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Interaktion ohne Grenzen

Interaction without borders

Band 1 | Volume 1



# Interaktion ohne Grenzen

Beispiele archäologischer Forschungen am Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts

# Interaction without borders

Exemplary archaeological research at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century

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# One face still lost but another gained

Lars Larsson

Our knowledge of Late Bronze Age mythological representations in the form of plastic depictions in southern Scandinavia is based on a number of figures with human-like form which are combined and supplemented with descriptions in texts from the Mediterranean world and further east, usually of later date. In this research, symbols are combined with figural representations of particular value.

It is problematic to know whether these are all really depictions of divinities and other supernatural beings or if they can be linked with the cult specialists who mediated contacts between everyday life and the supernatural.

This need not mean that there were any clear differences between cult specialists and those who were perceived as leaders of the supernatural world. To be able to establish good contact with the inhabitants of the other world, the cult specialists must have had forms and symbols which ensured that they would be noticed by the supernatural beings. The form given to the human-like depictions and the world of symbols attached to them should therefore reflect what members of Bronze Age society imagined as resembling the beings that populated the supernatural world.

A find that gives valuable links to Bronze Age people's ideas about the representatives of the mythological world is a hoard from period V that was discovered some decades ago at Fogdarp in central Scania, southernmost Sweden. New fragment finds of a face and the continued absence of parts of another face will be considered here.

## The Fogdarp find

To be able to transform steeply sloping pasture land into more gently sloping arable land, terracing was carried out in spring 1972 with the aid of a bulldozer. The slope is a part of a valley at Fogdarp in Scania. When the farmer was subsequently collecting stones he came across a piece of bronze

which he at first thought had been part of a paraffin lamp. Closer inspection of the ground nearby, however, led to the discovery of several more pieces of metal and of a complete object, a bracelet. When the field was later harrowed a number of fragments were recovered. The find was reported to the Historical Museum at the University of Lund, whereupon the author was assigned to investigate the site of the field. The site lies on the upper slopes of a narrow and steep U-shaped valley named Pinedalen (Fig. 1). It was formed during the deglaciation by the action of water from the nearby Lake Ringsjön, one kilometre to the north.

The site was investigated during the following autumn. When the slope was bulldozed, the bronze objects had not only been uncovered but also considerably demolished and spread. Since the earth had been moved in a constant direction down the slope it was possible to limit the area which was presumed to contain bronze objects to about 125 m<sup>2</sup>. Within this area the lowermost parts had been raised by some 0.4 m. In the upper part a small hillock about one metre high had been completely levelled off. Larger bronze pieces were recovered by metal-detecting. Then the loose soil was shovelled up and sifted.

On two occasions, in 1992 and 2013, further earth moving work was done in the area, when loose earth was scraped away in thin layers by machine and then searched with a metal detector. On both occasions the search covered a somewhat larger area than in 1972. The bronze objects were mainly found within a fairly well-marked fan-shaped area where the most destroyed pieces were to be found at the bottom of the bulldozed area. In most cases parts of the same object lay within a small area, but some shattered objects had been spread over a wide area. The farmer remembered that while bulldozing he had torn up a stone with a square shape immediately above the area with the finds. The original position



**Fig. 1** A picture of the find-spot showing the difference in level between the untouched and the terraced slope in the centre of the picture. The row of stones of different sizes marks where the earth moving stopped. The steep slope down to the bottom of Pinedalen and the less steep slope on the opposite side of the valley can be glimpsed between the trees (Photo: Lars Larsson).

of the stone was fixed. The stone was recognized thanks to its square shape at the lower edge of the field. This suggests that there is a connection between the stone and the bronzes.

The pieces of bronze in the lower part of the excavation were found on or just below the surface, which indicates that the bronzes were broken up in the final phases of bulldozing. The square stone at the bottom of the loose soil indicates that it had been moved during the initial phase.

