduction of the warrior society. Whether these roles also included the function of seersse or priestess is not directly indicated by the grave material, but could be possible in some cases. Other functions encountered in literature are that of *provoker* and *initiator*, *shield-maiden* and *slave*, all equally impossible to find in the archaeological material. On the other hand, indications of household activities and production were found, as well as a few of hunting and fishing. The frequent occurrence of the spindle whorl proves both the practical importance of the tool in textile production and its metaphorical meaning of the reproduction of life, which seems to have been an essential concept in the Iron Age mind. Iconography connected with certain artefacts indicates that a continuity of a warrior ideology with roots in the Roman Iron Age/Migration Period was present in the memories of the Vendel and Viking Age societies of central Blekinge. The material proved that the societies in the area were part of a long-distance network, to the continent and the south Baltic region throughout the periods.

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Images:

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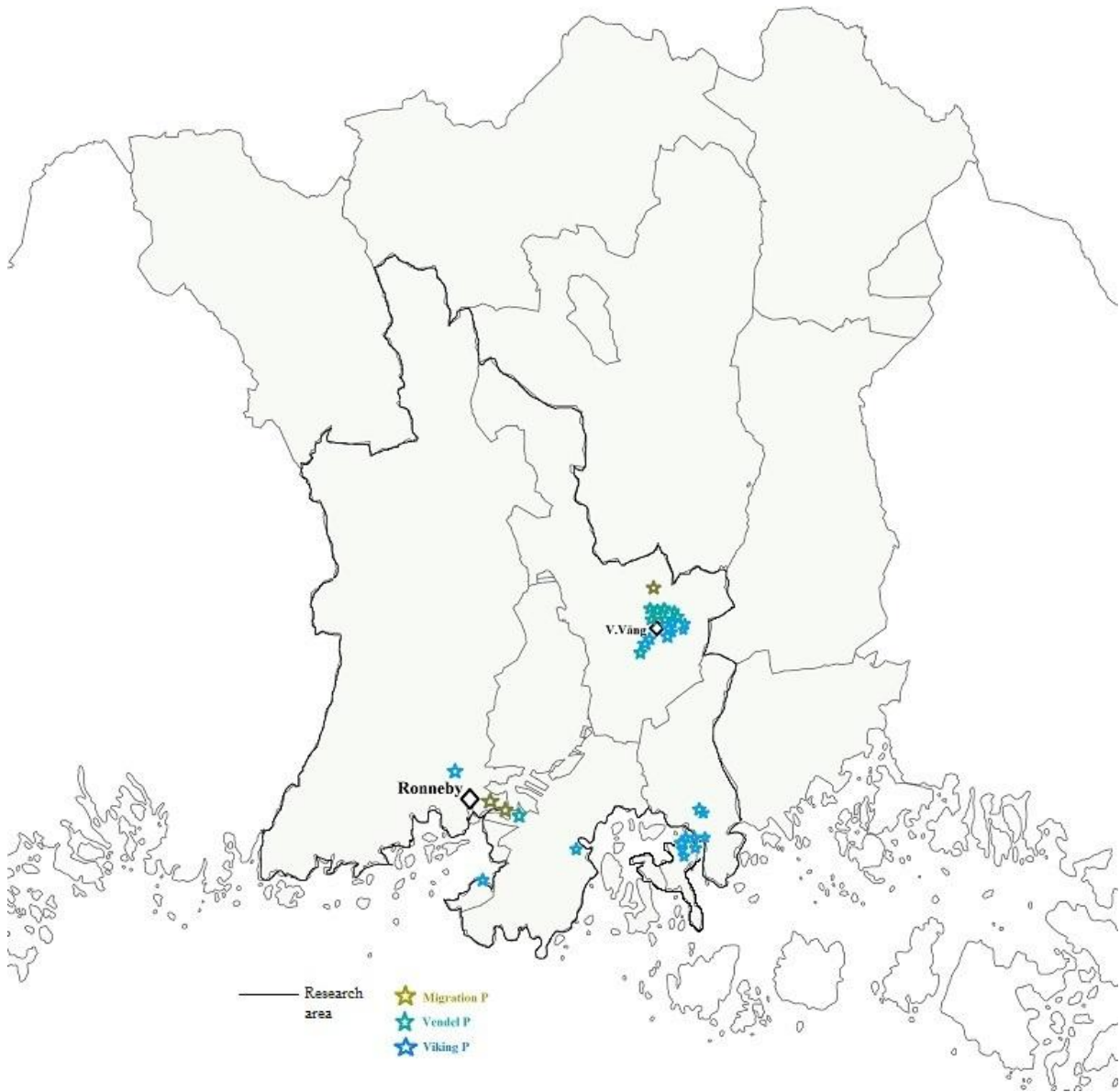
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Appendix

