Preface

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to all who participated in the 13th Nordic Bronze Age symposium. Thank you for attending the conference, for presenting excellent papers and for asking stimulating questions and sharing a wealth of specialist knowledge, all of which led to a successful, and memorable, conference. I am especially grateful to the session organisers for leading interesting sessions with lively discussions. I am also grateful to Johan Ling for organising the excursion to Tanum on the last day, and to Anna Wessman for leading the excursion to the so-called Bronze Age Strait. In addition, heartfelt thanks must also go to GAST, the student society, and to the student helpers who volunteered during the symposium.

A further round of thanks must go to the contributors to this volume, both for taking the time to write and revise the articles, and for having patience with the numerous small questions that always arise in finalising an edited volume. I would also like to thank my co-editor, Anna Wessman, who assisted until the start of her maternity leave in April 2016. Thanks are also due to Kristin Bornholdt Collins for assisting with matters of language and in the task of adopting the style guidelines of the publisher, and to Rich Potter for setting the volume. I am also grateful to Archaeopress for showing interest when I approached them about publishing the volume.

For generously sponsoring both the conference and this volume, I am profoundly grateful to Lennart J Hägglunds Stiftelse för arkeologisk forskning och utbildning.

Finally, I wish to thank my colleagues at the Department of Historical Studies at the University of Gothenburg for their support, from conference planning to production of this volume. Particular thanks go to Johan Ling, Peter Skoglund and Kristian Kristiansen for their input along the way. I hope that the authors are pleased with the final result, and that many will find the diverse collection of articles an interesting and inspiring read.

Gothenburg, March 2017

Sophie Bergerbrant
# Table of Contents

**Introduction** .................................................................................................................. 1

**New perspectives on Nordic Bronze Age graves** ................................................................. 5
Kristian Kristiansen

**Mjeltehaugen: Europe’s northernmost Bell Beaker expression?** ........................................ 7
Anette Sand-Eriksen

**Bronze Age burials in megalithic graves in Falbygden** ..................................................... 19
Malou Blank

**Identifying commoners in the Early Bronze Age: burials outside barrows** .......................... 37
Sophie Bergerbrant, Kristian Kristiansen, Morten E. Allentoft, Karin M. Frei, T. Douglas Price, Karl-Göran Sjögren and Anna Tornberg

**Visible ships were the graves of Bronze Age ritual specialists** ........................................ 65
Gisela Ängeby

**From bird wings to fool’s gold. Organic materials and stone from burials of the Late Bronze Age** .......................................................................................................................... 81
Karen Margrethe Hornstrup

**Craft and materials in the Bronze Age** .............................................................................. 95
Nils Anfinset

**On the behaviour of potters and metalworkers at the Narkūnai hillfort** ............................ 97
Vytenis Podėnas and Evaldas Babenskas

**Castelluccio painted pottery: shared repertoires and local identity: A case study from Early Bronze Age Sicily** ................................................................. 109
Valentina Copat, Annalisa Costa and Paola Piccione

**Bronze Age metal workshops in Denmark between 1500–1300 BC: elite-controlled craft on Zealand** .................................................................................................................. 127
Heide Wrobel Nørgaard

**Bronze casting specialists during the Late Bronze Age in the Lake Mälaren region of East Middle Sweden** ................................................................. 143
Reidar Magnusson

**Crafts and resources — western Norway in the Late Neolithic and the Early Bronze Age** .................................................................................................................. 153
Nils Anfinset

**New currents in Scandinavian Bronze Age settlement and landscape archaeology** .......... 169
Mette Løvschal and Kristian Brink

**Time warps and long-term structures: images of Early Bronze Age landscape organisation in south-west Denmark** .................................................................................................................. 177
Marianne Rasmussen

**Settlements, political economy and social organisation: a study from the Únětice Circumharz Region** .................................................................................................................. 187
Claes Uhnér
Continuity and change in settlement from LN II to EBA II. New results from a southern Jutland inland region .................................................. 203
Martin Egelund Poulsen

Tanum 1821 — Examining cooking pits in landscape studies ................................................................. 219
Stig Swedberg, Annika Östlund and Oscar Jacobsson

Introduction to the rock art session at the 13th Nordic Bronze Age symposium ................................................. 233
Johan Ling

‘It’s a man’s world’? Sex and gender in Scandinavian Bronze Age rock art .................................................... 237
Christian Horn

Carved ship images from the Bronze Age barrows of north-eastern Zealand: on the trail of Bronze Age farmer-
fishers and seafarers ............................................................................................................................... 253
Liv Appel

Materiella bilder: Visuella uttryck bland Mälarvikens hällbilder ...................................................................... 267
Fredrik Fahlander

Re-cut rock art images (with a special emphasis on ship carvings) ................................................................... 281
Gerhard Milstreu

The Kivik tomb: Bredarör enters into the digital arena — documented with OLS, SfM and RTI ....................... 289
Ulf Bertilsson, Johan Ling, Catarina Bertilsson, Rich Potter and Christian Horn

The northern perspective 2000 BC – AD 1 .................................................................................................... 307
Marianne Skandfer and Joakim Wehlin

