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Vestiges of Roman Cult Religion and Household Deities in the Northern Barbaricum

*A study of statuettes and other anthropomorphic figures from
Barbaricum, Britannia Superior and the Roman heartlands*

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ARK04 Bachelor's Degree in Archaeology, 15 credits

Autumn semester 2020, January 2021

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Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank Lovisa Brännstedt, for all your support, encouragement and patience as well as your guidance.

And also, Fredrik Ekengren, for all your useful information and literature tips regarding Roman influence on Barbaricum.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family and my fellow students at Lund university for your continued support and advice.

Abstract

This text serves as a fresh approach to the study of Roman influence on the Scandinavian region. This is achieved through the medium of various bronze statuettes, both from the Roman Empire itself as well as in the form of locally-produced anthropomorphic figures. The study concentrates on four specific regions of Europe; Italy, southern Britain, Denmark, and southern Sweden. All of these areas maintained some form of connection to the Roman Empire during the Roman Iron Age 0-400 CE, whether directly due to Roman conquest, or as a result of the mass production and monetary wealth of the Roman Empire. Military alliances with the tribal societies of the northern Barbaricum resulted in Celtic mercenaries returning with a multitude of Roman prestige goods. Among these goods were objects associated with the Roman cults, particularly in relation to the concept of private cult worship and domestic religion. By comparing Scandinavia with the province of Britannia Superior; a region famous for its Romano-Celtic civitas and communities, the study is posed to understand this interaction between Roman and “celt”. The imitation of Roman originals by local craftsmen is not a contemporary area of research within Scandinavian archaeology, though this study endeavours to connect their religious symbolism to the more Roman tradition of guardian household deities. Based on the writings of several foregoing scholars, and in combination with the physical archaeological material, this text details and analyses a number of renowned artefacts connected to Iron Age religion and the cults of Roman religion, with the overall intention of understanding their spiritual significance in a new light as well as proposing new discursive practices for the topic of Romanisation in general.

Keywords: Lares, penates, genius, anthropomorphic figures, household deities, domestic religion, cult worship, lararium, romanisation, hybridisation, animism, Romans, Roman cults, Roman Britain, Roman Iron Age, tribal societies, classical art.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Scope

The purpose of this text is to ask new questions related to the study of Roman influence on Scandinavian culture as well to offer perhaps a fresh new insight into the possible existence of fragmented Roman cult worship and domestic religion beyond the Roman frontier. The study will be achieved through the medium of various statuettes and other anthropomorphic figures, both from the Roman homeland of Italy as well as from Britain and Scandinavia, with the ultimate objective of revealing new findings connected to the use of cult deities in more private forms of worship. To be able to trace any possible parallels between the archaeological material, the imported statuettes will be compared with locally-produced Scandinavian bronze figures. The physical archaeological material shall serve as the main focus of this text, as all elements are thoroughly analysed for indications of possible visual and practical similarities between each object, however, a number of digital and printed publications will also be analysed for background information concerning the artefacts involved in this study. The circumstances surrounding the discovery of these objects will also be brought into question in an attempt to understand the geographical pattern of these anthropomorphic figures as well as their role in Roman Iron Age (RIA) society.

1.2 Research problem and background

The Roman Empire has long been a favourite haunt among European archaeologists, with a great deal of works heralding from regions such as Germany and Britain; regions in which an evident connection to the empire already exists (Hansen 1987; Millet 1990). This said, throughout the past century, a number of Scandinavian authors have shown an interest in the topic to varying degrees, particularly within the realms of burial customs and the creation of military alliances between tribal societies and the Roman Empire (Dobson 1936).

Additionally, many interpretations have been proposed over the years with the aim of explaining the existence of Roman import goods, such as luxury Samian pottery and Roman glass present in burials among the elite and high-ranking officials within these tribal societies (Hansen 1987). The concept of Roman influence on the Germanic peoples of the provinces is not a contemporary area of research within the realms of Roman history, though the topic seems to be less researched beyond the borders of the Empire's known limits. This is presumably due to the fact that relatively little Roman archaeological material has been

discovered in Scandinavia, particularly when compared with the ilk of Roman Germany and Britain, but also because the region was never actually part of the Roman Empire. This means that many studies into the presence of Roman archaeological material in Scandinavia seem to be built principally on speculation (Wells 1999) as well as the writings of Roman authors such as *Tacitus*, who wrote about the relationship between the Roman Empire and Barbaricum in his work, *Germania* (Stephenson 1899).

Furthermore, many of the theories expressed in this text are directly related to the primitive formation of urban centres, or “central places”, which is in itself a relatively new topic of research within the region of the northern Barbaricum (Callmer 2007, p. 236). Many of the studies into contact with the Roman Empire are based on Germanic burial customs that demonstrate a relationship between tribal chieftains and Roman military generals, such as the extensively-researched Hoby and Himlingøje burials, from which a number of Roman prestige goods have been excavated. This means that much of the archaeological knowledge of the area is predominantly based on a handful of rare and sporadic finds; often found as elements involved in lavish tomb burials (Roberts 1994, p. 361). It is also important to consider that when researching the situation in Scandinavia during the RIA, one must also understand the region’s geographical proximity to Germania, and that many of the Roman artefacts found in the region likely originated from within the Germanic and Gaulish provinces, and less so from the Roman heartland of Italia itself (Roberts 1994, p. 369).

Regarding the studies that involve Roman statuettes in Scandinavia, the vast majority seem to be heavily focused on such aspects as stylistic similarity and cultural identity (Andersson 2020). One particular area of research within this field that appears to have been less covered is the idea that some aspects of Roman religion could have found their way into Scandinavian-RIA society (Roberts 1994, p. 369). In other words, is it possible that the tribal societies of Scandinavia had some comprehension of the complexity and significance of Roman cult worship? And were these objects regarded as anything more than merely exotic trinkets by elite members of the community; the type that could be used to display and communicate their higher status and ranking? As it is likely that the Romans did indeed receive and maybe even converse with higher-ranking officials from Barbaricum, it could also be likely that they may have been able to comprehend certain aspects of one another’s respective culture. Could this have led to the conception of hybrid-religious beliefs becoming

more commonplace throughout Scandinavian culture during the Late RIA and possibly continuing on into the following periods?

The two principal questions posed by this study are:

- ***What connections can be drawn between locally-produced anthropomorphic figures and Roman statuettes?***
- ***Which forms of evidence exist for the conscious practice of Roman domestic religion in the northern Barbaricum?***

1.3 Theoretical framework

This text is heavily focused on the theoretical concept of *hybridisation*, or “hybridity” as it is sometimes called. In addition to this, the theory of *animism* is also an integral part of the theoretical framework utilised by this study.

Hybridisation is, in essence, the theory of “cultural mixture”; that two cultural processes may be combined to form a new variation of hybrid culture. This theory can be applied to everything from social and religious ideologies, to symbolism and material culture. The theory of hybridisation is particularly popular within anthropology circles, and is similar to, and mostly interchangeable with, “creolisation”, which is the theory that two divergent cultural patterns may be joined to become a new singular culture. Hybridisation is, in a sense, a form of entanglement process that explains the theory of social practice fusion (Stockhammer 2011, p. 43). Theories of hybridisation and creolisation are fast replacing the rather outdated concept of romanisation. One of the principal reasons for this is that the very idea of romanisation removes the freedom of the “Romanised” party, and hybridisation does not. This process of social practice fusion, thus, becomes a more selective process that involves cooperation from both sides. (Webster 2001, p. 210). For this reason, hybridisation functions as an ideal theoretical perspective for demonstrating the existence of Romano-Germanic culture in the northern Barbaricum, as it permits to answer questions relating to ritualistic activity and cult behaviour in a manner where other theories fall short (Stockhammer 2011). This is perhaps one of the key reasons why theories of hybridisation are an integral element of any study involving the marriage of these two coexisting cultures.

Animism can, in the broad sense, be summarised as the theory that inanimate objects can possess properties of a spiritual nature, and, therefore, may be transformed from being merely

soulless objects to those of a deeper religious meaning and significance. However, from a Roman perspective, these objects may be more likened to the Roman belief that the power of gods and goddesses is diffused throughout the natural world, and, therefore, also the material one. It also thought that this belief originates from the Greek world, which has then gradually found its way into the Roman psyche during the later stages of the Empire (Beard, North and Price 1999, p. 2). As this theory is directly connected to the archaeological material, it shall, thus, serve as an important area for any analytical discussions involved in this study.

