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Published in:
Lund Archaeological Review

2007

Link to publication

Citation for published version (APA):
Naum, M. (2007). Early Christians, immigrants and ritualised practice. A case study of the south-eastern Bornholm. *Lund Archaeological Review*, *11-12*(2005-2006), 17-36.

Total number of authors:
1

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Early Christians, immigrants and ritualised practice. A case study of the south-eastern Bornholm.

BY MAGDALENA NAUM

Naum, Magdalena. Early Christians, immigrants and ritualised practice. A case study of the south-eastern Bornholm. Lund Archaeological Review.
In the article funerary rituals observed on early medieval cemeteries of the south-eastern Bornholm are studied and explained from the perspective of *theory of practice*. Rituals, although sharing certain elements with other types of human practices, are viewed as a special kind of actions due to their formality, fixity and their outcomes. It is argued that the analysis of the funerary rituals practiced by the communities of the early medieval Bornholm can, on one hand, inform about non-verbal expression of identity of their members and, on the other hand, enlighten the circumstances and the reaction to the proceeding social and political change that took place on the island in the 1000-1100 AD.
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Death, funeral and ritual practice

Death is one of the most traumatic events and experiences in human life. Vanishing of an individual, family and community member, generates strong emotions that are partly associated with the physical realities of death, i.e. disappearing of the social being and appearance of a lifeless cadaver, and partly with the transcendent states of the decease, the uncertainty of after-life reality, which is beyond what is perceptible to the senses. The death constitutes an important marker or main transition between a physical and a non-physical world, which cannot be left to unconscious instincts and thus have to be defined and controlled through certain actions. All the events that follow death, the process of funeral, coming to terms with loss and dealing with lifeless body are subjects of rituals. These rituals are part of human practice and as such they are to a degree habitual and transmitted without conscious intentions through social learning, through observation and participation. Nonetheless, even if rituals share certain principles with the mundane practices, they are special kind of actions deployed with a particular meaning and characterized by formality, fixity in time and space and by repetition (Bell 1992). They are reserved for particular circumstances requiring an intensive form of communication resting on the enactment of prescribed gestures. Rituals often refer to tradition, i.e. they are based on observation, memory and practical knowledge passed from generation to generation among the members of a community. And yet deployment of tradition, as well as its negligence in the ritual acts, could be strategically chosen and manipulated by particular authorities defined as the experts on ritual (priests, elderly, etc.). Through their position they are empowered to control ritual responses and use them to construct and renegotiate elements of tradition, alter their meaning, deploy memory and forgetfulness.

Rituals are not static and they are subject of manipulation, modification and alteration that might be of conscious decisions caused by, for example, tensions and political or social transformation in the given community. On the other hand the changes in ritualized practices may be of unconscious nature and partly due to a constant interplay with the surrounding always-shifting environment that imposes and demands responses in the form of actions. Actors, however, may not be conscious

about the inventions and changes that they are contributing to. They may be convinced that they are still on the terrain of the old, reproducing and repeating the known and learnt patterns while in reality they produce new ones.

All rituals including funerals are performances with theatre-like aspect where participants overtly follow prescribed procedures, use certain gestures and communicate verbally and tacitly. Theatrical aspect of ritual influences its participants on few different levels. The joint experience of ceremony, sharing the knowledge of appropriate response is undoubtedly creating a sense of a strong bond among those who actively participate, a bond that otherwise, in the mundane reality of daily life might actually be looser. Some argue that indeed belonging defined as "a step beyond membership", solidification into "something potent and secure" and belief - a "step beyond knowledge", are the two primary outcomes of ritual (Marshall 2002:360). In the moment of transition or collective shock such as the death and disappearance of community member individuals are seeking company of those who feel and think the same, they come together and act. This phenomenon of co-presence has a direct and powerful effect on the feeling of belonging, and, as stated by Marshall, causes *deindividuation*, that is the loss of the sense of self. This in turn results in a strong sense of unity with a group. Furthermore, he argues that the state of co-presence in ritual situation may lead to conformity where "people enact behaviors they may not otherwise have, often without even knowing why, or even that they are doing so" (Marshall 2002:362) as well as the fact that they do things they otherwise would not or could not do.

Rituals then, including ceremonies of burial, are practices that are reserved to particular events; they are fixed, formalized and based on tradition and common knowledge of proper handlings and yet, on the other hand they are subject of change that is partly a consequence of always shifting and dynamic surroundings. Rituals can be also a subject of manipulation and alteration and a powerful tool enabling expression of ones beliefs and points of view. Due to their formality based on the common mnemonic knowledge of how to execute rites correctly and due to the fact that situations requiring ritual response lead to co-presence of those who are touched by these situations, one of the most important outcomes of ritual is the sensation of belonging and bonding with the co-participants of the ritual.

Finally, recognition of ritual as a practice has important repercussions for archaeologists. Participants of funerary rituals communicate verbally and tacitly through, amongst other, the use of material objects. These objects accessible for archaeologists deliver only fragmentary information about past handlings, nonetheless the analysis of these objects and their context can offer guidance in interpretation of the ceremonies and the circumstances behind them.