Textiles from the peripheries? Upland evidence from Norway ...................................................................... 313
Christopher Prescott and Lene Melheim

Stone Age appearances in the south-eastern Arctic Bronze Age ...................................................................... 327
Jarkko Saipio

Different Bronze Ages — the emergence of diverging cultural traditions in the southern inland, Norway ...... 343
Hilde Rigmor Amundsen

Nordic-Mediterranean relations in the second millennium BC ....................................................................... 355
Serena Sabatini and Lene Melheim

The wheel and the sun: ‘Glocal’ symbologies of wheel-pendants across Europe ............................................. 363
Sara De Angelis and Maja Gori

Danish beads of Egyptian and Mesopotamian glass in context, and the amber connection ............................... 375
Flemming Kaul and Jeanette Varberg

Mortuary rituals at Mycenaean Dendra: the Baltic connection and the role of amber .................................. 387
Ann-Louise Schallin

The North from the perspective of the Greek mainland in the Late Bronze Age ........................................... 395
Helène Whittaker

Identity, individuals and agency in the Bronze Age ....................................................................................... 403
Sophie Bergerbrant
Communicating identity through built space — Concise-sous-Colachoz (CH), a case study .......................... 409
Markus Spring

Tracing boundaries of local group identities in the Early Bronze Age — south-west Norway .................. 421
Knut Ivar Austvoll

Intentionally made: objects as composite indexes of agency and the case of the Late Bronze Age house urns  . 435
Serena Sabatini

Authors .................................................................................................................................................. 447
Tracing boundaries of local group identities in the Early Bronze Age — south-west Norway

Knut Ivar Austvoll

Abstract

This article explores the construction of boundaries between local group identities through the burial practice of south-west Norway in the Early Bronze Age. It is argued that active choices were made in the consolidation of groups that had both direct and indirect effects on choices made by neighbouring groups. By drawing on theoretical tools from poststructuralism and anthropology, boundary maintenance is detected in the archaeological record. This is investigated through the construction of burials, treatment of the deceased and gender categorisation. This is set against a background of a highly dynamic and interconnected region with ties to a broader Nordic Bronze Age world. The patterns found point to a region where choices in burial practice reflect real ongoing developments in the social organisation of local Bronze Age societies.

Key words: Early Bronze Age, group organisation, boundary maintenance, identity construction, burial mounds, sociopolitical organisation, south-west Norway.

Introduction

The construction of boundaries is a multifaceted endeavour, based on intrinsic deeply rooted structures as well as more fleeting conjunctures of specific events in time and space (e.g. Barth 1969a; Braudel 1972; Jones 1997). Mapping prehistoric boundaries can therefore seem like an exceedingly difficult task; and, even more difficult than this is the challenge of identifying the reasons behind their construction. In south-west Norway these questions have largely gone unexplored, argued to be linked to previous research discourses where the material remains are nearly always seen in correlation with the rich South Scandinavian material, whether to postulate similarities, or differences (e.g. Shetelig 1925; Brøgger 1925b; Marstrander 1950; Møllerop 1963b; Nordenborg Myhre 2004). This is not necessarily problematic, however, the creation of boundaries between local group identities has been underemphasised, and in its place a homogeneous and misrepresentative picture of Early Bronze Age societies has emerged. In this article, it is argued that boundaries of constructed group identities were based on both intentional and unintentional choices, linked to the compositional features of the burial mound. While the material remains from the Nordic Bronze Age are generally considered homogeneous and standardised (Kristiansen 1998: 68–70), a group’s reflection and justification of the material is argued to be of social significance. Though, depending on situational factors with neighbouring groups, the compositional features of the burial mounds can either be used as active tools to express social power, or their value as identity symbols can deflate, and become inclusive.

Subscribing to a poststructuralist perspective (i.e. Bourdieu 1977), with a dose of more clear-cut anthropological theory (i.e. Barth 1969a), the burial mounds of south-west Norway will be examined through a handful of elements laden with a perceived value of what groups considered representative of their identity. Each element comprises different aspects of the burial practice, including the construction of the burial mound, treatment of the deceased, gender distribution and choices of artefacts. This article aims to identify how these elements, when diachronically and geographically combined, can be utilised to trace boundaries of local group identities, and more implicitly to ask why do people and groups, at certain times and at certain places, feel more in unison and collective, and how does it affect neighbouring groups?