Domestic religion, as a phenomenon, is not confined to the Roman Empire, as its origins can be traced back thousands of years prior to the conception of Romulus and Remus. Many different civilisations, from the Ancient Egyptians to the Ancient Greeks, collectively took part in their own form of domestic-religious activities. But it is the Romans who are perhaps the most likely culprits for introducing possible domestic religion into the northern Barbaricum. This is due to the fact that during the Early Iron Age, the Romans would have likely been the sole Mediterranean culture to have come into contact with these tribal societies of the north (Bodel 2008). It is for this reason that the study is focused on the cults of Rome, as opposed to the forms adopted by other cultures. For the purpose of this text, domestic religion has not been used *per se* to explain the overall use of the archaeological material found in Scandinavia, but more as a tool for understanding the basic concepts of Roman cult worship in general. The decision to utilise this particular type of Roman behaviour was established in large part due to the nature of the archaeological material itself, as most of the artefacts utilised in this study depict deities that are commonly employed within the “home environment” due to their protective nature, such as to bless meals and other familial events as well as for their use in votive rituals. For the purpose of this study, domestic religion refers to the use of cult worship in a “private” setting. This is because the term “domestic religion” actually refers to the “household” and not the “house” itself. It is important to understand this difference, as the acts involved in Roman domestic religion also took place outside of the home (Flower 2017, p. 33). It is, therefore, not the purpose of this text to attempt to identify all major aspects of Roman domestic religion in the Scandinavian region, as this would not be achievable given the current material available to archaeologists. This study instead seeks to ask whether it is possible that at least some aspects of Roman private cult worship could have been practiced beyond the limits of the Empire.

It is also important to consider that *anthropomorphism* in itself was not a novel concept to Scandinavian people during the RIA, or indeed the rest of Europe; as figures depicting animals and humans have been an active element of our ancient history for thousands of years, originating in the Upper Palaeolithic between 35,000 to 40,000 years ago. The famous *Löwenmensch* figurine (*Lion Man*) found in Germany (Ulmer Museum 2013) is a strong reflection of this phenomenon. It is, thus, solely the connection between anthropomorphism and private cult worship, and, in turn, to the Roman Empire, that poses as one of the principal research problems for this study

1.4 Material and delimitations

The study is concentrated on a number of Iron Age artefacts from the Early and Late RIA that are connected to the religious traditions of each respective culture. The material consists of objects that derive from the Roman Empire itself as well as bronze figures that have been locally produced in Britain and Scandinavia. Aside from the archaeological material, a number of printed and digital publications will be studied and analysed for background information surrounding these various artefacts. The intention of this study is to build upon previous research within the field of Iron Age studies as well as to shed new light on Roman contact with the surrounding world as a whole. The study focuses on several key archaeological sites throughout Europe, such as Pompeii in Italy, Felmingham Hall in Britain, Gudme in Denmark, and Öland and Uppåkra in Sweden, among others. Several sites other than those listed above may also be cited for purposes of imparting background information related to Roman influence, though these places shall not be analysed to any extent in this text. Several factors contributed to the combination of archaeological material contained within this study, as it was important to select a group of objects that either demonstrate or otherwise possess characteristics that can be theoretically linked to domestic religion and private cult worship. The text is solely focused on the aforementioned material; therefore, other typical Roman phenomena shall not be analysed to any great length in this study.

Furthermore, the concept of Gallo-Roman deities is not unique to the confines of Roman Britain, as it is also commonly observed throughout the Roman provinces of both France and Germany. The Germanic and Gaulish provinces have long been considered the foremost contenders for bringing Roman influence to the Scandinavian region. In the province of Limes, for example, many aspects of Roman cult behaviour thrived, such as the use of *lares* and other bronze statuettes depicting both Roman and hybrid deities in daily cult worship

(Kemkes, Willburger 2004). This said, it is not the purpose of this text to identify the original source of Roman material in Scandinavia, but instead to utilise a more familiar example of a country influenced by Roman rule, so that future presumptions can be substantiated regarding the Scandinavian material.

This text is based on a series of printed and digital publications from a variety of authors with similar archaeological backgrounds. The texts vary a great deal in age and comprehension, and, as such, offer a general overview of the historical background. *The Dancing Lares & the Serpent in the Garden* by H. I. Flower, *The Religion of Rome: Volumes 1 and 2* by M. Beard, J. North, and S. Price, and *Household and Family Religion in Antiquity* by J. Bodel and S. Olyan should provide the study with much of the background information regarding domestic religion and private cults within Rome and the provinces. The publications *Antiquities of Roman Britain* by The Trustees of the British Museum and the article *Style and Substance* by E. Durham will be utilised for information connected to the archaeological material from Roman Britain. The catalogue from Malmö Museer, titled *Roman Reflections in Scandinavia*, and the comprehensive Danish publication *Oldtidens Ansigt* by Kjørum. P. O and O. Olsen are the two foremost publications concerning information related to the Scandinavian archaeological material. As well as these, K. Andersson's recent publication *Det förflutnas ansikten*, should contribute to the study with a fresh and more recent account of the connection between the Scandinavian Iron Age and its trade connections with the continent.

Furthermore, this text borrows much of its theory relating to cultural hybridisation from the works of P.W. Stockhammer in his article *Conceptualizing Cultural Hybridization* as well as *Creolizing the Roman Provinces* by J. Webster; and all background information relating to *animism* is based on the interpretations of M. Beard, J. North and S. Price, also contained within *The Religion of Rome: Volumes 1 & 2*. In addition to the aforementioned publications, a handful of other notable works shall be studied and analysed for the purpose of shedding light on the archaeological material featured in this study.

1.5 Methodology

The study will analyse a number of statuettes and anthropomorphic figures as well as a selection of other miscellaneous objects linked to the Roman cults and domestic religion. This will be achieved through the use of previous literary works in order to formulate a new interpretation of the archaeological material. All material will be compared for potential

similarities and differences, and the theoretical perspectives of hybridisation and animism shall serve as the key methods for accomplishing this task, as described in the foregoing chapter *1.5 Theoretical perspectives*. In addition, the study is largely based on theoretical analysis, and therefore, no physical examination of the material culture will be conducted for purpose of this analysis. This is in part due to the COVID-19 pandemic that is currently ongoing during the writing process of this text as well as the geographical distribution of the artefacts deeming any physical analysis unrealistic at this time. In spite of this, the study is expected to uncover new knowledge, and the digital media and literary sources should suffice in answering the aforementioned research problems.

1.6 Source criticism

The study is focused primarily on the archaeological material listed in the ensuing chapter, 2. *Materials and Methods* as well as the literary works described earlier. In combination with these artefacts, a plethora of additional publications will be utilised for the purpose of addressing the research problems. As stated earlier, the example of Roman Britain shall serve as a third comparative subject, which should allow the study to draw a number of key parallels from a closer and more stylistically similar “Celtic” region to Scandinavia than the Italian peninsula (The Trustees of the British Museum 1964; Hansen 1987). Despite this geographical and cultural similarity, there seems to be an extensive divide between the myriad of literary works published on Roman Britain and the devoid lack of comprehensive Scandinavian publications on Roman presence in the Scandinavian region. That said, the issue is becoming a more frequented area of interest in more recent publications, and is a topic of discussion that largely remains open to debate (Andersson 2020, p. 59).

Furthermore, in order to conduct a well-established and balanced study, this text is inspired by a wide and diverse collection of written materials with publication dates from throughout the last century. Implementing such a diverse group of materials should assist the study in being as comprehensive and thorough as possible. The writings of Roman authors, such as *Tacitus* and *Cicero*, among others, will not be thoroughly analysed in this text, though they may be cited; and without noting the importance and research history of these renowned works, the study is not focused on these writings to any great extent. This is in part due to the objective and dubious nature of these works, but primarily because of their lack of information concerning domestic religion and Roman cults connected to the archaeological material found in northern Europe (Stephenson 1899; Bodel 2008). Due to these factors, the

study draws upon more contemporary interpretations regarding the use of household deities in the northern Barbaricum.

2. Presenting the archaeological material

The study utilised a number of statuettes and other significant objects connected to Roman cult worship from several European regions; namely southern Scandinavia, southern Britain and the Roman heartlands of Italy. These objects were analysed with the purpose of explaining and theorising the connection between *cultural hybridisation*, *animism*, and *domestic religion* in the northern Barbaricum. The objects utilised by this study have been organised into two subcategories; Roman statuettes and anthropomorphic figures; i.e., objects that display anthropomorphic qualities, but which cannot be classed as statuettes in the true sense. All study materials shall be detailed in the next section of this text, and are listed as follows;

2.1 Roman domestic religion

This section details archaeological material that fits into the basic description of “objects relating to Roman domestic religion and private cult worship”, as all of these objects share common characteristics, despite their area of origin. The material in this category serves as the principal comparative subject for the purpose of drawing any future conclusions, as it embodies the key characteristics of Roman cult behaviour. Material was studied from three distinct regions; of which all maintained some form of connection to the Roman Empire, either directly, or indirectly. The archaeological material will now be described in more detail, beginning with objects that have been found in the Roman heartlands of southern Italy, and subsequently continuing on to the regions of Britannia Superior and the northern Barbaricum.

