

Encounters | Materialities | Confrontations
Archaeologies of Social Space and Interaction

Edited by

Per Cornell and Fredrik Fahlander



CAMBRIDGE SCHOLARS PRESS

Encounters | Materialities | Confrontations: Archaeologies of Social Space and Interaction, edited by Per Cornell and Fredrik Fahlander

This book first published 2007 by

Cambridge Scholars Press

15 Angerton Gardens, Newcastle, NE5 2JA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN 1-84718-085-X

CHAPTER TWELVE

GOTLANDIC PICTURE STONES, HYBRIDITY AND MATERIAL CULTURE

ALEXANDER ANDREEFF

The archaeological material from the Late Iron Age and Early Medieval Period in the Baltic Sea region is rich and varied, and has increasingly been taken into consideration in discussions about social encounters and interactions in the area. The aim of this paper is to illustrate the possibilities to use methodological tools developed within postcolonial theory in an investigation about the relations between materiality, social encounters, and ideological change in the Baltic region. I will demonstrate how the Gotlandic picture stones can be viewed as expressions of ideological hybridity.

This paper shall be seen as a preliminary case study, which will be elaborated further in my future work. My PhD-research deals with the impact of the Latin Western European influences on social organisation and ideology. Important perspectives derive from postcolonial, gender, and queer theoretical thought. Concepts of personal and collective social identities, as gender, and ethnicity will be analysed through the picture stone tradition, other artefacts, and the layout of settlements. The geographical frame of study is the Late Iron Age and Early Medieval (6th-13th cent. AD) societies in the Baltic Sea region, particularly the Swedish province of Gotland.

The Baltic laboratory

The Island of Gotland and the Eastern Baltic (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, see fig. 1) are promising areas for archaeological studies of the workings of Bhabha's concepts of third space and hybridity. Previous research has often emphasised the unique and original character of the Scandinavian and Baltic Late Iron Age societies, but on the contrary the nature of the ideology and material culture were shaped through the encounters and contacts with the Continent.

During the last decade scholars within Baltic historical and archaeological studies have put forward innovative research to put the different local studies into a larger European context. One of the more recent research projects was the international and interdisciplinary CCC-project (Culture Clash or Compromise), that engaged scholars at several universities around the shores of the Baltic Sea. The project was launched 1998 by the historian Nils Blomkvist, Gotland University (Blomkvist 2005 et al).

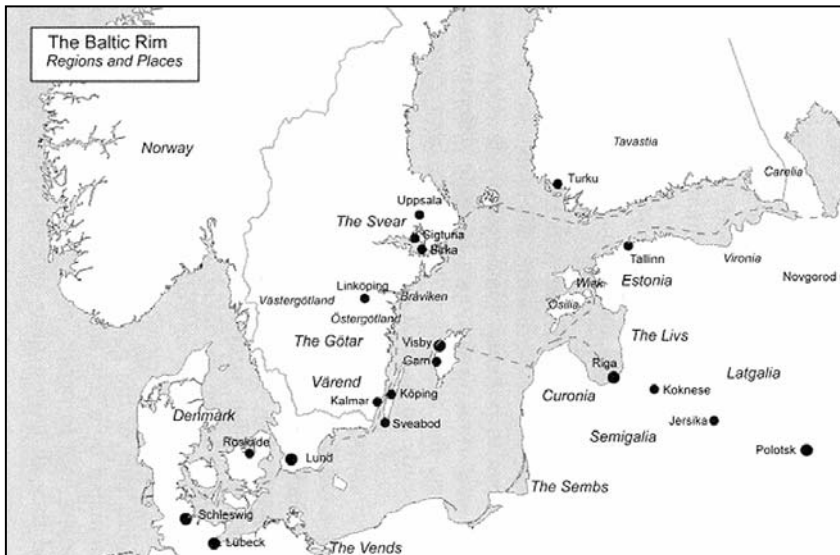


Figure 1: The Baltic Rim. After Blomkvist 2005.