Map A of selected burials and their distribution according to period.....	i
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Map A of research area, parishes and the 32 burials.



Map B of the cemeteries and burial places in the research area mentioned in this study.

1. Nötanabben/Byrum
2. Hjortahammar
3. Lilla Vambåsa
4. Hjortsberga
5. Kasakulle

Table I of burials

No.	Parish	Site	Excav. year	Grave type	Feature	Findings	Dating	Present location
1	Edestad	Anglemåla, RAÄ 85	1893	Secondary grave in BA cairn	Upper layer of cist	24-25 beads of amber and glass, 2 fragmentary whetstones of slate and quartzite, resp., remains of wood and bones (or coal and burnt bones?), urn	RIA-MP	SHM 9410:63a
2	Edestad	Gö/Byrum, RAÄ 97	1970	Four-sided stone setting	57	Round bronze pendant, 5 beads of glass and lime stone, slate whetstone with hole and bronze loop, grave stone sphere, burnt bones	Mid VA	BLM 16923:1-4
3	Förkärla	Hjortahammar, RAÄ 12	1820	Central mound in four-sided stone setting	186 (No. 26)	Round bronze pendant, 9-10 glass beads	900-1000 AD	SHM 1453:186
4	Förkärla	Hjortahammar, RAÄ 12	1820	Low mound	189	2 oval brooches JP57 (1 given away), 6 glass beads, iron belt buckle (lost)	900-1000 AD	SHM 1453:189
5	Förkärla	Hjortahammar, RAÄ 12	1820	Central mound in four-sided stone setting	192	Fragmented silver finger ring (lost), 2 beads of glass and carnelian, silver ear-ring (lost), silver filigree button (lost)	900-1000 AD	SHM 1453:192
6	Förkärla	Hjortahammar, RAÄ 12	1828	Ship setting I	Cremation layer	1 round silver brooch, 1 oval bronze brooch JP51/52, 3 fragm finger rings of silver plate, 3 spindle whorls of soap stone, sand stone and fired clay, resp, bronze knife-sheath mount, burnt bones, charcoal	900-1000 AD	SHM 1452:34-40

No.	Parish	Site	Excav. year	Grave type	Feature	Finds	Dating	Present location
7	Förkärle	Hjortahammar, RAÄ 12	1828	Ship setting 2	Cremation layer	1 oval bronze brooch JP51/52, 6 glass beads, burnt bones, charcoal	900-1000 AD	SHM 1452:34-40
8	Förkärle	Hjortahammar, RAÄ 12	1885	Tricorn	Cremation layer (No.76)	Penannular bronze brooch, 1 cylindrical bead of twisted bronze wire, 1 small knife, whetstone, 6 nails, iron object with barbs, burnt bones	VA	SHM 7869
9	Förkärle	Hjortahammar, RAÄ 12	1955	Destroyed mound?	Cremation layer, grave No. 115	1 or 2 fragm bronze pendants type Birka, 61 glass/bronze beads, damaged by fire, 'Lady with mead cup' amulet of bronze, part of bronze key, strap-end mount, 2 nails, iron fragments, flint, pottery (urn), burnt bones	VA	BLM 13631
10	Förkärle	Lilla Vambåsa, RAÄ 16	1895	Cairn	Unknown	6 beads of glass and clay, bronze penannular brooch/ringed pin, iron arrow head, iron key, 2 iron handles, iron hook, nails, iron fragments, flint flakes, pottery (from 2 vessels)	900-1000 AD	SHM 9991 (all lost)
11	Förkärle	Lilla Vambåsa, RAÄ 16	1939	Grave field	Unknown	Equal-armed brooch (Aagard gr III), 2 oval brooches JP51B, top shell of oval brooch JP51A	900-1000 AD	BLM 12703:a-d