From these observations in the field, the following reconstruction of the site can be made: a pit about one metre deep was dug in a small hollow in the hillside. The bronze objects seemed to have been placed in the pit and then covered with the square stone. Among objects which occurred in pairs, one proved to have been more exposed to patination than the other. The unaffected objects often displayed a shiny, almost golden surface. The objects were probably buried in two groups, one group protecting the other from corrosive substances from the outside. There is nothing to indicate that the bronzes were demolished intentionally before being deposited.

Almost all the objects found were in a fragmentary state. The deposition includes two bronze discs of lurs without any traces of the long, S-shaped tubes. Four bronze phalerae (decoration discs) were found, two large (diameter 21 cm) and two small (about 15 cm) with a rim and a raised, slightly arched upper side. There are four bronze rattles, each consisting of three pear-shaped plates held together by a thick ring. Two semicircular bronze tubes were found, decorated with

human-like figures. There were also two bronze bracelets, one formed of a spirally wound narrow bronze band and the other a broad band, bent almost into a ring with somewhat tapering ends. From each end of the band there is an eye which is the fastening for a simple form of rattle consisting of two slender rings secured by a third of the same size.

#### **The bronze tubes**

The finds and comparative analyses concerning the surrounding world in the same period have already been treated in detail (LARSSON 1975), and therefore the focus here will be on a couple of objects, including newly found fragments, which give us insight into the beliefs of the time. In this context it is the two semicircular tubes that will receive our attention.

The objects consist of hollow tubes. At their apex the tubes are circular in cross section with a diameter of 2.5 cm. At their ends the tubes become flatter. The maximum length is about 15 cm. On the inside of the tubes on either side of the midpoint there are oblong openings with rounded corners.

It has not been possible to refit any of the tubes completely, but large pieces of one (tube I) make reconstruction possible. Equidistant from the midpoint there are two heads (heads I and II) resembling humans (Fig. 2). They are almost identical. The heads are 4 cm high measured from the junction between tube and head. The heads have well-defined anatomical features such as a protruding jaw, mouth, ears, and sunken, centred eye sockets where eyes are indicated by circular protruding parts and marked eyebrows. There is no





Fig. 2 The two semicircular bronze tubes, above tube I and below tube II. Scale c. 1:2 (Photo: Arne Sjöström).

nose but a hook-shaped protuberance between the eyebrows. The crown of the head bears two S-shaped horns, each of which has a spherical bulge from its tip. There is a groove right through the material which runs from the crown down the back of the head. The groove is framed by a ridge running forward to the forehead.

The second tube, tube II, is in a considerably more fragmentary state (Fig. 2). The measurements regarding material size and thickness match those for the other one. This is also true of the size and positioning of the apertures. It has been possible to unite parts of one head with the tube. Evidence that there was a further head on the tube is provided by, among other things, the beginning of the upward curve of the upper side of the tube next to the break.

Of the left head (head III), ears, neck and parts of the mouth remain (Fig. 3). Judging from these details, the size of

the head and the shape of the ears and mouth were roughly the same as for heads I and II. The protruding jaw, however, is not present. At the point where head and tube join there is a ridge which encircles the neck. On the right side of the head the ridge is adjacent to an elongated bulge, the point of which continues somewhat down the back of the tube.

After the first excavation, pieces were found that could be fitted together to form the second head (head IV), including just a part of the front with an eyebrow, an ear and most of the upper part with a coiffure (LARSSON 1975, fig. 9). The ear differs from those of the other heads in that it sticks out more from the side of the head and there are signs of a hole through the lower part of the ear. An intricate coiffure is indicated by scored lines from the forehead towards the back of the neck. These are interrupted by a band consisting of three marked ridges running from ear to ear. The scoring is less dense on



**Fig. 3** The still fragmentary human-like head seen from behind. **Scale c. 2:1** (Photo: Arne Sjöström).

the neck than on the forehead. One of the transverse ridges continues, providing a frame for the rear part of the coiffure.