The early Baltic societies can be viewed as a laboratory; they present a kaleidoscope of social forms. A variety of social structures emerge, that are very promising for analyses of social interaction at many levels, including complex patterns of power relations. Archaeological and written sources suggest that the groups manifested their differences through their socio-cultural identity. In this rather limited geographical area groups with diverse languages, economy, and ideology, lived side by side, sometimes peacefully, but more often in conflict. It must be remarked that the individual groups never were any homogenous entities in any sense; all societies are in constant change and interact with the external world.

The social organisation and ideological patterns of the indigenous Baltic societies differed from the Latin Western European norm. The outlook and material culture changed in the Baltic arena during the Late Iron Age and Early

Middle Ages. Which social strategies did the different groups develop through the encounters; adaptation, confrontation, retreat or others? These social and cultural changes lay not only in the outer political reality but had a deep impact on the society. Cultural encounters many times also had effects that were unexpected, activating and creating new sets logics and negotiations effecting social practices, and relations to materialities (see Fahlander, chapter 2 in this volume).

The impact of Continental and Christian influences had diverse consequences in different areas in the Baltic. The Scandinavian societies slowly integrated the continental ideas and material culture. The situation in the Eastern Baltic was much more complex, the development was dominated by crusading and conquest, which changed the societies in radical and profound ways. Some groups either assimilated or acculturated with the conquerors, or made them their allied (Blomkvist 2005). But colonial situations regardless of time and space show that often the colonial control was superficial. Traditional power structures within the societies continued to prevail. As long the colonial powers had the nominal prerogative, the indigenous elite were allowed to keep their control. Varying strategies of silent resistance were usually operating (Gosden 2004).

Ideological, political and cultural changes created reactions and new adaptations. Earlier research within this field has generally concentrated on the Large History, the great political changes and the wars. To subdue the colonised the coloniser often targeted the core of the indigenous society, the social relations on the micro level. But that is also the most complex target, to change what constitutes the diverse systems of lineage, inheritance, and gender relations. When these values are under threat the bloodiest conflicts have exploded. Many of the groups succeeded to keep or create an own socio-cultural identity through out the centuries until this date, despite that they have been under external power and pressure since the Middle Ages. How is that possible? One answer could be that indigenous social structures (i.e. household, family and kinship systems) were kept and strengthen (Blomkvist 2005). Strong inner social structures with material manifestations kept and sustained the group identity, despite foreign influences. Old traditions were often integrated, but got new Christian cloth, producing new social structures and materialities. Outer pressure helped to preserve indigenous cultural traits, but also reshaped them to something new.

To summarise, some working hypotheses I shall investigate in my future studies: Did the forces behind Continental influences and Christianisation try to subdue the different Baltic groups by targeting their social structures? Did the groups succeed to keep their traditions through silent resistance and hybridity? Can this be exemplified through complex family system, gender relations,

strong female roles, and how is this reflected through the material culture? Perhaps the indigenous groups also used ideological conceptions about their past to mobilise this resistance, conceptions that also are manifested through the material culture?

Postcolonial theory and material culture

Colonial domination does not rely on violence and exploitation alone but is supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations...power and knowledge directly imply one another (Said 1978:8, 27).

The issues of postcolonial theory have been vividly debated. The following discussion has been highly inspired by Peter van Dommelen's ideas concerning the application of postcolonial theory on archaeological material. Archaeologists have during the last years started to show interest in postcolonial analyses. But the studies that exist are mostly concerning the Pacific, and within classical and historical archaeology. Nevertheless, Peter van Dommelen says in a recent article that postcolonial concepts can be applied and would give fruitful results in analysing other earlier pre-modern colonial situations, because "colonialism has been such a widespread phenomenon across the globe and through the ages" (van Dommelen 2006:108-109).

Van Dommelen has suggested that postcolonial theory is an "endeavour to go beyond colonialism in a metaphorical and ideological rather than simply chronological sense" (van Dommelen 2006:104-105).

Postcolonial debate has until recent been focused on literary studies. Most probably because the three main scholarly figures that have been connected to this theoretical thought have been literary theorists: Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha. To summarise in a few words their research approaches is off course impossible, and would be dangerously simplistic. But for this discussion it could be useful to focus on a few of their concepts. Said is interested in the relations of knowledge and power (Said 1978, 1993), Spivak wishes to give the unheard a voice in discussions about the subaltern (Spivak 1999), and Bhabha has emphasised on the common ground between colonisers and the colonised, the third space and hybridity (Bhabha 1994).