2.1.1 A typical Roman lar and lararium

In order to accurately analyse statuettes and anthropomorphic objects from the Roman Empire’s limits and beyond, an integral starting point for any research involves studying material from the Roman interior. Most bronze statuettes depicting *lares* would suitably fit this role, however, one particularly fine example of a Roman *lar* is exhibited at the Mount

Holyoke College Art Museum, Massachusetts, and it is thus this statuette that poses as the principal Roman *lar* for this study.

The statuette is approximately 10 cm tall, and is positioned in the classic standing pose associated with many *lar* figures. The figure is holding a *patera* (an offering bowl) and is also believed to have been holding a *cornucopia* (a prosperity symbol) in its left hand; though this part is now missing, presumably a result of damage. The statuette dates to between the 1st and 2nd centuries CE, is made of bronze, and is believed to have been produced somewhere on the Italian peninsula. This object is a fine visual example of a confirmed *lar* statuette, which possesses several of the characteristics associated with Roman domestic religion in material form (**Fig. 1**) (Flower 2017).



Fig. 1. A Statuette of a standing *lar* holding a *patera* and *cornucopia*. (Shea 2013)

Statuettes of this type would often be placed inside a type of household shrine known as a “lararium”. These *lararia* came in many forms, from a simple wall alcove to far more extravagant designs; much like the famous examples found at the archaeological site of Pompeii. The usual depiction is of two *lares* and a *genius* (the leader of the household, or *paterfamilias* in Latin) in the centre of the image. Snake motifs and images associated with gift offering are also common depictions (see a more detailed description in chapter 3. *Analysis*). These more lavish *lararia* were placed inside atrium shrines such as the one depicted overleaf (**Fig. 2**). Though the *lararia* themselves did not pose as core subjects for this particular text, it is nonetheless important to understand their relation to the various statuettes and votive offerings that were placed within the shrine (Flower 2017, p. 49).



Fig. 2. An exceptional *lararium fresco* from an unspecified wealthy villa in Pompeii. (Sailko 2013)

2.1.2 The Belvedere Altar

The *Lares Augusti* were *lares* that honoured the Emperor Augustus after reforms brought into force around the year 29 CE. The conception of this new brand of *lar* cult resulted in the creation of 265 street shrines across the city of Rome, at the intersection to every *ward* (a type of Roman street zone). The Belvedere Altar itself is a marble altar that depicts four different scenes from this Augustan period. The altar is today housed in the Vatican Museums, Rome, and is a significant example of Roman visual display, as it shows various grand events that played out in front of an eager public Roman audience (Beard, North and Price 2010, pp.184-187). For the purpose of this study, the section of the altar that held the most importance is a scene depicting a consecration. Figures can be seen gifting a number of statuettes connected to the *Lares Augusti* cult to another figure (presumed to be the emperor Augustus). The altar was analysed in this study to highlight the potential idea that bronze statuettes may have been employed as gift offerings through acts of exchange in the northern Barbaricum (**Fig. 3**).

Fig. 3. A section of *The Belvedere Altar* depicting a *consecration scene*. (DAI Rome 2014)

2.2 Roman statuettes abroad

In addition to the archaeological material found in Roman Italy itself, many other statuettes are excavated outside of the heartlands of Italia. This section describes the “true statuettes” that have been studied from the Roman province of Britannia Superior, and also those that have emerged in Denmark and Sweden. A combination of *lares* as well as other forms of statuette were studied for the purpose of comparing traditional Roman household deities with other anthropomorphic figures found in the Scandinavian region.



2.2.1 The Hoard of Felmingham Hall

The Felmingham Hall Hoard is an intriguing collection of Roman artefacts that was uncovered in the town of Felmingham in Norfolk, England, which was part of an area known as Britannia Superior during Roman occupation (The Trustees of the British Museum 1964, p. 1). The set includes a number of objects ranging from pottery to bronze statuettes (**Fig. 4**). The hoard is thought to have been connected to a Romano-British temple building, and is one of the premier surviving examples of a hoard connected to local religion in the area. The concepts of hybridisation and romanisation are topics that has been covered to a far greater degree in Britain, and so, the prospect of using this region as a comparative subject to Scandinavia was an interesting feature of this study. The study focused particularly on the *lar* statuette found in the Felmingham Hoard, as it shares many characteristics with typical Italian *lares* such as the one mentioned in the preceding section (Potter 1997, p. 78).



Fig. 4. *The Felmingham Hoard* in its entirety (left), boasting a number of bronze religious objects, and a bronze *lar* (right), which was a key comparative subject in the study. (The Trustees of the British Museum n.d.)

2.2.2 *The Lar and the Genius on Funen*

Around twenty Roman bronze statuettes have been found in Denmark throughout the last century, and the island of Funen has become a particularly rich area for these artefacts, with by far the largest quantity heralding from this region. The large RIA settlement of Gudme is located on Funen as well as a number of smaller settlements connected with trade to the south. Two statuettes found on Funen have been studied and analysed due to their potential influence on the tribal societies of Denmark; one *lar* statuette from Marslev, and a second statuette thought to depict a *genius* from Skjærup Skov (**Fig. 5**) (Kjærum and Olsen 1990, p. 124). The *genius* statuette is particularly realistic, with its striking and particularly human features. It is also stylised in a rather stereotypical Roman manner, with its trademark toga and iconic pose (Engelhardt 1871, p. 434).

As the only two statuettes from Denmark depicting deities that are primarily connected to Roman domestic cult worship, this pair of objects stood out as perhaps the most credible evidence of deities with domestic-religious attributes in the southern Scandinavian region.



Fig. 5. A pair of statuettes from Denmark. A *lar* from Marslev (left) and a male figure (*genius*) from Skjærup Skov (right). (Fortuna & Ursem 2007)

2.2.3 Statuettes from Uppland and Öland

Though it was not possible to identify a *lar* displaying the usual characteristics; a number of bronze statuettes depicting other forms and deities have been found in a handful of regions throughout Sweden, however, not nearly to the same extent as in Denmark. A pair of such statuettes dating from the Early Iron Age were found in the area of Uppland and on the island of Öland (Malmö Museer 1996, p. 199).

Both the Uppland and Öland statuettes currently reside in the Stockholm History Museum. The Öland statuette of a woman has been interpreted as either a Roman deity, such as Venus and Juno, or possibly a Roman empress; the other, a male figure believed to depict a *genius*, similarly to the Danish statuette from Arreskov Mose (**Fig. 6**). Of the two, only the latter depicts a deity that is usually associated with domestic religion, though both likely inspired the anthropomorphic figures described later in this text. Unfortunately, there is little background information regarding these coveted objects, as they are both “loose finds” with little associated context (Andersson 2020, pp. 53-55). This said, their discovery was

nonetheless important for this study, particularly for the task of tracing a chief source for future influences among native anthropomorphic designs on the island of Öland.



Fig. 6. A pair of Roman statuettes from Sweden. The male (*genius*) figure from Uppland (right), and the female “empress” figure (left). (Olsson 1998 and The Swedish History Museum 2001)

2.3 Anthropomorphism in bronze

This section of the text details the locally-produced anthropomorphic figures involved in this study. All objects featured here are figures that were likely produced by local artisans, and, therefore, may not be classed as import goods. The Scandinavian objects are the sole artefacts in this study believed not to have originated from within the confines of the Roman Empire itself. Additionally, the only archaeological material not to have been produced in Scandinavia, comes in the form of a group of copper-alloy (bronze) figures from Roman Britain. All of the material described hereafter assisted the study in tracing the possible transferal of Roman religious ideas to the Scandinavian region through theories of hybridisation.

2.3.1 The Southbroom deities

This group of copper-alloy figures depict various deities from both Gallo-Roman and Graeco-Roman belief systems (**Fig. 7**). The figures were discovered as part of a hoard in south-west

Britain in the town of Southbroom, Devizes. Similarly, to The Felmingham Hall Hoard, many of the artefacts recovered at Southbroom possessed many characteristics associated with Romano-British symbolism, and may also have originally belonged to a temple collection. The hoard is exceptional, as both classical and provincial deities are depicted. Several of the figures have since been lost since the discovery of the hoard in 1714 (Durham 2014, p. 3). The deities represented by these figures are still debated, though the hoard was originally comprised of several familiar classical deities, such as Mars, Vulcan, and Venus, and a set of figures possessing more local symbolism such as the Romano-Celtic deity, Sucellus (Durham 2014, p. 4). In addition to the major deities, one of the lost figures has been interpreted as a *Genius Paterfamilias*; yet another household deity. The figures were used as a comparative subject for aiding the analysis of the Scandinavian material, both due to their comparable common attributes, as well as the circumstances surrounding their discovery.



Fig. 7. The complete set of surviving bronze statuettes found in *The Southbroom Hoard*. (The Trustees of the British Museum n.d.)