No.	Parish	Site	Excav. year	Grave type	Feature	Finds	Dating	Present location
12	Hjortsberga	V Vång, Kasakulle, RAÄ 45-46	1885	Rectangular stone setting with central stone	Feature 10, cremation layer 4, under central stone	1 fragmented button-on-bow brooch, 1 fragm bronze armband, 1 fire-steel-shaped bronze pendant, 1 cylindrical bead of spiraled bronze wire, 5 glass smelts of beads, 1 cylindrical spindle whorl of slate, 1 fragm chain of double bronze rings, pottery	Late Vendel P (700-800 AD)	SHM 7869:4
13	Hjortsberga	V Vång, Kasakulle, RAÄ 45-46	1885	Four-sided stone setting w central mound	Cremation layer 3 a	2 fragm oval brooches JP51, iron fragments, burnt bone	Mid VA	SHM 7869:3a
14	Hjortsberga	V Vång, Kasakulle, RAÄ 45-46	1885	Four-sided stone setting w central mound	Cremation layer 3 b	1 damaged oval brooch JP51, glass melt (lost), ornate spindle whorl of fired clay, iron handle and mounts for hanging vessel, 2 nails	Mid VA	SHM 7869:3b
15	Hjortsberga	V Vång, Kasakulle, RAÄ 45-46	1885	Ship setting w central stone	Cremation layer 1	Bow of bronze brooch, silver armband, 4 beads of bronze and rock crystal, whetstone (?), L-shaped iron key, lead weight?, pottery, burnt bone	Late Vendel P	SHM 7869
16	Hjortsberga	V Vång, Kasakulle, RAÄ 45-46	1885	Tricorn	Cremation layer	Equal-armed brooch (Aagård IA:2), trefoil brooch (lost), 1 polychrome bead	EVA, 800-900	SHM 7869:2

No.	Parish	Site	Excav. year	Grave type	Feature	Finds	Dating	Present location
17	Hjortsberga	Västra Vång, Kasakulle, RAÄ 45-46	1974	Mound	A 110, cremation layer	3-4 fragm brooches (1 equal-armed, 1 bird-shaped, 1 bird-shaped with ornamentation), part of bronze armband, 35 glass beads, round cup-shaped pendant, fragmented composite bone comb, knife/sickle, bronze mount with animal head, bronze & iron fragments, bronze plates (mounts?), pottery, burnt bones, charcoal	Early (?) Vendel P	SHM 30963:110
18	Hjortsberga	Västra Vång, Kasakulle, RAÄ 45-46	1978	Four-sided stone setting	A2	1 equal-armed brooch, 2 oval brooches JP51 (one fragmented), 2 beads, 1 conical spindle whorl of clay, 1 whetstone w hole, bronze plate w animal ornament (3 holes)	900-1000 AD	SHM 31708:2
19	Hjortsberga	Västra Vång, Kasakulle, RAÄ 45-46	1978	Round stone setting	Cremation layer, A6	Fragmented bronze armband?, knife, slate whetstone w hole, fragments of bronze spiral, iron fragments, rivet, loom weight of fired clay, burnt bone, slag, pottery	Vendel P?	SHM 31708:6