During both the later metal detector surveys small numbers of fragments of the objects mentioned above were found. The most interesting are two pieces, one found in 1992, the other in 2013, that belong to the head in question. As a result, most of a female face is evident (**Fig. 4a**). The extremely little that we have of the lower part of the face suggests a mouth with closed lips. The eyes are pointed-oval with clearly marked pupils. The eye sockets are more or less almond-shaped. The eyebrows are clearly marked. The same is true of the nose, which appears slightly upturned (**Fig. 4b**). One nostril is marked by a hole. This face has been given a more plastic and human-like form than the two faces on the other tube with their staring eyes with concentric eye sockets and with a bird-like beak instead of a nose. For this head the intention seems to have been to portray a real human face. This head corresponds well in size to the others.

The lower part of the face and the neck are still missing. The fragments of the tube that were right beside the head do not seem to suggest any special attribute on the neck.

Despite intensive searching, no fragments of head III on tube II have been found over and above those discovered at the first excavation. This is frustrating since the other heads on the tubes have a significant number of features which were well known as symbols during the Late Bronze Age.

What is clear is that head III, through its lack of a distinct chin and also through the form of the ears, shows similarities and differences with respect to the twin heads on the other tube and the other head on the same tube.

On the basis of the above observations it may be concluded that the buried material included two semicircular bronze tubes of similar shape and size, adorned with replicas of human-like heads. In the one case the heads were almost identical; in the other the design varied considerably.

#### **Other finds of tubes**

In northern Europe tubes have been found that are very reminiscent of those from Fogdarp. A hoard find at Turup on the island of Funen, Denmark, contains, apart from phalerae and pendant vessels, two bronze tubes (THRANE 1971). A fragment of a semicircular tube was found together with pieces of phalerae and half of a bronze horse's bit with attached clapper plates in a field belonging to Løvejerggaard on the island of Orø in the Roskilde Fjord, Denmark.

At Helleved on the island of Als a tube was recovered as part of a rich hoard find. The tube is somewhat fragmentary but, in keeping with the above, has an extension at the midpoint (THRANE 1971). A hoard find from Stolzenburg, north-eastern Germany, contains two identical semicircular tubes decorated with a circular tube surrounding a profiled peg at the apex of the tube (SPROCKHOFF 1956).

A new find from Bækkedal in northern Jutland consists of a pot buried in a low hill, containing two bridles, jingle plates, buttons and ten phalerae (SARAUW 2015). Of special significance is that the leather bands in the headstall are preserved and have decorated parts. The find also included two yoke mountings furnished with a ring on the highest point of the bow. Several objects such as a belt-box, an oath ring of gold and a small socket axe make up the find, together with



Fig. 4 Thanks to fragments found by three different detector searches it is possible to present significant parts of a female face frontally (a) and in profile (b). Scale c. 2:1 (Photo: Arne Sjöström).

a plastic depiction of a horned animal head with a socket at the other end. This shows certain similarities to a horned mounting from Egemose, Funen, which is thought to have belonged to a wagon (BROHOLM 1946).

A comparison of the decoration of the semicircular tubes from Fogdarp with that of the other tubes reveals large differences but also some similarities. All the tubes have a peg at their highest point except for Bækkedal, which has a ring. The shape of this peg varies. The similarity between the Fogdarp heads and the pegs is accentuated by the fact that on at least some of the other tube decorations there is the possibility of attaching organic material in holes as adornment, which was probably the case for the horned heads on tube I.

#### The function of the semicircular tubes

The most likely explanation is that the tubes were used as yoke mountings. As yoke decorations they would also have had a practical function of holding the reins, which was necessary in order to keep the horse's head high and straight.

If the yoke mountings and other finds were intended for holding the reins together, as suggested by other similar objects, then a formation resembling a cavity, at least between the two horned heads, may have had this function for the harness. It is more likely, however, that this was merely decoration on the yokes.