Peter van Dommelen argues for an archaeological approach towards postcolonial theory. He appeals for material culture studies in connection with colonial situations regardless of time and space. He stresses that the role of material culture within social encounters will contribute to the progress of postcolonial theory (van Dommelen 2006:104-105). Van Dommelen has also suggested some main themes for studying material culture from a postcolonial perspective. He highlights the significance of the material dimension of representation, the use of material culture for writing alternative histories from

below (for the subaltern groups without history), and the material expressions of hybridisation processes (van Dommelen 2006:108, 112).

Material culture is crucial in shaping everyday colonial life and interactions, experience and practise. Colonial situations are characterised by the physical co-presence of colonisers and colonised. Usually a strong and very visible contrast between colonial and indigenous objects exists. Material studies can also give an insight in the lives and practises of the subaltern groups (van Dommelen 2006:112). Through material culture social identities can be constructed. Social categorisation can be based on gender, social status, ethnicity, and cultural or religious identity. In the material record, these identities can be studied through settlement layouts, artefacts, burial customs, and rituals among many other sources.

Studies of material culture can give information, and help to write alternative histories about social groups who are unknown or excluded from written documents. Archaeology has a great possibility to fill in these gaps of knowledge. The aim is to write alternative histories from below. The history of subaltern groups has almost never been recorded in the past, and when their actions are mentioned it's primarily from the dominant groups (elite) perspective. Analysing material culture with a postcolonial approach should highlight on social practise and human agency. Subalternity shall be viewed as a mean to restore agency and autonomy to social groups that have been looked upon as inferior in the past (and present). Study themes can be strategies as resistance or forms of silent resistance (van Dommelen 2006:107-108, 110). Silent resistance is not passive, and the effects can be dramatic and have large consequences.

Processes of hybridity

...Colonial situations cannot be reduced to neat dualist representations of colonisers versus colonised, because there are always many groups and communities that find themselves to varying degrees in between these extremes...hybrid cultures are common, if not inherent, features of colonial situations because of the constant and usually intense interaction between people (van Dommelen 2006:108).

Colonial situation offers mainly three different scenarios to the native population in colonial situations: cultural and physical destruction, acculturation, or most common "the creation of a working relationship and new way of living deriving from cultural logics that all parties brought to the encounter" (Gosden 2004:82). Recently this has been discussed and understood through Homi Bhabha's (1994) concepts of hybridity and third space by some scholars (see Fahlander, chapter 2 in this volume). Prior studies show that

interrelations between different groups were much more pluralistic, complex and close than mostly suggested. “People of very different cultural and ethnic background lived together very closely without entirely losing their own traditions” (van Dommelen 2006:115). But in the same time the colonial encounters:

...altered everyone and everything involved, if not all in the same manner and measure through an intricate mix of visible and invisible agency, of word and gesture, of subtle persuasion and brute force on the part of all concerned (van Dommelen 2006:111-112).

Hybridity and hybridisation in material culture is a possible large analytical field. Common methods are to study combined use of artefacts with different backgrounds. However according to Peter van Dommelen, its first when studying cultural practise and hybridity as a process that it provides a conceptual tool which allows Bhabha’s ideas about ambivalence in the third space situations to be related to social practise and material culture. Mixing of material culture was not random but structured (van Dommelen 2006:119).

...Joint households of people from different ethnic backgrounds led to the creation of new hybrid practices...the meanings of the objects involved could not and did not remain unchanged...it is a critical feature of hybridisation processes...(that)... existing practises and objects are recombined into new ones (van Dommelen 2006:119).