Early medieval cemeteries on Bornholm

There are four known and excavated early medieval cemeteries on Bornholm: in Slamrebjerg (Bodilsker parish), Runegård and Ndr. Grødbygård (both in Åker parish), and in Munkegård (Poulsker parish) (fig.1). With exception of Slamrebjerg and partially Munkegård, that were unearthed in the 19th c, the other sites were investigated in the last 20 years and shortly presented in a series of articles (see Wagnkilde 1999, 2000, 2001, Watt 1985). They are all located in the south-eastern part of Bornholm, in the area that in the early middle ages (possibly already in the Viking Age) formed a sort of administrative, legislative and military unit called in medieval historical sources *Michlingæ herred*, which was made up of 256 farms (Nielsen 1998:13f, fig.6). Given that during the excavations on the above mentioned

four cemeteries graves of about 630 men, women and children were unearthed we have at disposal an access to a rich source of information about the ritual practices of more than a quarter of the total population of early medieval *Michlingæ herred*.

Funerary practices observed on these four cemeteries represent an interesting example of phenomenon often called *transitional stages,* i.e. situation where longevity of pre-Christian tradition meets with new rules introduced by the Church (Boddington 1992, Hadley 2000).

Studies of burial illuminate also differences in ritual behavior between diverse families or other human grouping, which might have had its roots in contemporary social or political conditions or existence of different ideas about how does one should be buried.

Two oldest burial grounds located in Runegård and Slamrebjerg and dated to the 10th c, are family or kin cemeteries with only few burials (27 in Runegård and 6 in Slamrebjerg). In case of Slamrebjerg, the external features of the graves are similar to those recorded on burial grounds of earlier date: all interments were covered by mounds and, similarly to Viking Age custom, they were encircled by stones. Burials in Runegård were ordered into simple rows and spatially prearranged into three separate zones with grouping of children's graves in the middle (fig 2). In both cases further changes in practices are observed: deceased are placed in wooden coffins and lined up with heads towards west.

Two later burial grounds dated to the 11th c – Ndr. Grødbygård and Munkegård (fig. 3) show further progress in adoption of new norms, but interestingly also relatively strong persistence of what it seems to be pre-Christians folk beliefs and traditions. They represent a type of cemetery reflecting, most likely, an early parochial organization on the island, which was based on a unit of ca 20 farms (Wagnkilde 1999:14). Most likely both places (certainly Ndr. Grødbygård) were enclosed (a reflection of a Christian law of *benedictio coemeterii* and *ius funerandi* - a precept to burry in the consecrated ground with funeral rights). In both places about half of the internments are placed in the wooden coffins in which body is arranged in supine position with the head towards west and, as patterned on other early medieval cemeteries in Scandinavia, these graveyards are row-grave cemeteries divided into two zones – northern female and southern male (fig 4).

What is consistent in all four cemeteries and deviating from the norms observed elsewhere in early medieval Scandinavia is that a considerable number of the deceased were buried in clothes and wore ornaments instead of being swaddled in shrouds and that they were given grave gifts. Furthermore, in the case of Ndr. Grødbygård and Munkegård contemporaneous pits and patches filled with charcoal, animal bones, horse teeth and potshards were noticed which might indicate a form of commemoration of the deceased.

Cemeteries' location in the landscape

The early medieval Bornholm cemeteries were located in highly visible terrain: on the hills or slopes in the vicinity of rivers or streams and in close proximity to the contemporary settlement sites. The places chosen for their location were used in prehistoric times; traces of settlement and mortuary sites dating back mainly to the Bronze Age and the Iron Age were observed. The landscape context of burial ground in Ndr. Grødbygård is particularly evocative and interesting. It is positioned between contemporary farms, the earlier used kin cemetery in Runegård and Grødby River, which less than two kilometres away flows into the Baltic Sea. A few hundred meters north of the cemetery the watercourse crosscuts with a road and the place of a

presumable bridge is marked with a runic stone. The area surrounding Runegård and Grødbygård is filled with prehistoric monuments.

Deceased attire and grave gifts

In all recognized early medieval cemeteries on Bornholm a considerable number of deceased wore and were given diverse objects (fig 2, 3 and 5). The percentage of furnished graves varies between 58% in Runegård, 61% in Ndr. Grødbygård 70% in Munkegård and up to 83% in Slamrebjerg (only one person there was buried without grave goods). Anthropological analysis determining sex and age of the buried were conducted only in Grødbygård; in the case of the other three cemeteries bone material was not examined in details and only children graves were successfully recognized on the basis of bone fragility and coffin/burial pit size observations.

Since only a fraction of the deceased was anthropologically determined the information about male and female dress is incomplete. Most of the objects recorded in the male graves fall into category of grave gifts (i.e. objects that were placed with the deceased in the coffin or grave pit). The elements of dress are rather scarce and include belt buckles and single knives attached to a belt, single beads worn as neck ornaments and brooches fastening a type of cloak or shrouds[1]. Women were often wearing beaded necklaces made of glass, silver, amber and clay (other types of beads are scarcer). A few knives were also found attached to their belts along with simple brooches and they decorated their foreheads with beads most likely attached to some form of headbands[2].