2.3.2 Anthropomorphic figures from Gudme and Öland

A large number of locally-produced bronze figures displaying anthropomorphic forms have been found close to, or within the RIA settlement at Gudme as well as at other sites throughout the Danish islands. The island of Funen has long been interpreted as a cultural and economic trade hub for people of the region, and, as such, many Roman import goods have been discovered during archaeological excavations at the site (Callmer 2011, p. 236). As well as a number of Roman statuettes, many local bronze figures have also been excavated. The Danish objects vary a great deal in shape and size, and range from full-bodied figures to mere

faces and other more abstract shapes (**Fig. 8**). The vast majority of these Danish bronze figures date to the Late RIA and Migration Periods (Malmö Museer 1996, p. 199).

A series of bronze figures have also been found on the island of Öland in Sweden, such as *The Laxeby Man* and the figure from Himmelsberga (**Fig. 9**). These figures share many similarities with their Danish counterparts, such as hair style, clothing, and materials; however, perhaps one key difference is the manner in which they relate to the Roman statuettes found in the same area, with more fluid and less static poses than the Danish figures at Gudme. One of the Öland figures even possesses moveable parts, such as the Himmelsberga figure featured below. A feature shared by many of both the Danish and Swedish figures is the use of facial hair as well as the conscious decision to design the objects in full figure and nude; a characteristic not associated with Nordic art until much later periods in history, though one that was commonly utilised throughout much of Greek and Roman art (Andersson 2020, p. 57).



Fig. 8. Two of the many anthropomorphic figures found in Denmark; a lifelike figure from Bregnebjerg and a more abstract figure from Gudme on Funen (left). (Fortuna & Ursem 2008)

Fig. 9. A pair of anthropomorphic figures from Öland, Sweden. *The Laxeby Man* (left) and a second figure with a bronze band and moveable parts from Himmelsberga (right). (The Swedish History Museum 2001)



2.3.3 *The human face at Uppåkra*

This small and mysterious object is a recently-discovered bronze artefact that was found at Uppåkra in southern Sweden. Similarly, to Gudme; Uppåkra was also a well-established central place during the RIA, and its connection to the Roman Empire is also apparent via the mass of Roman import goods that have been excavated at the site (Callmer 2011, p. 236). The object pictured below (**Fig. 10**) could potentially show the face of a local craftsman, or perhaps even a warrior, as the figure seems to be wearing a helmet in a style resembling military attire of the period. Additionally, from a visual standpoint, the stylistic similarities between the bronze figure from Himmelsberga and this small face are uncanny (Andersson 2020, p. 57).

To date, not much is known about this elusive and almost overlooked object, retrieved from the archaeological site at Uppåkra. It is so small that without the use of a magnifying glass, it is rather difficult to make out its various details and features. What is apparent, however, is that the object shares some stylistic similarities with the aforementioned Scandinavian material, and does not seem to express characteristics that are commonly associated with Roman anthropomorphic designs. As a relatively new find, this object is largely open to interpretation, and was, therefore, a particularly interesting addition to the study of Roman influence and its impact on the northern Barbaricum.



Fig. 10. The mysterious human face on display at the Lund University History Museum (LUHM), as part of the *Barbaricum* exhibition. (Parker 2020)

3. Analysing the archaeological material

After presenting the archaeological material featured in this study, it is now possible to analyse each respective artefact for potential clues indicating signs of religious use within a domestic setting. With the theories of hybridisation and animism as a guide, the material shall be compared and thoughtfully analysed; beginning with background information regarding the roots of domestic religion on Roman soil, before moving on to the lands of Roman Britain, and ultimately ending with the anthropomorphic material produced locally by native tribal societies, both in Britain and in the northern Barbaricum. After analysing the material, the results shall be presented in the subsequent chapter titled 4. *Conclusions and reflections*.

3.1 Tracing the roots: Domestic religion in Italia

Entire bodies of literature already exist that focus solely on the complex aspects of Roman domestic religion and the uses of *lares*, though these areas are not the focus of this particular study. It is instead the intention of this text to provide a new perspective on the nature of “romanisation”, based on the medium of household deities, as presented in the foregoing chapter. This said, however, a certain degree of background information is necessary in order to understand the key concepts of this Roman phenomenon. The next section offers a glimpse into Roman domestic religion in Italia, which provides the reader with a basic understanding of its origins so that any future conclusions can be drawn with some degree of certainty.

The Standing Lar from Roman Italia

The *lares* are first referenced in the works of Roman playwright Maccius Plautus (254-184 BCE), in which they play the part of “familiar figures” who have the responsibility of assuring the continued inheritance and wellbeing of the household over the generations (Flower 2017, p. 31). The term “*lares*” has since become a general term that actually refers to a variety of different household deities; each with their own unique domains, both at home as well as those used in a more public setting as well as during festive events, such as the “neighbourhood *lares*”, or “*Lares Compitales*”. The *Lares Familiares*, however, comprise the deities that “cared for the prosperity and wealth of the household”, which likely included all who resided in the property, whether noble or slave. However, there are also the *penates* (deities attributed to specific members of the household; typically, the leader of the household (*genius*) (Bodel 2008, pp. 248-249). For the purpose of this study, the variations between these deities will not

be analysed in any great detail, although the most common forms of *lar* can be basically categorised as either “dancing” or “standing” *lares* (Flower 2017, p. 49), and of all the various *lar* cults, the *Lares Familiares* were the most common in Imperial Rome (Flower 2017, p. 33).

The principal Italian statuette featured in the study is a traditional “standing” *lar*, with its classic standing pose (**Fig. 1**). The figure seems to be resting its weight on one foot, and is holding a *patera* in its right hand and a *cornucopia* in the left (Flower 2017, plate II). The statuette appears to share many visual similarities with the Roman import material from Britain and Scandinavia, though the Italian *lar* seems to be more intrinsically detailed, and has a more “lifelike” appearance. This could be due to the geographical location, as perhaps its maker was more experienced due to his/her close proximity to Rome itself, resulting on the quality of the end product. The *lar* is also mounted on a marble base with an inscription in Greek, which holds little significance for this study.

A Lararium from Pompeii

All of the aforementioned deities are represented in the form of figures or statuettes, and are often placed in a household shrine, known as a *lararium*. These *lararia* were often lavishly decorated as frescoes, and positioned next to, or near the hearth of the household. The *lararium* was thus a key focal point in the Roman domestic scene, and was an important place for devotion and worship for all members of the Roman household (Beard, North and Price 1999, p. 102). In Roman Germania, the variety of deities worshipped in a *lararium* would have been significantly unlike the material found in the heartlands of Rome, with the discovery of both native and Roman forms apparent (Bodel 2008, pp. 262-263). Armed with this knowledge, it may not be entirely unacceptable that a *lararium* could have been utilised in this manner, and that deities from various different cults could have been simultaneously worshipped in places where recently-conquered tribal societies did not wish to relinquish their traditional beliefs.

It is also important to note that throughout the Roman provinces north of the Alps, the variation in votive offerings far exceeded the traditional group of *lares*, *penates*, and a *genius*, such as seen in the Roman heartlands. Votive statuettes representing ancestors, emperors, heroes, and essentially anything else that the user deemed sufficiently worthy have been attributed to domestic religion (Bodel 2008, p. 258). This reflects the variety and mixed culture of the provinces, where different values gave way to a shift in the relationship people maintained with

private cult worship. Much of the information available on such matters, however, come from Roman written sources, and are, thus, not wholly credible (Bodel 2008, p. 263).

The *lararium* featured in this study is a vivid example of a household shrine from a typical wealthy Roman home (**Fig. 2**). The fresco originally adorned a lavish Roman villa in Pompeii, though the exact location of the fresco is unknown. Unfortunately, not much is known of its context, however, the fresco encompasses many of the characteristics synonymous with *lararium* designs. It is dated to around twenty years prior to the eruption of Vesuvius, and fits into a period of fresco art known as (the fourth style). As with many of the fragile artefacts excavated at the archaeological site of Pompeii, this important fresco has since been transferred to the Naples National Archaeological Museum so it may be protected indoors and away from the elements. The image painted on the fresco shows a pair of dancing *lares* surrounding what can only be assumed as the members of the household. The smaller figure to the immediate right of the central-altar structure is presumably the household *genius*, although another common central depiction is that of *Vesta* (the guardian of the hearth) (Flower 2017, pp. 54-55); a deity often represented in *lararia* associated with the hearth of the household, or Roman businesses such as the *lararium* found inside the House of the Baker in Pompeii (Bodel 2008, pp. 256-257). To the left of the altar is a toga-wearing figure that appears to represent a “cult attendant”, shown blowing on some form of flute-like instrument. A pair of more distant figures represent two additional cult attendants, who seem to be bringing gifts of produce to the occasion, such as a pig, and other gifts related to the sacrificial event. The snake motifs underneath this scene often symbolise the “fertility of the earth” (Flower 2017, pp. 54-55), as well as the “procreative power” of the *genius* and, therefore, the general fertility of the household (Bodel 2008, p. 257). In addition, the *lares* featured in this vivid scene hold a striking resemblance to the *lar* statuettes included in this study; a vivid reminder of the importance of connecting physical material to artistic impressions such as the these.