Richard White (1991) investigates what he calls the middle ground, which is similar to Bhabha’s idea about third space, in a study about the contacts between Algonquin groups and the Frenchmen in North America (see also Fahlander, chapter 2 in this volume). White points out that societies have diverse concepts of power. In the colonised society the power relations often were personal, in colonising society it’s institutionalised. This is crucial when two societies interact. The level of social complexity has been important for the outcome of social encounters, not only the state of material and technological development. The most important contacts in creating the middle ground were face-to-face contacts. Many problems and controversies between Native Americans and Frenchman revolved around issues of sex, violence, and material exchange. White underscores as Bhabha that sex and violence are key elements to understand how social interaction works in colonial situations. Different concepts of sexuality, marriage and gender created tensions that had to be resolved within the middle ground (White 1991:56, 60).

House and settlement layout on the Island of Gotland

Peter van Dommelen states that material culture constitutes an unexplored dimension of representation. He argues that houses and settlement layouts are worth studying because they reflect human perception of and actual responses to colonial contexts.

...Domestic architecture and settlement planning...are well established and profound links between how people organise their living spaces in practical terms and their views of how life should properly be lived (van Dommelen 2006:112).

These perspectives are interesting from an archaeological point of view, and are applicable for the Gotlandic material. During the second half of first millennium the settlement pattern on the Island of Gotland changed profoundly. During Scandinavian Roman and Migration Period (1st-6th cent.) peoples lived in clusters of long houses, within a system of small cultivated fields and cattle causeways divided by low stonewalls. Remains of these “villages” are still very characteristic for the Gotlandic landscape, and one of the most famous of these sites is Vallhagar (see fig. 2). In colloquial folklore the rectangular stone foundations were called “graves of Giants” (Måhl 1990:24). This settlement pattern changed in the Late Iron Age (7th-11th cent.) to single farms, with the farmhouses in the centre of arable and grazing lands. Contrary to the case in the Scandinavian southern mainland, these single farms never moved together in villages in the Middle Ages.

The influence on Scandinavia and Gotland by the Continental form of feudalism has been intensely debated. Gotland was never feudalised, neither in a political or economical sense. Neither indigenous nor foreign nobility took control over the arable lands on the Island, leaving the landowning farmers a comparatively prominent position within the society through the Middle Ages until present. But tension existed between the countryside and the later Hanseatic town of Visby, a tension that culminated in a civic war 1288, which the burghers of Visby seem to have won. The ethnic or lingual composition of the townspeople is much discussed. From historical and archaeological evidence it seems that a mixture of groups originating from present day Germany, Russia, Scandinavia, and indigenous Gotlanders inhabited the town (Blomkvist 2005:478). Whether or not, Gotland present a colonial situation isn't the topic here. Nevertheless, I argue for that postcolonial concepts can be used to explain and understand the reception of external influences, both material and ideological, in any society.

It would be interesting to study the architecture, the internal and external layout of settlement and houses both at the farmsteads, and in Visby. This can

reveal information about the nature of the external influences affecting materiality and material culture, giving complementary versions of past actions.

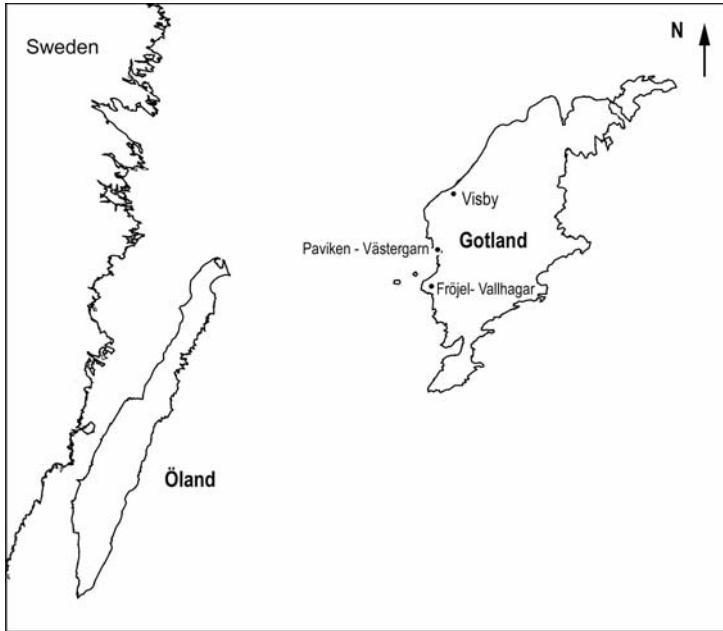


Figure 2: The island of Gotland in the Baltic Sea.