The most common grave gifts are tools and in this category knives strongly predominate[3]. It is somewhat striking that majority of knives were given to the deceased and placed by, on or under interred arm, head or chest rather than being worn attached to a belt. This tendency is visible in all cemeteries. A single knife often occurred as the only grave gift or is combined with other objects.

Other commonly found grave gifts include whetstones, coins, iron needles, pots and potshards. These are thus some of the most obvious objects of every day use that might have been regarded as absolutely necessary for the journey and existence in the world of dead and symbolising the most common human needs and activities.

In the older cemeteries (i.e. in Slamrebjerg and Runegård) it is unusual to find more than one grave gift placed by the body, while in both Ndr. Grødbygård and Munkegård it is not so uncommon to find burials where up to four various objects were given to the deceased.

There is no relation between grave gifts and the sex or age of the buried. It is interesting to note however that children were given pots statistically more often than adults.

Choice of objects worn and put with the deceased. Occurrence of Slavic objects

Studies of the objects found in the graves can provide information about the deceased costume and the pattern of grave gifts giving. But these analyses throw also a light on the particularity of the early medieval south-eastern Bornholm communities with regards to some ritual practices including funeral ceremonies (like dressing of the dead) as well as observances following deposition of the body in the grave pit. One of the most visible particularities relates to the occurrence of Slavic objects as a part of the deceased dress as well as to the treatment and deposition of some of the grave gifts (most evidently pottery) in a way finding close parallels with the customs observed in the Western Slavic area[4].

The most common objects that originate from the Slavic region and that were found worn by the buried are silver beads. In Ndr. Grødbygård these beads were recovered from 39 mostly female burials, a single bead was found with a *maturus* man and few beads in sex undetermined graves located in the northern (i.e. female) zone. In Munkegård six silver beads were found in 5 different interments. None of them was registered in Runegård or Slamrebjerg. They were most commonly used as neck decorations but in few cases they were also found by the temples and between skull bones, which could indicate that they were worn as a head ornament.

Other objects given to the interred and associated with Slavic tradition are knives with bronze mounted sheaths. They were found in 11 graves in Ndr. Grødbygård and in two graves in Munkegård.

Besides objects, there are also traces of certain rituals related to the placement and treatment of the grave gifts that are closely reminding of the practices used by the Western Slavs. Pottery, often broken into shards, was found scattered in the grave pits or single shards were placed by the feet or above the head of the deceased. Similarly to customs observed on some of the cemeteries south of the Baltic Sea, miniature forms of ceramics were noticed, as well as the practice of barbarisation of the pottery was observed (i.e. grave pottery was of worse technological and aesthetical standards than ceramics used in the household). Also use of amulets draw attention; in a single child's grave a bronze bell pendant was found hanging on the infant's neck and a single woman was carrying capsular amulet, the so-called *kaptorga*.

In number of graves these objects and phenomena related to Slavic ritual practices coexist with each other.

Human groupings and special and temporal tendencies on the cemeteries

In the earlier studies concerned with the process of Christianisation it is often assumed that there is a clearly visible temporal tendency towards the gradual decrease in the custom of grave gifts giving. This straightforward assumption could be seriously doubted and undermined by the results of analysis of the cemeteries in question, which furthermore leads to an observation that the shift in funerary rituals involving use of material objects was more complex and problematic than it had been earlier thought. Looking at the spatial distribution of the graves, especially allocation of equipped and objectless graves in Ndr.Grødbygård it is striking that the 'empty' graves group in the western extremes of the cemetery. This and other extremes are assumed to be younger than the middle zone of the site, which was most likely a starting point of the graveyard. Hence considering solely this factor one could conclude about temporal evolution of the ritual from custom of grave goods giving till cessation of this custom. However, other observations and analysis conducted on Bornholm cemeteries reveal contrasting and more complicated picture. Generally, interred on the older cemeteries were given less grave gifts than the buried on the younger burial grounds. In the complete excavated cemetery in Ndr. Grødbygård graves are arranged into rows although in a few places this neat arrangement is disturbed and interments overlap and cluster. This clustering and stratigraphical crosscutting allow identifying temporal and spatial similarities and differences in the way the buried were dressed and kitted. Six clusters in the female zone where stratigraphical relations between at least four burials were possible to discern and five clusters in the male zone where stratigraphical relations between at least three interments were detected were chosen for analysis. It appears that only in the case of some of the groupings a gradual decrease of the custom of grave goods giving is possible to notice. This tendency is clearer in the case of the clusters in the northern,

i.e. female zone of the cemetery. However there are also groupings within the female zone that do not show this propensity (amount of grave goods placed with the deceased is more or less constant throughout the time) or prove quite opposite – some of the older graves are 'poorer' than the younger ones. Analysis of the clusters in the male zone showed that either all the men who were buried in the same grouping were given the exact same or very similar grave goods (three clusters) or the men in the stratigraphically younger graves were given more grave goods than those who were buried earlier. None of the analysed clusters showed the tendency of diminishing and ceasing of the custom of grave goods giving. Furthermore, analysing pairs of stratigraphically layered burials one can notice that there is approximately as many younger unequipped graves succeeding older equipped ones as unequipped burials preceding equipped ones. Hence a conclusion can be reached that there is no general tendency to decrease the number of placed grave goods, at least in the cluster of male graves. This propensity is more pronounced in some of the female grave groupings (although not in all of them) where changes in the attire also often occurred. Unfortunately, it is hardly possible to exactly date the individual graves in each cluster and necessary reliance on relative chronology makes it difficult to grasp the pace of changes. The excavator of the cemetery, Hanne Wagnkilde, estimated that Grødbygård was used during about 100 years (Wagnkilde 1999:14), which means that the cemetery could have been used by up to 5-6 generations. How long did different families or groupings keep the rituals in unchanged form and when exactly new forms of expression were introduced is unfortunately difficult to pinpoint with accuracy.