It is reasonable to suppose that the wooden base, for example the yoke, had pegs cut into it which corresponded to the holes in the tube. The hypothesis that there were wagons in northern Europe drawn by horses with richly decorated harnesses is not new. O. MONTELIUS (1887) was thinking along

these lines when he published the material from the Eskelhem parsonage. Objects in the form of bronze mountings considered to have belonged to wagons have been found in Danish hoards as well as graves (THRANE 1984). It is not possible to tell from these wagon-part finds whether the wagons had two or four wheels. In this connection it should be mentioned that the closest stone engraving with respect to the Fogdarp find, that at Frännarp, north-eastern Scania, contains only four-wheeled wagons, which in several cases are portrayed in great detail (COLES 2002). The wagon as a utility object was not unknown when the new impulses began to flow in from the south during period IV, from central Europe.

Judging by the combination of objects, the use of horse decorations in the area around the south Baltic reached a peak during period V and ceased completely by the transition to period VI. During this period, however, the number of horse decorations reached a maximum in central Sweden and Gotland.

#### Depictions of gods and cult specialists

When looking for material similar to the heads on tube I, two finds in particular spring to mind: the helmets from Viksø (THRANE 1975) and the human figures from Grevensvænge, both on the island of Zealand (DJUPEDAL/BROHOLM 1952). The Viksø helmets, found standing on a plank of wood in a bog, have several decorative details in common with the Fogdarp heads, for example a hook on the forehead, horns with swellings near the points, eyebrows, and eye markings. The finds from Grevensvænge, of which a small number of pieces are preserved, contained two figures both of which



wore horned helmets. The horns are of the same type as the Viksø helmets. In each of the three finds the heads and the arrangement of their decorative details are different.

The heads on tube I, with their absence of noses and with the addition of the bird-like beaks, mark a deviation from a human figure. This could have been a depiction of a human wearing a helmet resembling those from Viksø, but if so the beak would have been much higher up than at eye level and a nose would have been represented. The figures from Grevensvænge show precisely this, with the helmet placed on a human head with a clearly depicted nose. The heads here are more like the Viksø helmets, which have marks for eyes and a beak.

The figures from Grevensvænge seem to represent cult specialists, while the heads from Fogdarp more likely depict divinities, in this case the twin gods that are also seen in rock carvings. It is said to be based on the conception of a double god (KRISTIANSEN 1999; VANDKILDE 2013).

On the basis of rich comparative material from throughout the Bronze Age, the shape of the ridge which partly frames the groove on heads I and II may be interpreted as depicting an axe. The axe as a symbol seems to have been of great significance and is often to be seen as an integral part of the decoration. The Grevensvænge find, as well as representations on rocks and on bronze objects, shows the combination of horned helmet and axe. From periods V and VI there are finds of so-called processional axes from Galstad (SjÖGREN 2008). As with the helmets from Viksø, these must have had a purely symbolic significance; the material is too thin for them to have been part of a warrior's equipment.

There are human-looking depictions such as the finds from Grevensvænge and Fårdal (KJÆR 1927) as well as those represented on knife handles from Itzehoe, Horne and Simris (ENGELHARDT 1871; MONTELIUS 1917; GLOB 1969) which may help to explain any lack of clarity, above all concerning the fragmentary heads on tube II. One of these clearly marked female figures shows markings of a coiffure. Some have pierced ears from which small rings hang. On the grounds of these parallels it may be assumed that head IV has intentional female features.

However, there are no parallels to the combination of neck ornament and bulge as in the case of head III. The strange design of the neck ornament on head III may possibly be interpreted as a snake placed around the neck, the swelling thus denoting the snake's head and tail. Combinations of humans and snake-like figures are not uncommon both in plastic form and as engravings on rocks and on bronze objects (KAUL 1998). The role of snakes in Late Bronze Age mythology is evident from grave finds, plastic depictions and in carvings on both bronzes and rocks (KAUL 1998; VARBERG 2015).