Studies of the interior layout of colonial houses e.g. in Calcutta, India, demonstrate that the division between the colonial families and their indigenous servants living and working quarters were not as strict as may be first supposed. Peoples of different status and ethnicity lived close together. An opposite example is from colonial Morocco where the French and the native population lived in special blocks separated from each other (van Dommelen 2006:113-114).

Nils Blomkvist has in his comprehensive work *“The Discovery of the Baltic”* used mostly the written evidences to give an explanation of the progress of Visby and its relation to the countryside. He can see a development from a Viking Age trading harbour and a pre-Christian cult site with asylum rights at Visby. This may be indicated by the Old Norse word *Vi-* that means cult/holy place (Blomkvist 2005:478, 489).

Dan Carlsson has identified about 50 smaller harbours and 6-7 larger ones at the Gotlandic coast. They were in use from Late Iron Age until Early Medieval

Period. Some of them still exist as small fishing hamlets. These harbours were of various size and often multifunctional. It's not yet known if some of the larger were inhabited all the year round or only seasonally, neither if foreign traders or craftsmen were among the population (Carlsson 1999a, 1999b, 1999c). In any case it was through the larger harbours foreign goods and ideas reached the Island. The harbours were localities where many small unsupervised day-to-day and face-to-face contacts and encounters took place, the harbours can be said to be the primary arena at Gotland for Richard White's concepts of the middle ground (White 1991:56, 60).

Dan Carlsson has extensively investigated the harbour at Fröjel, and earlier the harbours at Paviken and Västergarn has been archaeological surveyed by him and others (see fig. 2). In Fröjel dwelling houses, workshops and cemeteries (both Christian and pre-Christian) have been found. The site was in use from 6th-7th centuries until early 12th century (Carlsson 1999a, 1999b, 1999c). These partly excavated sites lay all south of Visby along the central west coast of the Island.

The archaeological material of these harbours and cemeteries will reveal a lot of the early contacts between the Gotlanders and the surrounding world. In respect to the naming, Fröjel, as Visby, has religious connotations. The word *Fröj-* refers to the great Norse goddess Freyja and *-el* to holy grove or place (Olsson 1984:50). It's an interesting fact that the both names are connected to cultic practices, and might represent areas of asylum. The larger harbour sites were probably congregation localities not just for trade and handicraft, but also for worship and legal matters. The site of Västergarn is towards land defended by a semicircle rampart of disputed dating (probably late 10th or early 11th cent.). The rampart may not only represent a defence structure, but also a religious and juridical border. Within the walls foreigners could trade and live under protection of special rights, as later proved in Visby. Jörn Staecker is undertaking excavations at the medieval churchyard of the Romanesque church in Västergarn, and shall also pursue with investigation of the earlier trading settlement. When Visby developed in the 12th century, all these major harbours shrank into insignificance.

The external influences behind the growth of Visby are interesting to pursue in further studies. Privileges rarely mention the town or any special position of the German inhabitants. Nils Blomkvist has shown that Visby was an embedded part of Gotlandic society, and that the Gotlandic communities were involved in the affairs of Visby. The Gotlandic *seniores* based on the countryside hold authority on the whole Island, but some foreign groups were granted autonomy in internal matters. This was the state of affairs until the last quadrant of the 12th century, then things escalated quickly towards the civil war 1288 (Blomkvist 2005:484, 487-488).

The Gotlandic picture stones

The picture stones have in earlier research been regarded as unique cultural expressions of the Late Iron Age society on the Island of Gotland, with few or any parallels. Approximately 450 picture stones have been discovered until this date (2006) at Gotland. Only four picture stones (according to my knowledge) of the Gotlandic type have been found outside Gotland, one at Öland, two in mainland Sweden, and one in Grobina, Latvia. Above this 20 fragments have been found in the Lake Mälaren area in central Sweden. The picture stones are usually made of limestone slabs, and a few of sandstone, that are cut into distinctive forms that vary in length from 0.5 to 4 m. What the form represents or symbolises is much discussed. Suggestions have varied between a phallus, a human body, an axe, a fleece, a door, a keyhole, or the world tree.