Stratigraphical analyses also revealed another interesting phenomena. In the case of three female groupings there were obvious similarities in the deceased dress and grave gifts or in the principle of choice of goods. In one grouping consisting of five graves there were similarities between a few interments but inconsistencies with the others and in two cluster there were no observable similarities in grave goods pattern. Comparable propensities were noticed in the male zone, where in three clusters the exact the same or similar grave goods were found and in the remaining two no parallels were noticed.

Groupings of another type are visible in the small kin cemetery in Runegård. The graves that contain potshards are clustered in the southern part of cemetery, while the graves with complete pots are laid in the northern part. Children's graves are located in the middle zone of the cemetery (fig 6).

The existence of such clusters and overlapping of interments where buried are dressed and given similar objects raises a question of identity of the deceased and the participants of funeral ceremony. These groupings do not seem to be random and the will to be buried next to each other might have been dictated by the relations based on kin associations or sharing of common identity by the members of these communities. One could also make an assumption that while some families or human groupings were more conservative and continued to place grave gifts and dress their deceased in accordance with once learnt norms, or interpreted Christian ideals in such way that allowed them to proceed with certain rituals, the others might have adopted new customs quicker. This is probably why we are receiving two contrasting pictures from the spatial analysis of Ndr. Grødbygård cemetery. On one hand there are clusters of graves witnessing of unchanged or gradually changing tradition with regards to dress and grave gifts, while on the other hand graves that are located in the extremes of the cemetery, which are most likely the youngest, tend to be less equipped or 'empty'.

Bornholm early medieval cemeteries - combining theory with empirical data

The results of the analysis of the rituals in which the communities of the south-eastern Bornholm engaged, shed light on variety of ritual responses, which were most likely grounded in at least two independent phenomena experienced by these communities. Firstly they reveal some of the circumstances and reactions to the changing political and social landscape, one dimension of which was the process of Christianisation and strengthening hitherto rather weak ties with the Danish realm leading to a shift in social relations. In these settings manipulation of funerary rituals proved to be a powerful tool of tacit communication of legitimate order. Secondly, they inform about migration and the immigrants use of material culture.

Overlapping of these two processes in time and space caused certain social and cultural tensions, which led to redefinition of own identity and shifts in practices. One may expect that in such circumstances previously functioning social and cultural norms, the unquestioned order of things and all that was taken for granted becomes revealed as subjective (Bourdieu 2000). This in turn leads to renegotiation and shift in ritual and quotidian practices.

Christianisation and change in political landscape

Written sources are inconsistent with regard to the official conversion of Bornholm. According to Adam of Bremen, Egino the pious Bishop of Lund, was the one who converted Bornholmers to Christianity. Egino's mission on the island took place sometimes between 1060 and 1070 AD and trusting Adam's words, the bishop convinced the locals to damage their pagan gods statues, build churches and free the numerous slaves that were hold captive on the island (Nielsen 1988:16). But Egino was neither the only nor the first missionary who set his foot on Bornholm. Before him Henry, former bishop of Orkneys and subordinate to English Church, was sent to conduct the missionary duties among the Bornholmers. Adam, who was representing the interests of Archdiocese of Hamburg-Bremen, writes that Henry was 'unchristian' and continues in a bitter tone that the bishop drunk and ate so much that he finally burst (Wagnkilde 1999:9).

It is hard to measure how successful or unsuccessful the undertakings of both missionaries were. It is however possible to observe that on one hand some elements of the Christian ideology were known and to some degree accepted before Egino's assignment. On the other hand, the adherence to traditional beliefs and ignorance of Christian values survived his mission. The latter becomes clear in the deeds of the so-called Blod-Egil. He was a royal bailiff in the times of Canute the Holy reign (1080-86) and famous for his cruelty leader of a group of pirates, threatening the eastern waters of the Baltic Sea. He refused to convert and to refrain from his wicked activities, for which he was put to death by the king.

Written sources give only glimpses of what has happened on the island in the beginnings of the 11th c, these clues however might indicate that this period brought some significant political and social transformations leading to the reorganization of the administrative system (introduction of parochial system) and the increase of new claims of power. The most complete account on this subject given by Adam of Bremen might have been exaggerating about the Bornholmers late meeting with Christianity, nonetheless the chronicler's words are an important indication that from the second half of the 11th c onwards, the process of strengthening ties with the Danish kingdom and the institutionalization of the Church started to be formalized.