A dichotomised discourse

The relevance of the Scandinavian peninsula has often been marginalised in comparison to the much richer Bronze Age found in southern Scandinavia (cf. Melheim 2015: 11–13). To a certain extent this is justified, at least if the amount of bronzes are considered, but it also leaves regions such as south-west Norway locked in a
peripheral perspective where the internal organisation of groups becomes recycled through historical conditions governed by southern impulses (cf. Nordenborg Myhre 2004). From the beginning of antiquarianism the region along the south-western coastline has frequently been dismissed as a place with a couple of mounds that most likely are the result of migration from Jutland (e.g. Christie 1842; Worsaae 1881: 72). This idea has remained tenacious in a Norwegian Bronze Age discourse, and was first coined by Anathon Bjørn (1924: 40, 1927) as a dual culture of specialised farmers confined only to a few coastal areas, primarily in south-west Norway, and a continuing hunter-fisher lifestyle further inland and up the coast (cf. Prescott 1994). The debate is commonly traced back to the works of Haakon Shetelig (1922, 1925) and Anton Wilhelm Brøgger (1925a, 1925b). On the one hand, Brøgger’s (1925a, 1925b) interpretations emphasised evolutionary, ecological and internal material developments, which stressed the human adaptation to different ecological zones (e.g. Brøgger 1925a; Gjessing, G. 1944), on the other, Shetelig (1922, 1925) drew on external dynamic influences, emphasising trade and migration that was in line with general European developments (e.g. Shetelig 1925; Møllerop 1963b; Bakka 1993). However, both interpretations derive from a materialistic-oriented understanding of the past. This view has governed large parts of the research history and is also reflected in contemporary studies (e.g. Aakvik 2000; Engedal 2010). The material will always govern archaeological interpretations of the past, and so it should. Still, the burial mounds in south-west Norway have on the whole been interpreted in a fixed social framework with southern Scandinavia, based on similarities in the material record (e.g. Shetelig 1925; Petersen 1926; Møllerop 1963b). This view is not necessarily incorrect, but simplifies the complex and entangled system that we call identity. As argued by Philip L. Kohl (1981: 89), ‘The term [materiality] signifies a philosophical view of reality that accords greater casual weight to a society’s behavior than to its thoughts, reflections, or justification of its behavior’. Kohl’s argument is important, as it implies that societies’ thoughts and perceptions of themselves and others are visible in the material remains, including constructional features of the burial mound. In this the burial becomes an important element, where the communal identity of a society is expressed by those left behind. And so, the burial not only defines the individual, but also the collective identity of the group.

Defining identity

Identifying social processes in which the individual perceives themselves as part of a certain group of persons is not without its challenges. The process is usually combined with the ability to cognitively segment and organise the social environment of which the person is a part, giving the person the ability to categorise themselves as part of a group and exclude themselves from others (Ashforth and Mael 1989: 21). This gives the person a sense of belonging and purpose, accompanied by a certain set of know-how abilities and norms. These norms and abilities are structured through habitual practices that are historically constituted (Bourdieu 1977). It is these historically constituted practices that create social and symbolic boundaries, illustrated by Fredrik Barth in the introduction of his book, Ethnic Groups and Boundaries (1969b). Barth argues that ethnic distinctions do not depend on absence of social interaction and acceptance, but are often the reason why social systems are constructed (Barth 1969a: 9).
10). As such, identity becomes a subjective process of classification, which does not necessarily correlate with cultural commonalities. Developed from a frustration over how anthropology did not critically reflect on how groups developed or re-constructed themselves (Jenkins 2004: 95), Barth sought to re-interpret how one conceived the social episteme, focusing on social and categortical boundaries, enabling us to study the formation and dissolution of groups. The debate following Barth’s original discussion on ethnicity and boundaries continues, yet is surprisingly true to Barth’s original ideas from 1969 (e.g. Eriksen 1993; Malešević 2004; Jenkins 2008; Wimmer 2013).

Of course, a person within a specific group need not be limited to one identity. Nor do they need to be constrained by sharply marked boundaries. As will be demonstrated in this article, the construction of groups in the Early Bronze Age is motivated by an intertwined network of multifarious elements. Some may be diffuse and ambiguous, others may be fixed and primordial; still, it is these relational and comparative categorisations that enable individuals to be part of multiple groups at the same time. As an example, people from the Early Bronze Age may have identified themselves with a grand interregional Nordic Bronze Age culture, as well as a more local, clearly defined identity. This entails that a shared material culture does not necessarily hold a shared identity, allowing interconnectedness between groups in the Early Bronze Age. Approaching a theory of groups in prehistory and mapping their boundaries requires an approach that allows one to follow structural processes as well as the particular events that ultimately changes or reconstructs them. Namely, the ‘[…] internal causes and hidden impersonal forces which move individuals and collectivities’ (Durkheim 1964: 373).

As a discipline ultimately concerned with long-term developments, and its underlying attention toward ontological questions like ‘who are we’, and ‘where do we come from’, archaeology is uniquely placed to address questions on group dynamics and social developments. However, it also forces us to move into interdisciplinary discourses with long-standing debates and traditions with completely different outlooks and aims (Trigger 2006: 497). There is always a danger here, as pointed out by Kristian Kristiansen (2004: 115), to end up as a consumer of conflicting theories. Yet, working with such a multifaceted concept, ‘redlining’ oneself within a specific theory will arguably inhibit, or at least obscure, a number of the various elements that constitute identity. With regard to this conundrum, the sociology debate around identity often comes back to the two dichotomous approaches: primordialism and instrumentalism (e.g. Bentley 1987; Yelvington 1991: 159).