No.	Parish	Site	Excav. year	Grave type	Feature	Finds	Dating	Present location
20	Hjortsberga	Västra Vång, Kasakulle, RAÄ 45-46	1978	Rectangular stone setting	Cremation layer, A8	1 trefoil bronze brooch, 6 glass beads, 1 conical spindle whorl of fired clay, 1 needle, 1 whetstone w hole, rivet plate, burnt bone	VA	SHM 31708:8
21	Hjortsberga	Västra Vång, Kasakulle, RAÄ 45-46	1978	?	Cremation layer, A14	Penannular iron brooch, 16 glass beads, iron rod, slag, burnt bone	VA	SHM 31708:14
22	Hjortsberga	Västra Vång, Kasakulle, RAÄ 45-46	1978	Round stone setting	A 42	Stone spindle whorl, knife, burnt bone, slag	Vendel P?	SHM 31708:42
23	Hjortsberga	Västra Vång, Kasakulle, RAÄ 45-46	1978	Round stone setting	Cremation layer, A53	1 bronze beak-shaped brooch, 1 equal-armed brooch, 2 glass beads, slate spindle whorl, knife, whetstone w hole, bronze plate, iron fragment (cauldron?), nails, pottery, slag, burnt bone and charcoal	Vendel P	SHM 31708:53
24	Hjortsberga	Västra Vång, Kasakulle, RAÄ 45-46	1978	Rectangular stone setting	Cremation layer, A68	Fragmented brooch, bronze fragment w relief ornament, 2 beads of glass and bronze, pottery, burnt bone	Vendel P/VA	SHM 31708:68
25	Hjortsberga	Hillerslätt 1:4, RAÄ 78	1972-73	Stone setting with central boulder	Secondary burial/deposit in BA grave	21 turned amber, glass paste and glass beads	MP	BLM 25334:1-67
26	Hjortsberga	Hjortsberga, RAÄ 8	1893	Mound	Cremation layer	Oval brooch JP51, 2 beads of glass and rock crystal, glass melt, piece of iron needle/pin	900-1000 AD	SHM 9410:64a-c

No.	Parish	Site	Excav. year	Grave type	Feature	Finds	Dating	Present location
27	Hjortsberga	Hjortsberga, RAÄ 8	1917	Small cairn in ship setting	No.50	Bronze ornamented equal-armed brooch, 3 glass beads, spindle whorl of sand stone, fragments of iron needle, pottery	EVA	SHM 16031
28	Hjortsberga	Johannishus, RAÄ 20? 12?	1932	Round stone setting on grave field, damaged	cairn, mixed with earth	Fragments of composite antler comb, 2 bronze polyhedral pins, 1 bronze dress pin, rivet, rivet plate, 1-2 bone objects, animal tooth, burnt bone, charcoal	Vendel P	SHM 20127
29	Listerby	Bökenäs, RAÄ- any of 73-76?	1899	Grave field	cairn	2 oval brooches JP52D, gilt bronze	900-1000 AD	BLM 1590, 1591
30	Listerby	Kartorp, RAÄ 114	1894	Round stone setting	'Gråfukulle B I'	Bow-shaped brooch M433, 2 fragments of another of the same, 2 beads of glass and bronze, 2 fragments of bone comb, disc-shaped spindle whorl of clay, rivets, iron fragments, pottery, burnt bone, charcoal	Vendel P	SHM 9824:6
31	Ronneby	Hulta, RAÄ 127	1969	Round stone setting with low central cairn	Grave IV, central grave, offering?	27 beads of glass, bronze spiralled wire and turned amber (one large, disc-shaped), bronze ring (spacer?), iron flat rod, slag, resin, pottery, burnt bones	MP	BLM 17244
32	Ronneby	Bredåkra, RAÄ 144	1972	Round stone setting with central cairn, LBA	Secondary burial?	Bronze armlet, 1 mosaic glass bead, cylindrical spindle whorl of soap stone, iron fragments, flint flakes	EVA	BLM 17160:3-19

Table II, Burials and finds in chronological order

The figures show the no. of burials including the type of artefact, not the no. of artefacts!

No.	Place	Brooch	Armlet/rings	Beads	Pendant	Spindle whorl	Knife/whet stone	Other tool	Mounts	Iron/bronze fragments	Other
1	Anglemåla			24-25 amber & glass			2 whet stones				burnt bone, charcoal, pottery
25	Hillerslätt			21 amber, glass, glass paste							
31	Hulta			27 glass, glass paste & amber + large disc, bronze wire							
3				3			1				1
17	Kasakulle	3-4	Fragment, bronze	35-37 glass, blue & polychrome	Round, bronze		Knife/sickle	comb	1 with animal head	Bronze plate, bronze & iron fragments	Slag, pottery, resin, burnt bones, charcoal
23	Kasakulle	2		2 glass		1 slate	1 knife? & whet stone			Bronze plate	Nails, iron fragment, bones pottery
12	Kasakulle	1 (button- on-bow)	Fragmented bronze/silver?	5 glass melts, 1 bronze wire	Fire-steel- shaped bronze	1 slate				Chain of double rings	
15	Kasakulle	1	1 silver	4, rock crystal, bronze			1 whet stone	Key, iron			Pottery burnt bone