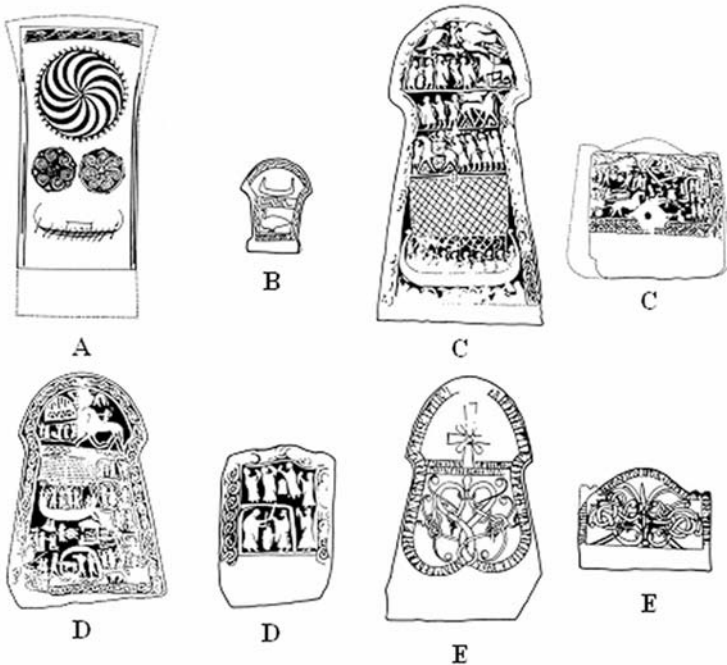


Figure 3: The typology of the Gotlandic picture stones by Sune Lindqvist (Lindqvist 1941, 1942): A, 5th-7th cent. B, 6th-8th cent. C-D, 8th-10th cent. E, 11th cent. After Andrén 1993, Göransson 1999, Nylén & Lamm 1988.

Different theoretical approaches have been applied when studying the picture stones and their motifs. Perspectives that can be divided into functionalistic, topographical, and symbolic/mythological positions (Andreeff 2002, Andrén 1993, Göransson 1999, Lindquist 1941, 1942, Myrberg 2005, Måhl 1990, Nylén & Lamm 1988, Staecker 2004, Varenius 1992). Scholars with functionalistic approach have above all dealt with one of the most frequently displayed motif on the picture stones, the ship. Depictions of ships have been used as starting point for experimental archaeology and interpretations of ship construction and sail making. Also other portrayed objects, as houses, clothes, weapons and tools, have been compared with archaeologically found constructions and artefact to explain handicrafts and everyday life of the Viking Age (Nylén & Lamm 1988, Varenius 1992).

Within the topographical field discussions have focused on the significance of spatial relations. How the stones are located in the landscape and their relation to other ancient remains. If they were territorial markers have been a main topic, possibly bordering and emphasising districts, farms, roads, paths, fords, and bridges? Some picture stones are erected in groups and at localities with place names that have religious connotations. Maybe they were associated with sacral practices and places of the pre-Christian cult? Findings of charcoal, animal bones, and ceramics in cultural layers at the base of some of the stones might indicate that offerings or ritual meals were made at these sites (Måhl 1990, Nylén & Lamm 1988).

The symbolical or mythological perspective has been the most popular among scholars that have studied picture stones. Mostly through analogies with Norse literature have the figures and motifs been identified to specific heroes, gods and myths, and even to Biblical motifs. The imagery is then viewed as belonging to the believe systems and the cosmology of the time (Andrén 1993, Myrberg 2005, Lindquist 1941, 1942, Staecker 2004).

Picture stones as sign of hybridity

The picture stones were probably multifunctional and had many significances changing through time and the context in which they were used. Thus, indicating to be one of the most interesting artefact types at Gotland when studying ideological change and interaction. The motifs of the picture stones have been used to explain the religious and ideological changes that took place on Gotland. The picture stones are a promising material for studies of ideological hybridity.