Primordialism sees identity as something deep, internal and permanent. Here, a group’s behaviour and beliefs are conformed to prescriptive idealised norms of behaviour (e.g. Isaacs 1989; Geertz 1963). That is, identity does not change but follows succeeding generations within the group (e.g. Childe 1958: 8). Instrumentalism, on the other hand, argues that the social identity of a group is created by external and internal relations and categorisation (e.g. Barth 1969a; Cohen 2004[1969]). However, both discourses show limits in the interpretation of identity, as a primordialistic interpretation is not concerned with external political or economic influences, whereas instrumentalism has a tendency to ignore historically internal habitual practice. Therefore, to borrow a saying from Andreas Wimmer (2013: 4), the two discourses need to be infused with a good dose of Bourdieusian sociology (e.g. Bourdieu 1977, 1990; see also Jones 1997).

In terms of Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of practice (1977), which fundamentally seeks to erase the sociological dichotomy between a constituted structuralism and an ontological individualism, the construction of identity is able to escape this tension and instead evolve through a dialectic discourse between the taken for granted (primordialism) and the external categorisation of others (instrumentalism). This is possible through habitus, which seeks to find a way between structure and action where both can become determining (Bourdieu 1977: 73). Habitus is a factor that strongly relates to past social practices as well as current events, its application to the construction of group identities is therefore considerable, and boils down to three concepts framed in Bourdieu’s (1977) Outline of a Theory of Practice: doxa, heterodoxy and orthodoxy. Doxa is that which is taken for granted (Bourdieu 1977: 166). These are elements in everyday-life that are self-evident and go without saying. Created by habitus, doxa becomes to such an extent embedded in the social life of people that it becomes the unalloyed truth, and subsequently it cannot be questioned (Bourdieu 1977: 164). Doxa is only fully revealed to a society when negatively constituted by the constitution of a field of opinion, e.g. faced with external pressure (Bourdieu 1977: 168–169; see also Barth 1969a: 10). Doxa is an important argument against critics who argue that similarities in identity do not necessarily correlate with a shared habitus (e.g. Yelvington 1991: 158). This is because a shared identity is created not only through subliminal similarities, but also through a consciousness of difference, i.e. a break with doxa (Jones 1997: 94). When doxa becomes questioned, it results in the establishment of either orthodoxy or heterodoxy (Bourdieu 1977: 169). ‘[…] orthodoxy attempting to deny the possibility of alternatives at a conscious level, and heterodoxy acknowledging the existence of a choice between different forms of knowledge and their evaluation through explicit critiques’ (Jones 1997: 94–95). Accordingly, heterodox knowledge would be presumed if a society intentionally constructed ritual
Contextualising the burial mounds

When identifying processes accountable for the construction of groups and group boundaries, it has been important to include every known burial mound along the coast of south-west Norway, spanning from Etne in the north to Lista in the south. As argued above, identity is a multi-layered concept, and an analysis working to uncover group identities needs to reflect this. Previous research has had a tendency to focus on single regions (e.g. Myhre 1980; Nordenborg Myhre 1998), or based their studies on the best-documented burial mounds (e.g. Lund 1934; Møllerop 1963a). This puts us at risk of misinterpreting — or missing out altogether — important elements that reflect social differentiation. Unfortunately, this leaves us with some qualitative challenges as the majority of mound excavations were carried out in the 19th and early 20th century (e.g. Neumann 1839; Christie 1842; Bendixen 1877; Lorange 1878; Helliesen 1901; Shetelig 1907; Gjessing, H. 1914), which means that the quality of the collected data used is variable and often with limited contextual information. On the other hand, the limitation of the collected data also forces the study to narrow its scope in terms of active elements that can be used to trace regional tendencies that reflect group identities. Furthermore, the data allows for standardisation and comparability between regions, which is vital for uncovering social structures along the coast of south-west Norway.

Construction of the burial mound

The burial mounds have been analysed both externally and internally based on information gathered from earlier publications, excavation reports and the topographical archives (see Austvoll 2014:32). From this information the exterior can be divided into four categories (see also Møllerop 1963b; Nordenborg Myhre 2004): naked cairns, earthen barrows with a thick outer layer of earth and a small central cairn inside, composite barrows where stones, sand, and gravel are mixed together, and those with a large central cairn and only a thin outer layer of earth. Still, only a small percentage of the overall number of earthen barrows contained this information when going through the topographical archives, publications and excavation reports, and it has proven to be of little comparable use. As such, the overall landscape along the south-western coastline can more generally be construed by the conspicuous earth-constructed barrows along raised beach ridges opposite naked cairns, which occupy a more peripheral position closer to the sea and the inland fjord districts (Nordenborg Myhre 2004: 207). More important for this article are the internal features of the burial mound, which display clear regional tendencies. Cists can be divided into two building techniques (see Figure 2): a dry stone technique of small, horizontally laid slabs, and cists made of standing stone slabs (cf. Møllerop 1963b: 42-43). Three cists in Jæren can be categorised as ‘hybrids’ and have walls made of both standing stone slabs and horizontally laid slabs in a dry stone technique (Gjessing, H. 1914; Lund 1934; Brogger 1913). Three others cists were more scantily built with large boulders as walls; still, these had clear compositional similarities with cists made of more finely cut standing stone slabs and have in this study been categorised as such. The distribution of the two typological cist constructions has noticeable regional lines of demarcation. Jæren stands out as the region with the majority of cists built in a dry stone technique (see Figure 3). It is also the region with the largest concentration of burial mounds from Period II (cf. Møllerop 1963b). Karmøy, on the other hand, is represented solely by Period III graves, and of particular relevance is the construction of the earthen barrows, which is, save one, represented solely with standing stone slabs (Austvoll 2014: 35-41). The cists at Karmøy also seem to hold a more local position, where the majority have a North–South alignment parallel with the narrow strait to the east, which would have functioned as a strategic bottleneck for control and redistribution of wealth (Kvalo 2007: 65; Prescott et al. in press). The burial at Karmøy also display a clear divide between the placements of earthen barrows versus cairns, which are situated in the southern part of
the island. Lista is more heterogeneous, but the majority of cists are made of standing stone slabs, with only one portrayal of a burial mound with a cist made in a dry stone technique (Austvoll 2014:57).