No.	Place	Brooch	Armlet/rings	Beads	Pendant	Spindle whorl	Knife/whetstone	Other tool	Mounts	Iron/bronze fragments	Other
19.	Kasakulle		Fragment, bronze	Fragments bronze wire			Knife & whetstone			Iron	Rivet, loom weight, burnt bone, slag, pottery
22	Kasakulle					1 stone	knife				Slag, burnt bone
24	Kasakulle	1		1 glass, 1 bronze						Bronze w ornament	Burnt bones, charcoal
28	Johannishus							comb			3 dress pins, rivet + rivet plate, 1-2 bone objects, animal tooth, burnt bone, charcoal
30	Kartorp	2		2 glass paste & bronze		1 clay		comb		iron	Rivets, pottery, burnt bone, charcoal
9		5	4	7	2	4	5 (3/3)	3 combs, 1 key	1	6	9
27	Hjortsberga	1		3 glass		1 Sand stone		Sewing needle		iron	Pottery, charcoal
32	Bredåkra		Bronze	1 glass mosaic		1 Soap stone		Arrow head			Pottery, flint shavings, charcoal
16	Kasakulle	2		1 polychrome							
2	Nötanabben			5 glass & limestone	bronze		whetstone				Burnt bones
13	Kasakulle	2								Iron	Burnt bone
14	Kasakulle	1		Glass melts		1 Clay, ornate		Awl?	Iron mounts		Iron handles, rivets, buckle pin?
3	Hjortahammar			9-10 glass	Round bronze						
4	Hjortahammar	2		6 glass							Iron belt buckle

No.	Place	Brooch	Armlet/rings	Beads	Pendant	Spindle whorl	Knife/whetstone	Other tool	Mounts	Iron/bronze fragments	Other
5	Hjortahammar		Silver finger ring, Ear-ring	2 glass & carnelian							Filigree button
6	Hjortahammar	1 silver, 1 bronze	2-3 silver finger rings			3, soap-stone, sandstone & clay			Bronze knife-sheath mount		Burnt bone, charcoal
7	Hjortahammar	1		6 glass							Burnt bone, charcoal
10	Lilla Vambåsa	1 or ringed pin						Arrow head, iron key		Iron	Iron handles, hook, nails, pottery (2 vessels), flint flakes
11	Lilla Vambåsa	4									
18	Kasakulle	3		2 glass		1 clay	Whetstone w hole			Bronze plate	
26	Hjortsberga	1		2, glass & rock crystal, glass melt				Needle/pin			
29	Bökenäs	2		1, bronze wire							6 nails, Burnt bones
8	Hjortahammar	1					Knife & whetstone			Iron barbed object	
9	Hjortahammar	1 round bronze		58 glass, bronze wire	1-2 bronze, Lady with mead-cuo			Bronze key	Bronze strap-end	iron	2 nails, pottery, burnt bone, flint flakes
20	Kasakulle	1		6 glass		1 Clay	Whetstone	Iron needle			Rivet plate, burnt bone, pottery, charcoal
21	Kasakulle	1		16 glass						Iron rod	Slag, burnt bone

No.	Place	Brooch	Armlet/rings	Beads	Pendant	Spindle whorl	Knife/whet stone	Other tool	Mounts	Iron/bronze fragments	Other
20		16		15	3	6	5 (2?/4)	3	3	7	14
Total:		21		25	5	10	11	3 needles, 2 keys, 2 arrows;	4	13	24
32								Total: 3 needles, 3 keys, 2 combs, 1 arrows, 1 awl?			