The picture stones are divided by Sune Lindqvist (1941, 1942) into five chronological and iconographical types (see fig. 3), extending from 5th until 11th cent. AD. The earliest picture stones, type A and B, are dated to 5th-8th cent. The

tradition of erecting picture stones seems to originate in connection with the Migration Period (5th-6th cent.) cemeteries. Though, some stones of type A have been pre-dated to Roman Period (1st-4th cent.). Type A and B stones have been found, both complete slabs and in parts, located at cemeteries and within structures of single graves. On these stones are displayed ships, sun wheels and animals, such as stallions and birds, motifs that have been interpreted as symbols for fertility, and assumed expressions of religious beliefs focusing on the sun and natural world.

The nearest parallels in space are Roman Hispanic tombstones, which are ornamented with the same kind of sun wheels as the earlier pictures stones. Erik Nylén and Jan Peder Lamm have suggested that the connecting link is the Roman legions or the Visigoths (Nylén & Lamm 1988:152). Lennart Swanström has in an essay put forward an interesting idea, that the stones with sun wheels on Gotland shall be seen as signs of early Christendom. He suggests that the Gotlandic elite were influenced by the Germanic tribes in central Europe common branch of Christendom, the *Arianism*. The picture stones from that time shall be viewed as expressions for this faith, and the sun wheel shall in this interpretation be seen as a symbol for God (Swanström 1993). This idea remains to be tested, but anyway its mind liberating to discuss a very early and then probably transient Christianisation of some groups at Gotland.

Many later works about pre-Christian traditions and Christendom in southern Scandinavia have doubted that the rather late mission described by among others Adam of Bremen (*Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum*) and Rimbert (*Vita Anskarii*) tells the only truth. Some parts of Scandinavia may have been exposed to Christendom or at least Christian thoughts much earlier, and also from other churches than the German (e.g. English-Irish, Byzantine) (Janson 2005, Staecker 1999, Theliander 2005).

The picture stones of type C and D are from the typological middle phase, 8th-10th cent., although the chronology is much in dispute. These types have attracted the most interest from scholars, and are the richest in iconography. When these monuments are found at original site they stand alone or are gathered in groups in the landscape, with no immediate connection to graves or cemeteries. Others have been re-used in later pre-Christian graves, and build into walls and floors of medieval churches. Usually they are interpreted to have been originally erected as memorial stones in the honour of dead male members of the society. Also the stones from the middle phase have been used to explain ideological and religious changes. Scholars have tried to identify figures and scenes in the iconography to specific mythological characters and events from the Norse literature (especially starting from the two Edda: *Poetic/Saemundar Edda* and *Prose Edda/Snorri's Edda*). Vivid displays of warriors and weapons are depicted on the stones, this presenting a paradox due to the fact that

traditional scholars tend to describe the Gotlanders as peaceful farmers and traders, quite contradictory to the witness provided by iconography. One of the main motifs the rider with the horse, regularly depicted at the top of the stones (see fig. 4), has been interpreted as either the great Norse god Odin and the divine horse Sleipnir, or Sigurd Fafnisbani on his horse Grani (*Volsunga Saga*), or the deceased man arriving to Valhalla, to whose honour the stone may have been erected (Andrén 1993:41, Staecker 2004:64). But, it's very doubtful to believe in a personalised art in the Late Iron Age; that the depictions should portray actual human persons, besides maybe in a transferred meaning, that dead persons could be identified with gods and heroes.

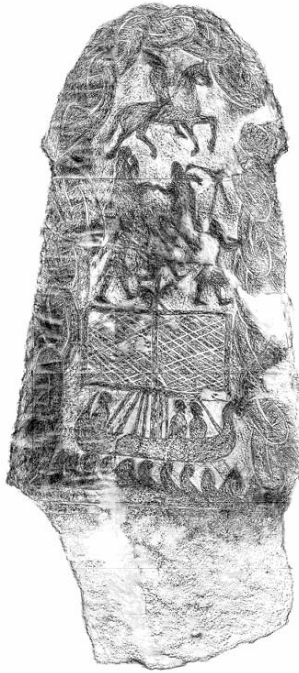


Figure 4: Picture stone found in two parts in a grave at the Viking Age harbour in Fröjel parish. Frottage and interpretation: Alexander Andreeff & Helena Andreeff.