In sum, the construction of the earthen barrows demonstrates clear lines of demarcation and is differentiated by a majority of cists constructed in a dry stone technique of small, horizontally laid slabs in Jæren — the majority from Period II — and standing stone slabs in Etne, Karmøy, and Lista — the majority from Period III.

**Treatment of the deceased**

The majority of Early Bronze Age burials are generally believed to be inhumation graves, but based on the 85 registered graves with museum numbers in south-west
Norway, it can be established that only 8.24% had traces of unburnt skeletal remains, and 9.41% contained fragments of burnt bone (Austvoll 2014: appendix I). However, it is important to note that the majority of the burnt bone fragments have not been examined osteologically. The longer lifetime of burnt bone in contrast to unburnt bone could be a partial factor behind why there are more burnt bones in the grave material than vice versa (e.g. Holck 1986). Therefore, a method was established in order to categorise the different burial practices. The cist construction can fortunately help to some extent. Burnt bone is for example never seen in connection with cists made in a dry stone technique — one possible exception is Svarthaug in Lista (Petersen 1926: 168–169). Similarly, burnt bone is not connected with cists made of standing stone slabs that are built to fit the body of an adult. The largest cremation graves in south-west Norway are Steinhaug in Lista and Garahaugen in Etne, measuring 0.80 and 0.75m in length respectively (Lorange 1878; Myhre and Myhre1970), which is too small to fit the body of a grown human — alternatively they could represent very young children’s graves, though this seems unlikely as there are few documented cases of children being buried in burial mounds in Scandinavia, especially in the Early Bronze Age (Bergerbrant 2007: 108–109), and when uncovered they are commonly placed in burials with adults or in proximity to other children’s graves (Bergerbrant 2014: 532). There are examples of graves containing both inhumations and cremations, for example the Egtved burial (Bergerbrant 2007: 108), however, this is not evident in south-west Norway. When sorting the burials according to these general requirements, it has been possible to make some estimates of the treatment of the deceased. Cremation practice is present throughout every period, but represents a minority compared to inhumation graves (Austvoll 2014: figure 26). Interestingly, several of the cremation graves could be dated to the earliest phase of the Bronze Age. In Jæren, one cairn from Stokka was dated to Periods I–II (Løken 1978). Also, in Etne a barrow has been radiocarbon dated to Periods I–II (Myhre 1972), and at Lista, two cremation graves have been tentatively dated to the Late Neolithic and one to the Early Bronze Age (Lorange 1878; Ballin and Jensen 1995: 238–239). Karmøy is only represented by one cremation grave, possibly from the Early Bronze Age (Bendixen 1877: 106).

To conclude, inhumation burials are the dominant burial practice in Periods II and III, although cremation burials are visible from an early stage, both in the Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age Period I, particularly in Etne, Jæren and Lista.

**Gender categorisation**

The graves have also been categorised in accordance with gender identification. This is a complicated topic where the identification of a specific gender category is in danger of being subjectively interpreted by one’s own cultural perceptions (Díaz-Andreu 2005: 14). The categorisation of gender in this article is based on artefact assemblages, as skeletal remains in the grave material are limited, and with just one exception (Denham 1999), not osteologically analysed. Gendered artefact assemblages have been extracted from several authors (Randsborg 1974, 1986; Gibbs 1998; Bergerbrant 2007; Kristiansen 2013). There are arguably some pitfalls in using gender categories from a different area; however, the find categories and assemblages display clear similarities with south-west Norway. The graves in this article have been categorised as male, female and indeterminable. Artefacts considered to be those of a male grave category are weapons such as swords and spears. Daggers are indeterminable in isolation, but considered part of the male inventory if other weapons or male artefacts such as tweezers, razors, fire-stroke stones and smaller knives are present. Personal artefacts such as jewellery, which typically include tutuli, neck-collars, belt-plates, arm-rings and in a few instances daggers, have been designated as female graves (e.g. Randsborg 1986: 147; Gibbs 1998; Bergerbrant 2007: 8). Still, the majority of the find material is sorted as indeterminable, which also seems to be the case for other regions in Scandinavia (cf. Bergerbrant 2007: appendix 6–7, 9).