Naturally, these *lararia* are rarely discovered during archaeological excavations, and the vast majority of recorded examples are located on the Italian peninsula at locations where conditions are ripe for preserving such artefacts, such as Pompeii and the harbour town of Ostia on the outskirts of Rome. The eruption at Pompeii was a particularly freak event, resulting in an exceptional level of preservation rarely observed elsewhere, therefore it is unlikely that *lararia* will be discovered in a comparable condition elsewhere (Bodel 2008, p. 258). Despite this, it seems fair to speculate that shrines may also have existed throughout the provinces. It is more plausible that archaeologists have simply not discovered them outside of the Roman heartlands;

be it due to preservation conditions, or for other undetermined reasons. Perhaps these *lararia* were indeed used extensively within the Roman territories of Gaul and Britannia. It is hard to know for sure without material evidence of *lararia* in these regions, but the known existence of archaeological material connected to Roman domestic religion north of the Alps suggests that at least some rudimentary form of household shrine could have been utilised in a manner similar to that seen in Italia; even if the sole evidence of this act presents itself in the form of a handful of bronze statuette caches (Bodel 2008, p. 258).

The Belvedere Altar: The gift of lares

Upon initial inspection, the Belvedere Altar does not seem to fit the brief of this study, as the marble altar depicts scenes that took place within the confines of the Roman capital, and, therefore, may seem out of place in a study on Roman cultural relations. However, it is the section of the altar that depicts a consecration scene, in which a figure is shown proffering several statuettes to a group of individuals that holds the most prevalence for this study (**Fig. 3**). The foremost interpretation of this event is that the chief figure in the image depicts the Emperor Augustus, and the group of figures receiving the gifts are respective attendants of their own allocated districts, or “wards” (Flower 2017, pp. 279-280). This scene raises several interesting questions to consider. Could this detail show that statuettes depicting deities (including *lares*) may have served as badges of honour, or that they were passed to another in order to spread their spiritual message? Is this a phenomenon that is reserved solely for the visual embodiments of *Lares Augusti*, or is this an event that may have comprised alternate forms of *lar* cult? Who were the key players involved in these official exchanges; were the emperors and high-ranking officials of Roman society permitted exclusively, or were ordinary Romans permitted to partake in such acts of bestowment? As the Augustan reforms took place after 7 CE, and the Roman army did not reach the lands beyond Germania until sometime after this date, it is probable that the brand of domestic religion encountered by the tribal societies of the northern Barbaricum would have likely developed from these latter Roman forms of *lar* cult. It is also important to consider the pluralistic forms of *lar* cult that existed within the Empire itself at that time. For example, it is widely recognised that Romans living in the provinces held different beliefs connected with the worship of cult deities than those expressed by the citizens of Rome itself (Beard, North and Price 2010, p. 337). The concept of the *Lares Compitales* and *Lares Augusti* also suggests the prospect that private cult worship can shapeshift to become a more public act of

admiration. This is an occurrence observed in Rome where bronze statuettes of the *Lars Compitales* type were frequently used as votive offerings in association with the *Compitalia* festival (Flower 2017, p. 160).

The *consecration scene* itself is not the principal focus of this study, as this is not an event that is likely to have taken place in the far reaches of the northern Barbaricum. It is instead the act of conferring the statuettes as a form of gift that changes their materiality; thus, ceasing to be merely private objects reserved solely for private use, but also something that can be gifted to another individual. This is rather significant, as there is some possibility, however small, that *lares* could also have been utilised in this manner throughout the provinces. Tribal chieftains who had participated in Roman wars could have been gifted these coveted statuettes by Roman military generals, with the intention of spreading their significance throughout their respective communities. This said, we can only speculate as to whether the act portrayed in the consecration scene is in fact a genuine occurrence, or merely a visual interpretation of symbolism widely understood by Roman citizens, though harder for the less-trained eye to comprehend.

3.2 Household deities in Britannia Superior

The tribal societies of Roman Britain during the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE are an already well-researched group of people, particularly in relation to hybridisation and the relationship with their Roman conquerors; at least from the perspective of religion and ritualistic activity (Millet 1990). Additionally, there is some evidence that the Romans did not fully compel the tribal societies of southern Britain (Britannia Superior) to relinquish their long-held beliefs and force them to become assimilated into the Roman way of life. There is much speculation surrounding this topic, though from the sources available to archaeologists, it is evident that a certain amount of autonomy was permitted among the native peoples (The Trustees of the British Museum 1964, p. 6). This semi-assimilation seems to have led to a variety of complex “hybrid forms”, encompassing many factors of community life such as religion, food and art. This phenomenon has given rise to a category of objects, simply referred to as “Romano-British” artefacts, and it is these objects that may serve as a clue to how people in RIA Scandinavia could have been influenced, even if this impact was felt to less of an extent than their Celtic cousins on the opposite side of the North Sea (The Trustees of the British Museum 1964).

Secrets of the Felmingham Hall Hoard

The Felmingham Hoard (**Fig. 4**) could be interpreted as a definitive example of *druidism* becoming fused with traditional Roman beliefs and ideologies into a hybrid form. Druidism is itself a broad term for the native religion adopted by the tribal societies of Iron Age Britain prior to Roman occupation (The Trustees of the British Museum 1964, pp. 6-7). According to Woolf (1998, p. 208), the existence of “distinctive cults” throughout the various conquered provinces of the Empire is not particularly hard to believe, as this is a phenomenon that applied to all Roman imperial provinces. As stated earlier, even in Rome itself, many diverse *lar* cults existed; each with their own set of beliefs and domains, therefore, it is no surprise that Rome’s Gaulish and British provinces would also have possessed their own forms of cult religion.

The hoard itself dates to between the 2nd and 3rd centuries, and contains a particularly significant set of bronze objects that were found in a ceramic vessel at Felmingham Hall, Norfolk. The objects are believed to have been owned by a religious official, and were likely employed during religious ceremonies within the context of a Romano-British temple. The hoard consists of a bronze rattle, a small wheel, a *lar*, as well as a number of other objects depicting various deities; though not all are Roman in origin. The wheel, for example, is a motif most commonly associated with the Celtic deity *Taranis*; however, the traditional Roman deities of Jupiter, Helios, and Minerva are also featured (Potter 1997, p. 72). The fact that these objects were all discovered as part of a single hoard is a strong indicator that the artefacts may have had some correlation with one another, and that the user(s) of these artefacts were not necessarily wholly governed by either polytheistic religion.

The bronze *lar* figure featured in the hoard is of most interest to this particular study (**Fig. 4**). The statuette itself is purely Roman in design, with a lack of visible native influences. Much like the traditional *lar* statuette from Italy, the figure is holding two objects connected with domestic religion in either hand; a *rhyton* (a drinking vessel) and a *patera*. It is difficult to establish whether the artefact was locally produced or instead imported from the continent, though the statuette appears to be of a rather high level of craftsmanship and detail. It is acceptable to assume that the person who crafted it was likely well-acquainted with the traditional motifs associated with *lares* (Potter 1997, p. 72). Another interesting aspect of this *lar* figure is its close resemblance to the other bronze objects found in the hoard. When comparing the objects up close it seems that they may even have been forged by the same

craftsperson; perhaps even from the same copper-alloy mould. The apparent mix of pure Roman and Romano-British objects signify some degree of understanding with regard to their complex interactions. There is also a significant possibility that the *lar* figure could have wound up in this collection of objects by utter chance, though when accompanied by several other Roman deities, this seems somewhat unreasonable.

Could these similarities in build quality signify that this *lar* is in fact a locally-produced variant; created by a person with Roman roots, or even a druid involved in the religious practice of some form of Romano-British cult? Whatever the truth of the matter, the possibility that such a bronze figure could have been produced by native hands is certainly a tantalising prospect. Another important aspect to consider is the reality that Christianity is thought to have spread throughout Roman Britain during the 2nd century CE; becoming fully established as an official religion in 312 CE; a time during which the Emperor Constantine was at the helm. This transition to a new state religion would have likely begun to snuff out the remaining attempts to reinitiate any form of traditional belief system (The Trustees of the British Museum 1964, pp. 6-7). Considering this, it is thus important to remember that the hybrid-Pagan beliefs connected to these objects would have been practiced against the backdrop of emergence of the new and powerful religious sect of Christianity, therefore, it is hard to establish with total conviction whether or not these hoards were perceived with a degree of controversy during the latter death throes of Britain under Roman occupation.