Table III of categories

Category	350-600	600-800	800-1000
I Burials with 2 artefacts apart from pottery and flint flakes	= 0	22 =1	29 =1
II Burials with only 3-5 artefacts	= 0	24 =1	5, 11, 13, 14, 16, 26, 32 =7
III Burials with more than 5 artefacts	1, 25, 31 =3	12, 15, 17, 19, 23, 28, 30 7	= 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 18, 20, 21, 27 =12
IV Burials including spindle whorls	=0	12, 22, 23, 30 =4	6 (3!), 14, 18, 20, 27, 32 =6
V Burials including remarkable artefacts	1, 25, 31 =3	12, 15, 19, 28 =4	5, 8, 9, 10, 14 =5
VI Burials with knife and/or whetstone	1 =1	15, 19, 22, 23 =4	2, 6, 8, 18, 20 =5
VII Burials with comb	=0	17, 28, 30 =3	=0
VIII Burials with no brooches	1, 25, 31 =3	19, 22, 28 =3	2, 3, 5, 32 = 4
IX Burials with no pottery	25, 31 =2	22 =1	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 13, 14, 16, 18, 20, 21, 26, 29, 32 =17
X Burials with no bones	25 =1	12 =1	3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 14, 16, 18, 26, 27, 29, 32 =12
	3 burials	9 burials	20 burials

Table A. Vendel Period burials, category III.

Note! Most burials fit into more than one category!

Burial no.	Brooch	Pendant	Beads	Armlet	Spindle whorl/tool	Other
17 Kasakulle	3-4	round	35-37	bronze	Knife, comb	Mount, plate, slag and resin etc.
12 Kasakulle	Button-on-bow	Fire-steel-shaped	5+1	Bronze/silver	Slate sw	Chain of double rings
15 Kasakulle	1		4, rock crystal, bronze	silver	Whet stone	key
23 Kasakulle	2		2		Slate sw, knife?&whetstone,	Bronze plate, iron fragment (cauldron?) 8 nails, pottery, slag
30 Kartorp	2		2		Clay sw, comb	Rivets, iron fragments
19 Kasakulle			Bronze wire	bronze	Knife + whet stone, loom weight	Fragments of iron, rivet
28 Johannishus					comb	3 dress pins, 1-2 bone objects, animal tooth, rivet + rivet plate

Table B. Viking Age categories III-I

Category III						
Burial no.	Brooches	Pendant	Beads	Armlet/finger ring	Spindle whorl/tool	Other
9 Hjortahammar	1 round	1-2 + Lady w MC	58		Bronze key	Bronze strap-end, 2 nails, iron fragments, pottery, burnt bone, flint flakes
6 Hjortahammar	2, round silver & oval bronze			2-3 finger rings	3 sw	Knife sheath mount, burnt bone, charcoal
18 Kasakulle	3, oval and equal-armed		2		Clay con sw, whet stone w hole	Bronze ornate plate fragments
7 Hjortahammar	1 oval		6			Burnt bone, charcoal
4 Hjortahammar			6			Iron belt buckle
10 Lilla Vambåsa	1 penannular				Iron key, arrow head	Iron handles, hook, fragments, nails, pottery, flint flakes
8 Hjortahammar	1 penannular		1, bronze wire		Knife, whet stone	Iron barbed object, 6 nails, burnt bones
20 Kasakulle	1 trefoil bronze		6		Con clay sw, needle, whet stone w hole	Rivet plate, burnt bone
21 Kasakulle	1 penannular iron		16			Iron rod, slag, burnt bone, charcoal
27 Hjortsberga	1 equal-armed		3		Con sw of sand stone, iron needle	pottery
3 Hjortahammar		1 round	9-10			
2 Nötanabben		1	5		Whet stone	Burnt bone

Category II						
Burial no.	Brooches	Pendant	Beads	Armlet/finger ring	Spindle whorl/tool	Other
5 Hjortahammar			2	1 silver finger ring		Silver ear-ring and filigree button
11 Lilla Vambåsa	4, equal-armed and oval					
14 Kasakulle	1, oval		?melt		Double-con Ornate sw of clay	Iron handle & mounts, nails
16 Kasakulle	2, equal-armed, trefoil		1			
13 Kasakulle	2 oval					Iron fragments, burnt bone
26 Hjortsberga	1 oval		2		Iron needle/pin	Glass melt
32 Bredåkra				Bronze armlet	Flat Sw of soap stone	Iron fragments, flint flakes
Category I						
29 Bökenäs	2 oval					