Jæren displays the highest number of female graves, 18 in total (Austvoll 2014: appendix I). No female graves are recorded in Etne and Karmøy (Austvoll 2014: appendix I). Lista has one female grave tentatively dated to the Early Bronze Age Period II (Johansen 1986: 64). In Period III, Karmøy is most homogeneous with only traditional male artefacts from the find material, and no known female graves. These are intriguing contrasts. As a parallel, the region with the highest number of female graves in Denmark has only half as many as male graves (Randsborg 1974: 39, 54–55). In Jæren, there is an almost 50% ratio between male and female graves, and female graves do actually outnumber male grave in Period II (Austvoll 2014: appendix I). To the knowledge of the author, that is much higher than anywhere else in Scandinavia. It also seems skewed compared to other regions in Scandinavia that usually see an increase in female burials from Period II to Period III (Randsborg 1974: 54–55; Kristiansen 1984: 91). Still, certain areas in Funen and north-western Zealand also show a decrease in female graves from Period II to III (Bergerbrant 2007: 87), indicating regional diversity across Scandinavia in the Early Bronze Age. The distribution of female graves is also interesting, with a clear cluster around the districts of Klepp and Time. Male graves are more scattered, but Period III graves seem to be clustered further north, around Sola and Tananger (see Figure 4).
Figure 4. Distribution map of burials with traditional female artefacts versus those with characteristic male artefacts in south-west Norway. © K. I. Austvoll.
Artefacts found within the grave

Artefacts are always interwoven in knowledge, social strategy and practice (Vandkilde 2008: 146). Artefacts in the Bronze Age are often highly standardised; however, choice of artefact type could be linked to periods, region and ideology. They can also underline social variations and active choices in order to express a certain type of identity. Still, the distribution of wealth is difficult to record, and many lighter and thinner artefacts are often more exposed to chemical changes and deterioration than heavier objects like swords and axes (Randsborg 1974). This could result in a misrepresentation of the overall number of bronzes; nevertheless, objects of bronze discovered in burial mounds, independent of type, must be considered an exclusive material for the upper strata of society, and allow us to differentiate regional social structures (e.g. Earle 2002). Graves recorded with gold should be seen as a signal of considerable wealth, however, these are few and not sufficient to constitute a representative distribution of the precious metal. It is worth mentioning, though, that they are evenly distributed between Karmøy and Jæren, none earlier than Period III (Austvoll 2014: 73–74). The sudden rise in burial mounds at Karmøy in Period III occurs at a time when there is a dramatic decline in burial mounds in Jæren — and subsequently metal (see Figure 3). Such observations could indicate a change in power structure or a conflict between two competing regions. There could also be a connection between the uniform male expression found in Period III graves in Karmøy and the sudden decline in bronzes in Jæren; if we include a lost sword from Guttormshaugen and a single find from Haugesund, over 50% of the burials at Karmøy contained weapons of some sort (Austvoll 2014; appendix I). This corresponds well with the general picture of Karmøy as an escalating power throughout this period.

To sum up, there are clear regional patterns in south-west Norway based on the distribution of artefacts. The overall number of metal finds in Period II is concentrated in Jæren. This changes quite dramatically at the onset of Period III, when Karmøy becomes more dominant, reflected in both bronzes and gold in the grave material.

Identifying groups and boundaries

The burial mound as a source of material to understand the social lives of prehistoric people is not new in archaeology, and one could easily argue that a large portion of our understanding of prehistory is a result of a disproportionate emphasis on the burial mounds as source material. Still, this focus has also resulted in generalisations that arguably have neglected regional differentiations. Many aspects of the burial tradition in south-west Norway can be connected to a larger Nordic or even European Bronze Age tradition, specifically seen with grand earthen burial mounds, metal and other chiefly objects like gold and amber (cf. Kristiansen 1998; Kristiansen and Larsson 2005), other aspects did most likely derive from local traditions like the cairns and rock art (Nordenborg Myhre 2004; Skoglund 2005). This article’s intention is not to argue for a supreme grand-narrative, or to differentiate south-west Norway as a separate group altogether. Rather, it is an attempt to demonstrate just how entangled and complex the construction of collective identities really is. The south-western coast yields a homogeneous material, but also distinction and clear lines of demarcation. Yet, how should these structures be interpreted?

Richard Jenkins (2000:7) argues that two independent processes are necessary for the classification and identification of the social episteme: the specification of similarities and of differences. If we apply this to a group, we can say that collective identification is structured by two socially constituted categories: the internal, taken-for-granted doxa and the external categorisation of others, structured either through heterodoxy or orthodoxy. In order for a social group to categorise itself as ‘us’, it needs an external contrast that can be defined as ‘them’ (Barth 1969a). Material manifestations will therefore accumulate through ‘our’ need for social differentiation. But from whom did they need to differentiate?