3.3 Roman statuettes on Scandinavian soil

Statuettes on the island of Funen

A small number of Roman statuettes have been excavated in Scandinavia, with by far the largest number stemming from Denmark. Some twenty statuettes have been found across the country, with fifteen found on the island of Funen alone (Thrane 1989). These Danish statuettes depict various deities from household names such as Jupiter and Venus, to lesser-known names such as the *lares* featured in this study (Kjærø and Olsson 1990, p. 124). These single-context finds are notoriously difficult to date due to the conditions surrounding their discovery, other than a handful of exceptions such as the “Emperor from Tømmerby”, a Roman-import figure widely interpreted as the first depiction of Jesus ever to arrive on Danish shores (Kjærø and Olsson 1990, p. 126). The vast majority of these bronze

statuettes are found in peat bogs or as part of burial customs; as is the case with most Roman material found throughout the northern Barbaricum. (Dobson 1936, p. 5).

This study is focused on two particular statuettes from this group of eleven bronze finds; namely, the *lar* from Marslev and the *genius* from Skjærup Skov (**Fig. 5**) (Kjærum and Olsson 1990, p. 124). Both sites are located on the island of Funen; an island with deep-rooted links within Iron Age trade and religion, such as the large and important urban centre at Gudme. It is not unthinkable that the bronze statuettes may have been items given in exchange, either through acts such as military service, or through trade to the region. It is known that the Romans were especially interested in the amber resources that Scandinavia had to offer, though much of this link was lost due to the unstable relations between Germanic tribes and the Romans to the south. This ancient trade link was known as “The Amber Route”; a trade route that may explain the existence of so much Roman material in the area (Dobson 1936, pp. 73-74). Whether or not the tribal societies of Denmark conducted their trade deals with the Romans directly, or through the Germanic tribes to the south who had more regular interaction with the Empire, it is probable that at least some form of trade network must have existed in the region during the RIA. Whatever the reason for the presence of this rather extensive collection of Roman statuettes in Denmark, it is clear that among the figures that have been discovered, at least two possess characteristics commonly associated with Roman domestic religion.

The first statuette is a *lar* that was found in Marslev (**Fig 5.**). Perhaps one of the most striking aspects of this object is its stylistic likeness to Italian *lares*, such as the one presented earlier in the text (Blinkenberg 1900, p. 72) (**Fig. 1**). The statuette, like most of the others found in this region, was presumably imported from the Roman-occupied lands to the south, of which possible places of origin include the area of the Rhine Valley in modern-day Germany (Kjærum and Olsson 1990, p. 124) According to Blinkenberg (1900, p. 71), it is not especially relevant that a *lar* could have ended up on the island of Funen, as they were produced in their thousands and disseminated to all corners of the Empire during the RIA. This is largely true, though this theory does not entirely rule out the possibility that the statuette could have been used in some form of private worship. The second statuette from Skjærup Skov has been interpreted as a *genius* representation, and shares many attributes with *genius* depictions found elsewhere throughout the Roman Empire including the bronze statuette found in Uppland, as described in the subsequent section (**Fig. 5**).

Roman inspiration from Uppland and Öland

As well as the material found in southern Scandinavia, a number of statuettes have also been discovered in central Sweden that date to the Early RIA (Malmö Museer 1996, p. 199). These objects are considered “loose finds”, and are, therefore, lacking in any form of archaeological context with regard to background information. To date, one statuette has been found in Uppland, three in Gotland, one in Scania, and two on the island of Öland (Hansen 1987, p. 228). Uppland actually refers to the area immediately north of the Swedish capital of Stockholm, and is a historically rich area, with its notable Iron Age sites such as Gamla Uppsala and Sigtuna, among others. Due to this region’s rich archaeological background, it is not particularly surprising that several Roman statuettes have been recovered from this region.

The first of these Öland statuettes is a female figure of a Roman woman (**Fig. 6**). Since its discovery, the principal interpretations of this object have alluded to the Roman deities of Venus or Juno, however, in more recent analyses, the idea that the figure may in fact depict a Roman “empress” has been theorised. This, incredibly, deems the object as one of the sole depictions of a female subject in all of RIA art in Scandinavia (Andersson 2020, p. 54). The object is almost seductive in appearance, with its lifelike pose and self-assured demeanour. The object imaginably left a rather long-lasting impression on the tribal societies of Scandinavia who came into contact with it. So much so, that there are even indications that this particular statuette may have inspired the creation of certain native forms of “nude” figure found in the same area, such as the *Laxeby Man* (Andersson 2020); an object that shall be analysed to greater detail in the next section of the text.

The object from this region with the most significance related to domestic religion, however, is a male figure from the Uppland area (**Fig. 6**). Similarly, to its Danish counterpart, one of the foremost interpretations of this object alludes to a *genius* depiction (Andersson 2020, p. 53). The statuette does indeed share many attributes with the *genius* from Skjærup Skov, with its characteristic toga and headress features. Furthermore, the pose of each statuette is vastly alike, with the left hand of each figure covered by the fabric of their respective togas. With this in consideration, these statuettes appear to represent two almost identical *genius* depictions; both separated by a vast distance, and in a similar state of preservation. If Öland and the island of Funen were indeed both important urban centres that maintained trading relations with southern Europe and thus the Roman Empire, it seems reasonable that these

genius figures did not end their respective journeys here by pure chance, and that at least some degree of understanding may have been prevalent throughout the community in each of these central places. Conversely, does the fact that both statuettes represent *genius* depictions really exhibit any evidence of domestic religion in these areas, or is their presence a mere coincidence?

3.4 The phenomenon of anthropomorphic figures

Now that the Roman import material has been analysed in more detail, it should be simpler to understand the connection that locally-produced figures may have had to Roman cult worship via the native interpretations of British and Scandinavian RIA patterns. This section constitutes perhaps the most significant part of the study, as it represents an attempt to connect the Roman material with more native craftsmanship, thus, leading to a discussion concerning the possibility of Roman religious traditions finding their way into native hands. It has long been thought that many of these locally-produced bronze figures could be interpreted as direct attempts to “imitate” the Roman material, though this text strives to go one step further, by attempting to connect these objects to something more personal; the prospect of Roman cult traditions spreading to the northern Barbaricum.

The Barbaric figures of Southbroom

As well as the pure Roman material found in Britannia Superior, there also several examples of anthropomorphic figures depicting deities that are more native in form. This set of bronze figures from Devizes, Wiltshire are collectively known as “The Southbroom Hoard” (**Fig. 7**). They are a fascinating group of small copper-alloy figurines that depict various Classical and Romano-British deities. Some of the figures appear to represent more native interpretations of classical deities from the Green and Roman pantheons, whereas others possess characteristics with far more provincial symbolism more commonly associated with the region. According to Durham (2014, p. 3), there is a significant lack of evidence alluding towards the production of bronze figures on a mass scale in Roman Britain, though it seems improbable that a number of the figures may have possibly originated from the continent, as their subjects are far more in line with the deities worshipped in southern Britain at that time.

Of the original set of figures uncovered in the Southbroom Hoard, several pieces have since been lost. The missing figures include a *Genius Paterfamilias* as well as several other deities such as Venus, Bacchus, and Vulcan (Durham 2014, p. 4). One theory, shared by Durham (2014, p. 4), is that the missing pieces may have been purchased by an antiquity collector who was only interested in the hoard's classical figures, and less so in the provincial material.

Could this be why the remaining pieces all share similar motifs? A drawing showing the entire hoard upon its discovery in 1719 survives, from which the differences between classical and Celtic deities can be observed in closer detail (Fig. 11). The *genius* can be seen in the original documentation, pictured alongside the other various deities found in the hoard. The presence of a domestic cult deity in a Romano-British religious hoard further indicates a possible form of hybrid cult behaviour among, at least, the aristocratic slice of Romano-British society.



Fig. 11. A sketch of the various figures that comprise *The Southbroom Hoard*. From this sketch, it is possible to see the variations in attributes and design between the classical and provincial deities. (Durham 2014)

Furthermore, Woolf (1998, p. 207) explains that in the first century AD, the Roman authorities suppressed druidism in the provinces of Germany, France and Britain during their occupation. This potentially means that the tribal societies of Roman Britain would have been under yet more pressure to incorporate their own beliefs into this new reformed system, resulting in the hybrid deities present in this hoard. According to Derks (2010, 232), the tribal societies of northern Europe were particularly selective about the Roman deities they worshipped. They were especially fond of the deities that most closely resembled their own, such as Mars and Hercules. For example, Mars, much like deities of the domestic cult domains, represented the protection of the estate's agriculture and viniculture, and Hercules was associated with the livestock, or the "wandering herdsmen" (Derks 2020, p. 242). With

this in mind, it is no surprise that these deities are often favoured by local Celtic craftsmen, such as the Mars and Hercules figures featured in this hoard.

Durham (2014 p. 18) also highlights the portability of the figures, and that their size and weight could reflect a great deal about their intended use, as well as the frequency at which they were used. This is an interesting concept, as many objects in our modern world are designed to be as portable as possible in order to facilitate our modern lifestyles. Could this have some significance with regard to the personal and private use of these bronze figures?