Archaeological studies can also contribute to the understanding of this time, and the fullest possibilities in this matter bring a scrutiny of the complex of Runegård

and Grødbygård with their farms, cemeteries, re-use of ancient landscape and new highly visible installations around it. The exact relationship between Runegård and Grødbygård is not certain, however we can assume that the owners of both farms were Christians choosing the strategy of support for the new order. The Runegård holders could afford establishing a cemetery for the farm inhabitants adjoining the settlement. The power of their successors stretched even further; they were able to found a large burial ground, most likely build a church[5], and ordered the inhabitants of neighbouring farms to burry their deceased at the cemetery. The location of Ndr. Grødbygård graveyard is evocative: it is exposed in the landscape, near the crossing of a sailable river with an established land route marked with a runic stone, in the place that has been used almost continuously from early prehistoric times. The conscious choice of this setting might have been a viable form of expression of power for the local elite - the founders of the cemetery, who, as believed by excavators, chose to be buried in a secluded zone of the graveyard (fig 4). It was this type of status manifestation that Christianity could offer and a feasible alternative to lavish burial.

However, the analysis of the burial rituals practiced by the communities using this graveyard expose some other interesting behavior. What is striking is the amount of objects that are found deposited with some of the deceased as well as the fact that the number and variety of grave goods is much higher in the interments made on younger cemeteries (Ndr. Grødbygård and Munkegård) than on the older ones. Some of the deceased interred in Ndr. Grødbygård and Munkegård were offered more than two different grave gifts; some women were buried with various pieces of jewellery of silver and more sporadically of gold and precious stones. Some of these burials are grouped tightly next to each other, which could be an indication of existence of family or other types of bonds, although, on the other hand, burials with exactly the same elements of dress and grave gifts tend to be more spatially diffused.

There could be a banal explanation for the occurrence of at least jewellery and some tools in these graves. They might be deceased's belongings, favourite objects or parts of the costume that he/she or the grieving wished to burry with the body. However, even if they were placed unconsciously and for such prosaic reason, it is hard to imagine that these objects did not evoke memories and associations, and taking into consideration the contemporary tense settings they probably led to ontological questions about selfhood and identity. Therefore, the reason behind diversity of ritual responses must be seek in other circumstances grounded in ideology and social/cultural realities.

Some archaeologists believe that burial rituals were primarily social manipulations and that transformations in funerary display were determined by changes in social structure rather than by religious beliefs, whether 'pagan' or Christian (Hadley 2000:159). Nonetheless, it should be stressed that customary rules and beliefs were important ingredients of ritual. Nor the significance of acceptance of Christianity should be downplayed. It not only caused changes in the ceremonies associated with burial, but it also offered new settings and new sets of symbols through which social status could continue to be uttered. In the same vein, rituals continued to be a channel of expression for those who disagreed with the official line of politics or for those who simply continued to engage in ceremonies they once learned and regarded as the only proper way to deal with bereavement and to commemorate the deceased.

The early medieval Bornholm was a stage of political developments undoubtedly causing some social anxiety, which become mirrored in the human

practices. The rising elite strategically chose to question the functioning norms and practices and aimed at re-establishing arbitrary order through creating of a new set of rules and practices. These in turn were introduced into funerary rituals where superiority of the Christian ceremony was established.

Most likely all or majority of the buried on the discussed cemeteries were considering themselves Christians. However the early Christianity was heterogeneous, which means that a single set of practices did not existed and Christian eschatological ideas could have been interpreted in various ways. It must be bear in mind that the understanding of Christian preaching and material expressions of beliefs might have differed considerably between individuals and groups. In the early phases of conversion, when the church organization was not yet fully established and when priests and church buildings sporadically doted the landscape, the access to the missionaries, as teachers and ritual experts, was probably uneven. By the same token the understanding of Christian eschatology was not universal and one has to consider that contemporary early Christian communities living on Bornholm might have interpreted these rules (what one should do in the circumstances of death and funerals) in various ways. It is also probable that certain ideas and rituals related to Christian ideology were understood and accepted quicker than the others due to their similarities to the pre-Christian ideas or particular evocativeness or ideological/imaginary strength. One of such ideas is the motif of soul journey present in both pre-Christian and Christian traditions. What happens during such journey might have been understood differently; hence the grave goods so frequently found in the burials and placed to accommodate the transition to another world might not necessarily witness about lingering paganism. Instead they might be reflection of interpretation of Christian idea of soul passage (for similar conclusion, see Andersson 2004).

On the other hand, it is also plausible to think that the objects found in the grave and rituals surrounding their choice and placement were result of a different stance and the outcome of different social strategies. Certainly not everybody on the island approved and followed new rules introduced by those who officially ruled. Those who stood in opposition could have aimed at reinstating the previous rituals and practices. In this situation manipulation of rituals took place most likely through tacit articulation of resistance through use of material culture and through making references to the past.