Based on the archaeological material we know that there are significant signs showing early trade with southern Scandinavia from the Late Neolithic and onward (Apel 2001). Most notable perhaps is the extensive spread of type-I daggers all along the western coastline, with a hot-spot around Jæren. Other finds, such as evidence of early metallurgy, two-aisled longhouses, and a rapid change towards an agro-pastoral based economy, are all indicative of a new ideology that was introduced around 2350 BCE (Prescott and Walderhaug 1995; Prescott 1996), associated with the Bell Beaker Phenomenon (e.g. Holberg 2000; Prescott 2012; Prescott and Glørstad 2001). Most notable perhaps is the extensive spread of type-I daggers all along the western coastline, with a hot-spot around Jæren. Other finds, such as evidence of early metallurgy, two-aisled longhouses, and a rapid change towards an agro-pastoral based economy, are all indicative of a new ideology that was introduced around 2350 BCE (Prescott and Walderhaug 1995; Prescott 1996), associated with the Bell Beaker Phenomenon (e.g. Holberg 2000; Prescott 2012; Prescott and Glørstad 2001; Melheim 2015). Jæren is particularly well represented with Bell Beaker finds, including barbed-and-tanged arrowheads and the single bell beaker found in Norway (Skjølsvold 1977).

Period II can be understood as a culmination of this long-term process, particularly in Jæren, where it is manifested in the construction of grand earthen barrows. However, the symbolic power expressed in the material remains in Jæren would not have gone unnoticed by other groups. As Barth (1969a:15–16) points out, external categorisation is necessarily significant in the processes of internal identification, and vice versa. A collective group exists through its own subjective recognition of itself, but just as important is how others recognise the group, resulting in an internal–external dialectic that will produce
boundaries of identification (Barth 1969a; Jenkins 2004:117). This categorisation by ‘others’ is, according to Barth (1969a:38), immanent, and part of the reality of any group. It is reasonable to believe that the material and social power exerted by groups in Jæren throughout Period II would have been recognised and categorised by the peripheries. The fact that there are no known barrows in Karmøy during Period II makes it, in all likelihood, an external objectified categoriser of groups in Jæren, which would effectively constitute itself as the ‘other’ group, and acknowledge the existence of choice through explicit critique in the form of heterodoxy or orthodoxy. Thus, Karmøy’s categorisation of groups in Jæren would inadvertently result in their own identity construction, and explains why there is such a strong homogeneity in the material remains at Karmøy in Period III. Perhaps most visible are the cists, constructed of standing stone slabs in a N-S alignment parallel with the strait. This not only demonstrates a highly collective act, but an intentional position of the cist, which reflects a strong local awareness. There are also no known female graves at Karmøy, and the choice of artefacts is typically represented with weapons and male toiletries such as razors and tweezers, representative of a male warrior ethos.

Reading identity through the material is not without its weaknesses though, and as pointed out by Jones (1997:135): ‘[…] the actual role of particular types of material culture in terms of identity cannot be subordinated to universal laws’. It is therefore necessary to establish a relationship between the material remains and processes of identification in concrete contexts. This is exemplified here through the dialectic relationship between groups in Jæren and Karmøy, yet other external factors could have played an active role in the process of categorisation.
that eventually resulted in the heterodox or orthodox construction of groups in Karmøy at the beginning of Period III. Of particular relevance are groups in Etne and the surrounding inland fjord districts. In addition to burial mounds that can be dated to Periods I–II, there are several single-context finds that support a strong inland region prior to Period III (Nordenborg Myhre 1998: 125–127; Indrelid 1991). In Skie, in Vindafjord, a bronze sword from Period II was recovered from a barrow in a cist built in dry stone technique of small horizontally laid slabs (Engedal 2010:65), and in Ølen several single context finds from the Late Neolithic and Period II have been discovered, including the famous deposit at Lunde, where three magnificent shaft-hole axes in bronze were recovered in 1950, all dated to Period II (Indrelid 1991: 56). Furthermore, at Bømlo, an island north of Karmøy, stone quarries have been established from the Stone Age and onwards, and a bronze sword dated to Period II has also been recovered from a bog in the same area (Melheim 2009:29). All of the above examples could have functioned as external factors that were categorised and identified by people in Karmøy that ultimately resulted in their social differentiation and construction of a group identity.

It is important to acknowledge that the construction of identity in each region is essential. No group can exist entirely unaffected by the other, and it is therefore not surprising to see groups in Jæren change some of their structures as a result of the strong group mentality in Karmøy in Period III. In Period II, Jæren had a strong assembly of graves with jewellery. This changed dramatically in Period III when, in addition to graves becoming larger, graves with weapons become dominant and there is a marked difference in barrow placement (see Figure 4). Whereas Period II graves with jewellery were concentrated in southern Sola, Klepp and Time, they now shift further north to Tananger and the Hafsford inlet, dominated by weapon graves. Cist construction also becomes more heterogeneous, and cists constructed in a dry stone technique become fewer in Period III (see Figure 3). In addition to these changes, there is an emergence of gold in graves during Period III, both in Jæren and Karmøy. The visible changes in Jæren at the transition to Period III are therefore seen as effects brought on by the emergence of power in Karmøy, which by then had already been affected by Jæren in Period II. Both regions are therefore part of an ongoing process of objectified knowledge and habitual subjective knowledge that transpires over a length of time. To illustrate these complicated processes a model has been created, appearing in Figure 5.