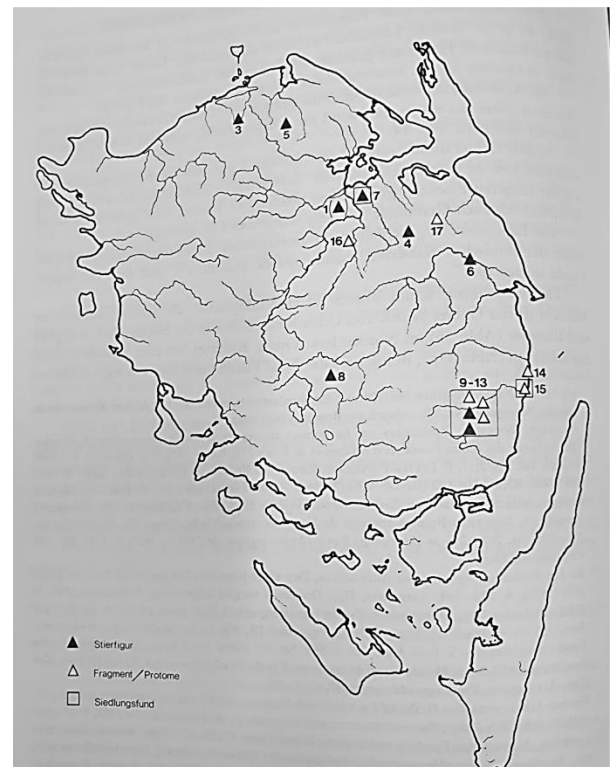
When comparing the Southbroom Hoard with the aforementioned Felmingham Hall Hoard, it is evident that many of the artefacts uncovered from the latter are also small and portable; the type of objects that can effortlessly be transported and carried on one's person at all times. This indicates a more private and domestic use than the larger icons and motifs found in many temple complexes throughout Europe. Of course, the possibility cannot be ruled out that these objects may have been owned by more than one individual, though it is difficult to confirm whether the objects were reserved solely for private use, or whether they were in fact permitted for use in more communal domains. The parallelism between the Southbroom Hoard with that of the Felmingham Hall Hoard is also referenced by Durham (2014, p. 10), as the hoards contain some identical objects, such as in the case of the bronze rattles.

From Gudme to Öland: Cultural exchange through trade and alliance

The existence of anthropomorphic designs that represent the entire human body were practically unheard of in Scandinavia prior to the advent of a handful of isolated examples discovered in regions such as Gudme and Öland. One of the most likely reasons for their conception is due to the far-reaching influence of the Roman Empire. Andersson (2020, p. 52) believes that these societal changes in anthropomorphism are largely a result of inspiration from the Roman material. Both Gudme and Öland were important central places for much of the Iron Age, and this is also reflected in the large quantities of import and export goods that are associated with these sites. According to Thrane (1976, p. 19), the reasons that led to these settlements becoming important trade centres are unknown, though they were nonetheless important places for the production of these small bronze figures.

Although the style of figure encountered varies significantly from region to region, the vast majority of these Danish figures have been found on the island of Funen, particularly within the RIA settlement at Gudme. Could this be a reflection of the many Roman statuettes discovered here? Upon studying a map of the total finds in the region, it is possible to see some correlation between the number of Roman finds and the mass production of locally-produced forms (**Fig. 12**).

Fig. 12. The marked location of all fifteen Roman statuettes recovered from the island of Funen. Five of the statuettes were found near to the area of Gudme (bottom right) where the largest number of local anthropomorphic figures have so far been excavated. (Thrane 1989)



The Danish objects featured in this study herald from two different regions; one from the area of Bregnebjerg, north of Odense, and a second from the RIA settlement at Gudme (**Fig. 8**). Both objects are bronze anthropomorphic figures that have been produced by local hands. The Danish figures are far more abstract and less lifelike than the Roman originals, with disproportionate features and more static poses. It is thought that these Danish bronze figures are attempts to mimic the Roman material, though this does not connote that the deities themselves were imitated, as hitherto it has been particularly difficult to trace any parallels to the Roman material with respect to similarities to the Roman pantheon. In addition, the native deities of Scandinavia during the RIA are especially obscured from archaeological knowledge, meaning that it is very difficult to ascertain which deities are depicted in the bronze figures featured in this study ((Kjærøum and Olsson 1990, p. 138).

Of the significant number of interesting finds retrieved from the island of Öland, Sweden, two objects, above all, are perhaps the most appropriate for this study; *The Laxeby Man* and the “Hercules” figure (**Fig. 9**). *The Laxeby Man* has been interpreted as an imitation of the aforementioned Roman “empress” statuette. This is in large part due to the evidence that tribal societies living in the area during the RIA were not especially known for their depictions of whole-bodied figures; instead, they more commonly depicted human faces and other anthropomorphic designs. Another special aspect of this figure is that it seems to be a

local imitation of a nude sculpture; a feature that may have been copied from the Roman figure of a woman discovered nearby (Andersson 2020, pp. 53-58). As stated earlier, nude figures were not a feature of Nordic art prior to Roman influence, which has caused archaeologists to look in the direction of these Roman statuettes for clues as to where this visual culture may have derived from. According to (Andersson 2020, p. 58), the Himmelsberga figure could be considered as a Nordic answer to the Graeco-Roman god Hercules due to the bronze arm band worn on its right arm, which shares some visual similarities with the lion skin worn by Hercules in Greek mythology. This is a rather interesting comparison, even if it does seem a little far-fetched; as depictions of Hercules, along with Mars, are often found throughout the Germanic and Gaulish provinces where elite mercenaries would likely have come into contact with various motifs representing this particular deity (Derks 1998, p. 232). This said, no statuettes depicting Hercules have hitherto been identified on the island of Öland, deeming this theory difficult to prove, even if the statuette does possess some similarities to symbolism associated with Hercules.

As stated earlier, when examining archaeological material found in Scandinavia during the RIA, it is often wise to draw on inspiration from the Roman provinces of Germania and Gaul. The act of utilising votive statuettes in this manner is not a naturally-occurring phenomenon within pre-Roman patterns; and the pastime itself was a direct result of the fusion between Roman and Gallic culture. All of the statuettes recovered from the central places of Funen and Öland are made of bronze, though in provincial Gaul, wooden and terracotta votive statuettes have also been discovered in places such as certain sites along the Seine river (Woolf 1998, p. 27). Could these materials also have been used within Scandinavian circles? Perhaps the bronze anthropomorphic statuettes found north of Germania were the property of wealthier members of RIA society, whereas the mass-produced versions made from cheaper materials were utilised by a wider community base.

The mysterious face of Uppåkra

This curious object is approximately the size of a small coin, with rough edges and rather crude features (**Fig. 10**). It is difficult to establish whether this small face was originally part of a larger object, such as a storage vessel or some other form of decorative element. As with the preceding anthropomorphic figures, perhaps this piece was once attached to a larger bronze mould, accompanying limbs and a torso. The central distinguishing feature on this

mysterious face comes in the form of a subtle shape that seems to represent a military helmet. The helmet itself is of a design that fits in well with styles known from later periods, such as those commonly associated with the Scandinavian Vendel (550-800 CE) and Viking Periods (800-1050) (Andersson 2020, p. 54, 111), however, it is hard to ascertain with any substantial certainty whether the object is an interpretation of a Roman soldier, or a native equivalent. The object in itself does not necessarily denote use in a domestic religious setting, and with little contextual information with regard its precise area of excavation, it seems unacceptable to contrive any bold interpretations regarding its intended use. It does not seem controversial to comment, however, that Uppåkra, much like Gudme and Öland, was a major cultural hub and central place during the RIA, and that the odds of discovering statuettes or other anthropomorphic figures at this site is not beyond the realms of possibility, particularly in light of its geographical proximity to its sister settlements and the plethora of other Roman goods excavated at the site. In addition, many prestige goods derive from German provinces that are well-known for their mass production centres, such as Samian wares (Terra Sigillata) and Roman glassware (Hansen 1987). This said, of the various Roman bronze statuettes discovered throughout Scandinavia, none have so far been excavated at Uppåkra (Thrane 1976, p. 12). Could this small object be interpreted as a form of precursor to the Gold-foil figures associated with subsequent periods? Or was the object part of a larger statuette-like object such as the ones found at Gudme and on Öland? As a “loose find”, it may be impossible to answer these questions at the present instant, though it seems acceptable to speculate as to its possible use in a cult setting, or within votive rituals.