The snake from Fårdal has usually been combined with the kneeling female-like figure in the same find. This figure and those from the find from Grevensvænge, for example,

have neck decoration but they are shaped like rings and not, as in the Fogdarp find, with a figure of a snake. Here we see a direct combination of an important symbol with a human-like figure.

Not all the female figures have been given eye adornments (e.g. Fårdal and Grevensvænge). On the other hand, there are examples of coiffures of a special structure on the figure in an acrobatic stance, and probably on the standing female figure on the same find from Grevensvænge. This female head can therefore be perceived as an individual who does not belong to the gods but is practising religious acts of significance for contacts between this world and the supernatural.

It is thus not possible to identify any clear symbolic representation on head IV. The earrings and the well-made coiffure are elements found in upper-class graves.

It is clearly documented (DJUPEDAL/BROHOLM 1952) that there were originally two axe bearers, with horned helmets, on one of the stands from Grevensvænge, but we do not know what the other figure looked like except that it was a woman with a long dress. Just because one of the stands had two similar figures does not mean that, like the Fogdarp find, the other figure must have been a double depiction.

The statuettes mentioned have some sort of means of attachment pegs or sockets. A common suggestion for reconstruction, on the basis of rock engravings, is to place these figures in a miniature boat. The Fogdarp heads might be proof that miniature forms can also occur in a situation without miniature forms in general. On the basis of the Fogdarp find, one wonders whether the other miniature objects may have occurred in similar connections as mountings on wagons or yokes.

### Male and female

Of the 33 known bronze figures from the Scandinavian Bronze Age, 21 are of female character (VARBERG 2013). Of the eleven male depictions, eight are pairs of twins and may thus have been depictions of twin gods (KRISTIANSEN 1999).

An analysis of deposits of horse gear in northern Europe shows that the majority contain objects associated with a social practice that included women (VON BRUNN 1980). This also applies to southern Scandinavia (VARBERG 2013). During the Early Bronze Age, equestrian equipment is associated with the male sphere, but there seems to have been a change at the transition to the Late Bronze Age. Comparisons with central and southern Europe show a female divinity with a clear relation to horses. This goddess, moreover, has the snake as another attribute. This link between a female divinity and the horse seems to cease to exist at the start of the Iron Age.

The hoard from Fogdarp has both female and male attributes. The two arm ornaments should be perceived as female jewellery. The two heads on one of the yoke mountings are male markers. It is uncertain whether the bell discs of lurs have a gender-indicating symbolism. In rock carvings it is

men who blow this instrument. The fact that only the discs are included may have weakened the male correlation. On the other hand, it may be the case that it was not possible to deposit the bulky parts of the lur in the limited space for the hoard. The male connotations thus remain.

In this connection the attributes of head III are very interesting. The parts of the head that have been found indicate both female and male relations. The snake around the neck hints at a female connection while the shape of the ears indicates a male.

Of special interest when it comes to identifying the sex of the human-like heads is the find combination as regards not only the objects from Fogdarp but also those from similar deposits. There is hardly any doubt that the two bracelets can be classed as female ornaments. In the majority of northern European hoards with comparable objects for two draught animals, the combination with female ornaments is most common. For example, in the new deposit from Bækkedal it is only the socket axe that can be perceived as a typically male tool, whereas several female ornaments are included in the find (SARAUW 2015).