Both these processes then – introduction of new ideology and setting new norms by the elite and the attempts to reinstall the old order by those in opposition, found expression in the ritual practices and manipulation of tradition through deployment of memory and forgetfulness. However each of the groups chose different media to express their attitude. The traditionalist, standing in conscious or unconscious opposition could chose viable and affordable forms of display based on the use of rituals and material culture during funeral ceremonies at home and on the cemetery. This included engagement with multi-staged ceremonies at the cemetery: custom of excessive grave gift-giving, putting objects into the grave filling and participation in commemorating meals. Ritual conduct and selection of objects deposited with the deceased were purposefully appropriated. In many graves, especially female, silver coins and silver beads were found together with other elements of dress and other pieces of grave gifts. Furthermore, in a few other interments exclusive pieces of jewelry were registered, like gild brooch or golden and semi-precious stone beads. The male graves are generally less abundant with objects, however in a few of them silver hoards and single coins were registered and here also

animal bones and horse teeth (placed as a grave gift or cast in the filling) occurred more frequently than in the female burials. The use of silver might have had symbolic meaning for members of the old elite. Artifacts, in this case fragmented coins and silver beads, could evoke memories not only through their form but also through their symbolic, metaphorical and biographical associations with the deceased and his or her past. Fragmented silver was a legal tender circulating between tradesmen. Silver and coins were also materialization of magical luck. Some of the individuals buried in Ndr. Grødbygård might have been the ones who previously participated in the trade thus had access to silver. In the moment of death and funerals mourners could have chosen to refer to this particular (successful) aspects of the deceased past and through the use of material objects wished to guarantee the good fortune in the afterlife. They also aimed at lifting up these facets that mattered to the deceased or to the grieving. In this case too references to the idealized order and to the past rather than to the real and contemporary status quo were made.

The lavish burials and performative, multi-staged ritual ceremonies were most likely aimed at a local audience. These practices were by their very nature temporary, although they still had bonding and empowering effect on their participants. By contrast, the elite could afford and invest in above-ground display involving manipulation of the landscape through establishing of the cemetery adjoining the settlement and most likely founding a church. This form of demonstration being a feasible alternative to the lavish burials had a much durable role to play and might have been aimed at distant peers (Hadley 2000).

Slavic migration

Another phenomenon that the analysis of the Bornholm cemeteries reveals is the particularity in selection of the objects found worn and given to some of the deceased. As mentioned before, a large number of the interred in these cemeteries were decorated with ornaments and given grave gifts. There is a group of burials where the choice of the objects and the way they were treated and placed inside the graves comes somewhat as a surprise. It does not have any clear relation to the earlier funerary rites practiced on Bornholm; it shows instead analogy with the rituals performed by Western Slavs in their home lands south of the Baltic Sea.

On the single-farm cemetery in Runegård there is a clear pattern of grouping of the graves: children interments (with two exception) are placed in the middle of the cemetery, interments where the buried were given pottery shards of the Baltic ware are located in the southern part of the site and other adults' graves (i.e. those who were not given pottery shards) are placed in the northern zone of the burial ground. This zoning and differences in ritual practice at least with regards to the pottery might be an indication of various habitual norms in ritual thus various identities among Runegård inhabitants. Differences in use of pottery in funerary ceremonies are also visible in case of two other cemeteries (Ndr. Grødbygård and Munkegård) although they lack the clear zoning observed in Runegård.

Other elements pointing towards Western Slavic tradition are objects worn or given to the deceased, like knives in bronze mounted sheaths, single finds of amulet pendants, temple rings and silver beads found mainly in the female graves. In some graves these objects co-occur with each other, in other only single finds of this type were deposited. Some of the pieces of jewellery bear clear signs of change of the function: ear-rings beads are found worn on the neck, a temple ring was turned into a brooch, beads that were originally a part of necklaces where found in the head area.

Such ‘incorrect’ use of this jewellery might be a sign of appropriation of the foreign elements into a local dress, although other explanation is also possible.

Elements of foreign material culture can be adopted and implemented. For this reason it is not impossible to think that silver beads became included into the local female dress, especially since they were known on the island, albeit in a different context, for some time. Such adoption or manipulation of material objects could even have had its meaning in demonstrating opposition in the uneasy times. As put forward earlier, in such circumstances these objects could have been placed for their material value (they were made of silver) and associated with trade activities and participation in exchange.

However, on the other hand there might be another explanation for the appearance of these artefacts. The choice of the jewellery might have been a result of conscious decisions of the deceased (who while still alive might have used it) and the participants of the funeral. These objects could have served as a loaded with meaning identity markers as did the ornaments – beaded necklaces, knife sheaths and headband jewellery, which were used in the same way as in the areas they originated from. This last mentioned feature – head decoration is of particular interest. In Ndr. Grødbygård and Munkegård a number of beads that were originally a part of the earrings were found during cleansing of the crania or by the women’s head. The custom of head or ear decoration was not previously recognized in the southern Scandinavia while it was rather common in the Slavic areas, where women commonly wore head ornaments in a form of a headband with temple rings and earrings attached to it. To recognize which bead belongs to a necklace and which to an earring and to use them ‘properly’ requires certain practical knowledge. The same regards earlier mentioned symbolic use of pottery. Could the local inhabitants of the island acquire such knowledge? Could they learn and adopt diverse ways of pottery treatment undoubtedly loaded with symbolical meanings, or could they invent these rituals? Are we witnessing burials of Slavic settlers, or signs of adoption and invention of material culture and funerary rituals, or both? Is it too far stretch to interpret the foreign object as a sign of immigrants in this context?