Anyway it has been suggested that the depictions of Odin, and other gods and mythological figures can be an indication that at latest during the 8th or 9th century the older nature and fertility based religious beliefs (as indicated by type A and B) had been replaced by the Viking Age religion per se, the beliefs in the

Aesir gods, with a pantheon populated by Odin, Thor, Frey and Freyja (Nylén & Lamm 1988:14-15, 68-70). But it must be stated that the Norse religion is a construct by the medieval Icelandic authors. The Old Norse beliefs were more of a tradition with large regional varieties (Blomkvist, T. 2002).

But as the later Norse literature indicates the interest and use of the Sagas doesn't imply a pure pagan society, the stories were told and written in Christian societies. The most important element of the stories is the concepts of wisdom, heroism, honour and death, and these concepts are also possible to attribute to the iconography of the picture stones, and to Christian societies (Andrén 1993:41). Jörn Staecker has lately reinterpreted the iconography of some picture stones. He argues that they have scenes depicting Biblical motifs. Making parallels to other materials Staecker shows that the combined use of Christian and mythological (pagan) motifs is not a contradiction, but was customary in Late Iron Age and Early Medieval Europe. The important were the normative values that were communicated through the iconography. The blend of Christian and pagan motifs in writing and iconography is common during this long transition period (Staecker 2004:67-70).

The images are not alone. The imagery we see on the stones is only remnants of a larger world of images that were carved in wood, woven in textiles and so on. Also from references in the Norse narratives it's clear that pictures were present on ships, carriages, halls, furniture, textiles, shields and weapons (Andrén 1993:38, Palm 2004:222-225). In this light the picture stones are not as unique pictorial expressions as maybe first assumed. They belonged to a tradition of artistic expression, oral traditions and belief systems that were common understood over large area of Northern Europe.

The latest picture stones, type E, are very similar to the common runic stones at the Scandinavian mainland. It can be argued if the type E-stones at all shall be considered as picture stones. They often display runic inscriptions in ornamental loops with Christian prayers, and depictions of Christian crosses, and are dated to the 11th century. The Runic inscriptions give proof of that these late stones were memorial monuments.

Conclusions

The archaeological material from the Late Iron Age and Early Medieval Period in the Baltic Sea region has been taken into consideration in discussions about social encounters and interactions in the area. The impact of Continental and Christian influences had diverse consequences in different areas in the Baltic. The Scandinavian societies slowly integrated the continental ideas and material culture. The situation in the Eastern Baltic was much more complex, as the development was dominated by crusading and conquest. The outlook and

material culture changed in the Baltic arena during the Late Iron Age and Early Middle Ages, and cultural encounters many times had effects that were unexpected, activating and creating new sets logics and negotiations effecting social practices, and relations to materialities.

The theoretical part in this paper has been highly inspired by Peter van Dommelens ideas concerning the application of postcolonial theory on archaeological material. He has suggested three main themes for studying material culture from a postcolonial perspective; the material dimension of representation, the use of material culture for writing alternative histories from below, and the material expressions of hybridisation processes. The concepts developed within postcolonial as Homi Bhabha's ideas of third space and hybridity, and Richards White's model of middle ground are also applicable for archaeological studies of social interaction and encounters in the Baltic.

The study of architecture, the internal and external layout of settlement and houses both at the farmsteads, and in Visby reveals information about the nature of the external influences affecting materiality and material culture, giving complementary versions of past actions. Houses and settlement layouts reflects human perception of and actual responses to colonial contexts. E.g. the Gotlandic harbours were localities where many small unsupervised day-to-day and face-to-face contacts and encounters took place, the harbours can be said to be the primary arena at Gotland for Richard White's concepts of the middle ground.

I have demonstrated that the Gotlandic picture stones can be viewed as expressions of ideological hybridity. The picture stones were multifunctional and had many significances changing through time and the context in which they were used. The example with the picture stone tradition shows that a material that have traditionally been seen as very unique for the Island, on the contrary it's one material that must obviously show the impact or influences from the foreign world, constituting a promising study field for ideological and religious hybridity and hybridisation, which will be investigated further in my future work.

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