4. Conclusions and reflections

Upon analysing the material, one question presents itself above all; could the people of RIA Scandinavia have had any genuine understanding of these statuettes' intended use as domestic-religious objects? Perhaps the chieftains of tribal societies were informed of their spiritual properties upon exchange; an idea that could have then be handed down from generation to generation, and, thus, expressed in material form through the locally-produced forms of anthropomorphism, and otherwise flaunted through the lives of the ordinary men and women of tribal societies within the northern Barbaricum. If validated, this expression would reflect the many of the traditions observed in other parts of northern Europe such as the example of Britannia Superior. This said, the stark reality is that no physical household shrines exist in the archaeological record of the northern Barbaricum, and, as such, it is

notoriously difficult to prove the existence of a Roman brand of domestic religion developing in the region. This, however, does not imply that it did not exist at one time. For instance, it is already known that larger, more public statues did exist throughout RIA settlements in Scandinavia, though these objects were primarily made of wood, resulting in them being lost to time (Malmö Museer 1996, p. 197). This reality deems the chances of finding an intact household shrine rather low indeed. Despite this, archaeological material in the form of anthropomorphic bronze statuettes *does* exist, and much of the theories brought forward by this study are based on this actuality. Perhaps these long-disappeared wooden statues were reserved for more public displays of worship and the small bronze statuettes were favoured for religious acts in privacy. This is yet another indicator regarding the true nature of these native anthropomorphic figures. Why was bronze only utilised in this way? In simpler terms, why do archaeologists not find larger statues made of bronze in Scandinavia? The answer to these questions may be traced back to the value of bronze as a material, compared with the vast abundance and relative affordability of wood in the Nordic region (Hansen 1987).

As stated by Wells on the tribes of the provinces (1999, p. 184), “the indigenous Iron Age peoples generally did not portray their deities in human form”. This conveys the possibility that their own *animistic* creations were likely produced in the image of the Roman material. Their own anthropomorphic forms were not merely objects that denoted wealth, rank, and political-standing with the Empire, but also embodiments of the deities they worshipped in material form. As with much of the spiritual world during the RIA, a large degree of archaeological knowledge appears to be built on the foundation of speculation, though it seems reasonable to assume that *animism* was a concept that the pre-Roman tribal societies of Barbaricum possibly did not recognise or comprehend prior to Roman intervention.

Furthermore, Derks (1998, p. 132) states that “a cult place does not require a man-made boundary, cult buildings are not a necessary condition for designating the spot a cult place”. This further highlights the possibility that Scandinavian tribal societies could have indeed worshipped these deities, as archaeologists may never locate preserved and intact household shrines such as the *lararia* of Italia. These alcoves were thus not defining characteristics of domestic religion, but more an additional feature. Could these aspects have something to do with class difference? Perhaps the wealthy elites of both Roman cities such as Pompeii, and central places such as Gudme, Öland, and Uppåkra, could have possessed independent versions of these private shrines in their homes, whereas lower-ranking individuals instead participated in more public affairs outside of the home environment, or perhaps with the use

of makeshift shrines produced from poorer quality materials. By utilising the example of Romano-British cult traditions, this study has been assisted in answering at least some questions related to how this process of cultural transition may have feasibly taken place. Of course, it is perhaps not wise to place these two very different regions into one singular category, as this study has shown that they differ vastly in both history and culture. This said, the similarities in Celtic tradition and expression between the tribal societies of Roman Britain and RIA Scandinavia have assisted this study in demonstrating the historical impact of hybridisation on the traditions and beliefs of tribal societies; and by employing an example of a thoroughly-researched “Romanised” people, a pattern has emerged.

The Romans believed in the protective and nurturing nature of household deities, but did the people of the northern Barbaricum also understand this complex relationship? This study has shown that this understanding could have been more powerful than previously believed, by analysing and comparing material from three separate regions with connections to the Roman Empire. This said, it is not unacceptable to assume that the peoples of Scandinavia would not have understood the full meaning of the Roman material, and it is not the purpose of this study to produce factual evidence that demonstrates an understanding of Roman domestic religion amongst the people of the northern Barbaricum. What is probable, however, is that the tribal societies of this region could have had enough of an understanding pertaining to the material’s intended use, that they were subsequently able to replicate these ideas into a more “familiar” form of cult worship. In other words, the religious beliefs they had already maintained may have been combined with the Roman tradition of utilising statuettes depicting deities in private worship; and that these bronze statuettes may not only have been viewed as prestige goods from a foreign and exotic land, but also as physical conduits to the spiritual world. This idea is not evidence of hybridisation alone; at least not to the extent observed throughout the Roman provinces of Gaul and Britain, though rather more subtle changes in cultural worship traditions.

Based on the material presented in this study, there is a lack of solid proof alluding that the Roman pantheon was integrated into Scandinavian belief, as although there are common characteristics between the Roman statuettes and native anthropomorphic figures, it has not been possible hitherto to present any concrete evidence that shows the anthropomorphic deities sharing any spiritual properties with the Roman deities, such as their intended guardian domains. Aside from a few stylistic similarities, such as the case with *The Laxeby*

Man and the statuette depicting a Roman woman from Öland, there is little evidence that the Roman deities themselves were transferred to the native druidism of Scandinavia; be it in complete or hybrid form. Based on the results of this study, it is more plausible that the locally-produced anthropomorphic figures were in fact representations of more familiar guardian deities; of which we know very little from this period. Furthermore, that which is also apparent, is that in the years following Roman intervention, larger-scale production of these bronze figures was escalated. This is a phenomenon that has been observed at major urban centres such as Gudme and Öland as well as other settlements that maintained trading and military connections with the Roman-occupied lands to the south (Hansen 1987).

The question still largely stands; were the elites in possession of these objects also aware of their use in cult worship? Or were they solely impressed and inspired by the physical beauty of the statuettes' appearance, and thus desired to create their own native styles? The answer to this question is likely closer to the latter. The people of RIA Scandinavia were simply not exposed to the same degree of Roman culture as the peoples of Roman Britain and the Germanic and Gaulish provinces. This essentially means that, although they were impressed by the visual display of Roman culture, they were not directly impacted by it. They were, in a sense, spared from the constraints of "Romanisation"; free to express their own deities in a manner that felt more visceral. According to (Kemkes, Willburger 2004, p. 18), the process by which new religious structures are conceived is not a sudden or transient set of events, but far more tumultuous; a process that requires effort from both sides. Additionally, this transitional process may have advanced and receded several times before finally becoming a balanced set of new traditions and rules. In the words of Derks (1998, p. 241), "communities or groups seldom adopt "foreign" ideas or material culture directly, not even when they are in an asymmetrical relation to the donating party". This affirms the belief that without greater persuasion from the Empire, the natives of the northern Barbaricum would likely not have allowed themselves to become "inordinately" Romanised; especially to such an extent that their own beliefs and traditions were in danger of being eradicated. This does not convey, however, that the anthropomorphic figures were not used as votive offerings, or even as protective deities, but moreover, they were physical embodiments of their own cult beliefs, which were then realised as a result of the inspiration gained from these sparse Roman finds. Whatever reality is adopted, the material culture of the northern Barbaricum was forever changed post-Roman contact, with novel forms and styles such as nude depictions and more lifelike poses contributing to some form of hybrid development.

In reflection, a number of aspects regarding this study could be improved for future study within this particular area of research. With regard to the analysis process, it would have perhaps been more rewarding to conduct a physical examination of the archaeological material in order to identify more subtle variations in design and ornamentation, though the possibility of arranging such an examination was not achievable at this moment in time. With the restricted timeframe and the complicated circumstances surrounding this study apparent, the decision to focus on digital materials was deemed more appropriate due to the theoretical nature of the study. Despite these various setbacks, this text has been formulated as thoroughly and informatively as possible, and a great many interesting results have been concluded from the archaeological material. Lastly, regarding future studies, it would perhaps be wiser to work with less archaeological material and fewer literary sources, as the sheer body of work dedicated to the area of provincial Romanisation, and, indeed, Romans in general, is vast.

The purpose of this study was to explore the possible existence of influence from Roman domestic religion in the northern Barbaricum, through the medium of both Roman import statuettes and native anthropomorphic figures. Considering the archaeological material that exists, this was partly achieved; however, without access to more physical evidence symbolising the active cult worship among tribal societies in Scandinavia, it is not feasible to invoke any unfounded interpretations of the material culture. There are, however, many common qualities between the material found in the heartlands of Italy, Britannia Superior, and the statuettes found in the northern Barbaricum, particularly with regard to the types of deities depicted as well as their shared connection to Roman domestic religion. Due to the lack of Roman statuettes and other cult objects that can be traced to the Empire, it does not seem appropriate to imprudently evince the presence of Roman domestic religion in the northern Barbaricum. This chapter is named as such due to this deficiency in material evidence as well as the need to uncover more artefacts that could provide the topic of discussion with more concrete facts. Nonetheless, this area of research is a particularly interesting one, despite its lack of transparency. There are still many questions to be answered; is it significant that statuettes depicting *lares* and other household deities have been found in the northern Barbaricum? Does the correlation between central place, religious centre, and Roman archaeological find, indicate a more conscious use of the material culture? A process by which the Roman material was ultimately transformed into a medium more familiar to the native populace.

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