To regard single examples of foreign material objects as indicators of immigration would be too limited if not completely unacceptable, especially in a society that already adopted some technological and stylistic elements springing from the same foreign tradition[6]. I am aware of possibility of adoption and a giving a new symbolic value to these objects (see the earlier drawn explanation of the occurrence of the silver beads), however I would like to argue that at least some of the graves in which these foreign objects were recorded should be seen as of Slavic immigrants.

As mentioned earlier it is often not only the occurrence of single elements of material culture but whole sets including material objects and the way these were treated and deposited, which, in my opinion, allows such a conclusion.

Nonetheless the rituals and selection of objects given to the deceased is similar but not identical to those practiced in the Western Slavic territory. This could be explained partly by the limited access to certain elements of material culture and the fact that immigrants usually carry a simplified version of the culture (Anthony 1998:26) and partly by the fact that the enactment and proceedings of ritual practices relay on memory, which is reconstructive interpretation of the past (Antze & Lambek 1996). This is especially visible in the case of female silver jewellery. Women in Slavic areas were very rarely kitted with silver beads or earrings and instead temple rings – a form of head decoration - were frequently found worn by the interred. In contrast, on Bornholm the situation is reversed; temple rings occur only in two burials

in Ndr.Grødbygård while beads were worn by about 8% (44 interments) of females in two of the studied cemeteries. The only Western Slavic area where a large number of silver ornaments were recovered from the grave context is the territory of Polabian Serbs (between Elbe, Oder and Saale, today's province of Lausitz in eastern Germany) (Kocka-Krenz 1993: map 15 ff). From the first half of the 10th c onwards this area witnessed increasing German expansion. Confrontations of this sort and situations of co-habitation (forced or willing) might be just these kinds of circumstances when identities were manifested stronger with the use of material culture.

These situations of culture contact lead to realization about other possible choices and other existing patterns or norms thus may lead to recognition of arbitrariness of own values and non-exclusiveness of own set of practices and responses. This in turn may lead to diverse reactions, spanning from assimilation through acceptance of the foreign norms and customs on one hand, to rejection of the foreign norms and conservative maintenance of old routines on the other hand. These diverse reactions recognized undoubtedly the importance of dress and the body in negotiation and transmission of identity. How to move, how to carry the body and how to dress is a subject of socially acquired knowledge. This *body hexis*, using Bourdieu's term, is a central means by which identities become somatically informed and grounded. It is a form of body memory. In the situation of prolonged culture contact, like immigration and co-habitation with members of other group, dress practices are imbued with intentionality because of the social climate of this situation. Like habitual practices and hitherto taken for granted and patently obvious doxic norms also *body hexis* put vis-à-vis the other set of practices is forced to comment and react. All that, which was earlier self evident and unquestioned (because never or rarely put against different pattern) now encounters the different and cannot just ignore it. Reactions might span from the abandonment of previous norms concerning they way of presenting the body to realization that difference in dress can be purposefully used to distinguish self from the others. These strategies are not equally visible in archaeological material. It is much easier to trace immigrants who used traditional dress to communicate self and identity grounded in the past. The silver beads, temple rings, amulets and knives in the mounted sheaths were a visual measure of difference tenaciously employed in ritual situation. Objects then could have been exploit for they specific cultural associations and as such used by the deceased (while still alive) or by mourners to lift up these aspects of self and the group that mattered and were regarded as important to emphasize.

As pointed out earlier in the circumstances of immigration and co-habitation, values, habitual responses and solutions are exposed as partial and one of many possible, which may lead to diverse reactions. Regardless of chosen strategy (assimilation or traditionalism) practices, in this case ritual actions, will most likely deviate from ceremonies observed and socially learned prior to immigration. It is partly due to the fact that performance of the rituals is based on the memory and memories are never simply records of the past but rather sort of interpretative reconstructions. Furthermore, new rituals and ways of expression could have developed and become recognized as proper as societies changed. Changes in conduct of daily and ritual practices might have been to a degree unavoidable due to the difference in settings and different experience of the immigrants and those who were left behind. On the other hand, the ritual ceremonies might have been purposefully steered. In this intentionally or unconsciously modified form, the rituals functioned as long as the participants recognized them as a proper dealing with the trauma. This

recognition of what is proper, the familiarity of actions strengthened the feeling of belonging together. Joint participation had cathartic qualities; not only the emotions of loss were released through the rituals but through the shared knowledge of how to proceed, the feeling of identity among the mourners became stronger and allowed them to go on.

The analysis of the cemeteries builds a ground for consideration of possible changes in ritual behavior of immigrants. In Runegård graves with potshards of Baltic ware, i.e. graves of possible immigrants, are grouped in the southernmost part of the graveyard. This very clear zoning is lacking at the cemetery in Ndr. Grødbygård, although one reason why it might be less apparent is due to the size and character of this cemetery, which was used by several farms. In Grødbygård in the female zone interments where a few Slavic objects or practices were combined with each other tend to be grouped in the center, i.e. in most likely the oldest part of this zone. The graves located towards the extremes of the northern zone show propensity of changes in the dress and the sole element that could be with some certainty associated with immigrants are potshards and maybe pots placed with the deceased. For the same reason it is interesting to study clustered graves with foreign objects and traces of foreign rituals. One such cluster is made up of four female graves located in the central part of the northern zone of the cemetery (graves 426 – 429). In the three overlapping graves women were given almost exact sets of ornaments and gifts consisting of beaded necklaces, including the same type of silver beads in two graves, knives (one in mounted sheath) and coins. In another grouping of five female graves elements of dress and grave gifts differ in every interments, yet in four of them there is at least one trait pointing towards Slavic tradition – temple ring, silver beads, potshards of the Baltic ware. In yet another grouping, which is lacking stratigraphical relation, all women buried next to each other were given knives and beaded necklaces or at least single beads, and one of them was additionally given a pot and two amulets – an animal tooth and capsular pendant called 'kaptorga'.