### Chorological aspects

An area within a radius of 100 km from Fogdarp includes several important Scandinavian finds, which clearly suggests that the site lies within the central Nordic cultural region. However, this is not the whole truth. The map (Fig. 5) includes all the Scanian hoards from the Late Bronze Age. These show a relatively even chronological distribution over the last three periods. The majority of the hoards are located alongside rivers and beside lakes within 20 km of the coast. A few hoards have been found inland in northern Scania but no hoards in the Ringsjön area. Pollen analysis shows that the countryside became open towards the end of the Bronze Age (BERGLUND 1991). It is possible that it is in a context like this, when the economic situation improves and the area becomes more attractive for craftsmen and traders, that we can place the hoard from Fogdarp. A mineralogical examination has shown that the preserved remains of the clay core of head IV correspond to the clay schist which is exposed near the find site (HULTHÉN 1975). Clay of this schist type occurs in the rock in a diagonal stretch across Scania from north-west to south-east. With the exception of Bornholm this schist occurs in Denmark only in loose blocks. This ought to be a strong indication that the semicircular tubes were local products and not imported from Zealand where prototypes of the tubes are to be found.

In certain cases a find-spot can provide hints about where the ceremony was performed in which the deposited objects were used. For example, the hoard from Brøndumgård in northern Jutland was found at the edge of a bog surrounded by a distinct rise, forming a natural theatre suitable for worship and the performance of rituals (VARBERG 2005; 2013). The previously mentioned objects with phalerae and

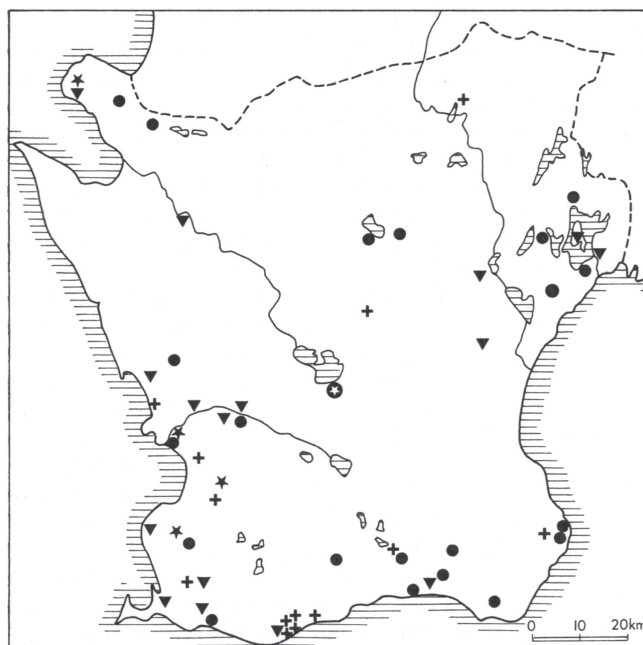


Fig. 5 Hoards from the Late Bronze Age in Scania, southernmost Sweden. Here we see that the Fogdarp find, marked with a large solid circle, is isolated in central Scania. Legend: triangles: period IV; solid circles: period V; crosses: period VI; stars: finds of lurs (from LARSSON 1975).

yoke mountings from Bækkedal in northern Jutland were deposited close to a deep, narrow valley with several hoard finds nearby (SARAUW 2015, fig. 1).

The find-spot in Fogdarp is in an unusual location with a steep slope down to the bottom of Pinedalen, while the other side of the valley a couple of hundred metres away rises more gently. This form of the valley sides creates a natural arena (Fig. 1). The place may have been eminently suitable for public activities on the steeper side of the valley which could have been observed by a large group of participants on the opposite side of the valley.

On a small rise a couple of hundred metres south-west of the find-spot, a tradition records that this was the place of execution in the district and possibly also the site of the assembly and court. Several springs, moreover, rise on either side of Pinedalen, which may have been significant for the place of the ceremony.

No ancient monuments from the Late Bronze Age are known in the locality. To gain better insight into the local connections of the Fogdarp find, surveys have been started to find indications of settlement sites which can be chronologically linked with this find. This survey is difficult because the fields are only accessible for surface survey during short periods between harvest and sowing. No evidence has yet been found of any certain sites from the Late Bronze Age in the vicinity of the hoard.



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