Some of the above mentioned and other clusters, in the context of which foreign objects and practices were recorded, show rather a static tendency in the choice of objects and their treatment or at least in the principle of these practices, while the others show a propensity of rather quick temporal changes in ceremonies, especially with regards to the dress. If the Slavic silver jewelry was indeed an identity signifier and not an element that became adopted by local women, this change in dress and rituals overall could have been caused by gradual assimilation or/and simply adoption of Christian forms of expression as well as shifting in identity and picturing self.

Conclusions

The studies of ritual or, strictly speaking, material remains of ritual inform about two overlapping processes that to a various degrees influenced the social, political and cultural landscape of the early medieval Bornholm. One was the migration or migrations of Slavic groups that settle down on the island, the other was the strengthening the ties and control over the island by the Danish kingdom, through media of Christianization, new administrative division and shifting constellation of power. Those processes were not without an effect on human practices and led to shifts in conduct of activities. These changes are particularly strongly reflected in ritual behavior. As pointed out earlier rituals share some common traits with other human actions and yet they are special actions partly due to the fact that they are entangled and result of both ideology and social manipulations and partly due to their

formality, fixity and ‘demand’ to be exercised according to the exactly prescribed rules. This knowledge and memory of how to proceed in the situation requiring ritual response and coming together has an important outcome in participants’ feeling of belonging with each other. I argue that this situation was particularly important for the immigrants. They could play out the difference, boost they feeling of identity, help to awake the memories allowing them to do things, which otherwise they might have not been able to do. Memory of the past and trial to reinstate old *doxic* norms might have been a viable choice for some other islanders. I argue that through rituals and manipulation of the material culture references to the past and the idealized state of things were made. Participation in such rituals had an effect not only on the participants but also on on-lookers.

There is also another strategy visible: with the introduction of Christianity and Christian norms into rituals, local elite tried to reinforce a new order. They could afford different media of identity marking and sought references rather to the present than to the past. Introduction of Christianity did not mean unification of ritual responses. The new ideas and rules could have been interpreted variously by different individuals and group and could have been largely influenced by the access to the preaching and social position within community. Hence presence of the grave goods and ornaments gains alternative explanation as it could be associated not with overt resistance but rather with different and simultaneously functioning interpretations of Christian eschatological dogmas and rites. As repeatedly pointed out the funerals and rituals associated with them were steered by religious or ideological beliefs as much as by social networks and position of the deceased and mourners. Hence the message send by the grieving (through engagement in ritual) could have had multiple but concurring meanings (of sort “we are Christians but we also identify ourselves with a particular group”).

One could ask how come that such an array of ritualized expression was possible to pursue without stronger or more defined control of those who tried to introduce new norms. According to Bell ritualization is not a matter of conveying beliefs or imposing a dominant ideology. It is because the ritual symbols and meaning are as a rule undefined, flexible and often unexplainable thus it is hardly possible to instill fixed ideas. “Ritualized practices, of necessity, require the external consent of participants while simultaneously tolerating a fair degree of internal resistance. As such they do not function as an instrument of heavy-handed social control” (Bell 1992:221). She continues that due to the mechanisms of ritualization and its authority ritual ceremonies can effectively build and display a sense of community without erasing the autonomy of individuals or groups (Bell 1992:222) This is another reason why the differences in identities (ethnic, cultural, social, etc) are sharper visible in the material remains of ritual situation. Identities found an easier way of expression in the circumstances requiring ritual response.

The interpretation of ritual responses of the communities of the south-eastern Bornholm sketched above might seem complicated and ambiguous for a reader. I feel, however, that to propose a single and straightforward interpretation of ritual practices that the members of this community engaged with would be unfair if not improper or even impossible. The complexity of the contemporary situation imposed various reactions and strategies that in their turn found the egress in various ritual responses.

Notes

1. Belt buckles were found in four interments, knives in seven, single beads in three and brooch in single burial.
2. Beaded necklaces were found worn by 32 women, knives by 26 women, brooches by 21 women and head decoration were found in seven interments
3. Grodbygård -160 knives, Munkegård - 32 knives, Runegård - 7 knives, Slamrebjerg - 5 knives
4. I.e. territory east of Elbe and west of Vistula and Bug rivers. The closest parallels however are found in the cemeteries of the coastal area (east and west of Oder estuary) and in the area of today's province of Great Poland.
5. Although remains of a church were not recovered during excavations, there is a possibility that church was actually standing on Ndr. Grødbygård cemetery
6. An example is pottery – the Baltic ware, which replaced the hand made local pottery sometime in the beginning of the 11th c.

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