The female and male traveller

Certain connotations spring to mind when faced with clear boundaries of demarcation, specifically those seen between Jæren and Karmøy. Jæren’s centralised position in Period II, characterised by predominantly by female graves, is intriguing and certainly raises the possibility of exogamy as a possible scenario. Historically speaking most traditional societies perceived marriage as a relationship between groups, not between individuals (Eriksen 2010: 117), and one of the more common institutions in traditional societies is bridewealth, where the groom’s kin must give resources to the bride’s kin. This type of payment creates a moral bond between two groups and effectively creates trading partners between lineages. The idea that women married out to maintain power has been discussed on numerous occasions and documented throughout history, often regarded as the supreme gift (Mauss 1954; Lévi-Strauss 1969: 65). Bergerbrant (2007: 119–124) discusses this scenario from an Early Bronze Age perspective, where women from the Lüneburg culture of northern Germany are identified in southern Scandinavian burial contexts. Yet, no evidence shows southern Scandinavian women moving the other way, though evidence from a cairn in Offerlund, Sweden is put forth as an indicator of South Scandinavian women travelling further north (Bergerbrant 2007:121). Considering the extensive representation of female burials in Jæren, the region is seen as indicative of exogamy and trade with southern Scandinavia, developed through a highly specialised maritime inter-chief alliance network. Recently, the idea of the female traveller has gained support from the natural sciences. Through a multidisciplinary study of the Egtved girl, based on biomolecular, biochemical and geochemical analyses, it has been possible to trace her movement through the last months of her life. The results show high mobility, with the likely provenance of origin hundreds of kilometres away from her final resting place (Frei et al. 2015), adding to the idea of a Bronze Age with a highly advanced interaction network consisting of both trade and gift exchange.

Conversely, the male traveller can be seen within an ideology that is commonly expressed in Bronze Age research (e.g. Kristiansen and Larsson 2005; Kristiansen 2011; Earle et al. 2015). At Karmøy, with the rise of an exceedingly homogeneous burial practice, together with a material that connotes warrior identity, a new political economy emerges. By capitalising on the narrow strait, which would have functioned as a bottleneck for redistribution of wealth, chieftains were able to integrate a political economy that was reliant on maritime knowledge, trade and travel (e.g. Earle 2002; Kristiansen 2007; Ling 2008; Earle et al. 2015; Prescott et al. in press). In addition, the flange-hilted sword, argued to be symbolic of a travelling warrior or chief (Kristiansen 2010), appears in this region in Period III; one was discovered in a lake in Jæren, another in burial mound in Karmøy (Engedal 2010: 64). Another sign of a developing power in Period III is the increasing size.
of burial mounds, where three of the four largest burial mounds in the region are situated within a short distance of each other at Reheia in Karmøy (Nordenborg Myhre 1998:132–133). The rapid accumulation of power would have involved ‘[…] an ability to maneuver a group to act together in the leader’s interest’ (Earle and Spriggs 2015: 516). This is not an easy task, however, and the material and symbolic reference to an interregional Nordic Bronze Age culture is a cunning way for a leader to uphold power and shares parallels to Sahlin’s concept of a ‘Stranger King’, often depicted as a traveling foreign entity (see Sahlin’s 1981; Ling and Rowlands 2015; Prescott et al. in press). The concept is based on the fact that nearly all societies have a tendency to project power as something that originates from the outside (e.g. Leach 1954), and can be connected to a sociological need or dependence on external sources of existence, for instance affinal relationships (Sahlins 2008).

Interestingly, the strong presence of affinal relationships, i.e. exogamy, between Jæren and South Scandinavia comes to a drastic end at the beginning of Period III, with a decrease from twelve to two female burials (Austvoll 2014: appendix I). This is not unsurprising as a system built on bride wealth is also seen as highly unstable. Common causes for feuds are often related to payment, or lack thereof (Eriksen 2010: 117, 22; Flannery and Marcus 2012: 200), resulting in the creation of new alliances. A change like this can be interpreted in southwest Norway at the onset of Period III, where Karmøy emerges with a strong male warrior ethos.

Concluding remarks

The construction of boundaries in prehistory is shown in this article to have played an important part in the social life of its inhabitants. The values placed on the material remains are varied, based on situational and diachronic relations that are enmeshed through processes of categorisation. Tracing these processes has seemingly been rendered through wide-ranging supraregional perspectives that are unable to grasp the more subtle processes at work in the construction of local group identities. Boundaries in prehistory are commonly seen as instrumental reactions to competition over resources, however, boundaries are here extended to include historical and temporary processes of identity construction. In mapping prehistoric boundaries one must therefore not only consider the observation of contemporary material remains, but also deep-rooted structures of the longue durée. Thus, the construction of clear-cut boundaries, seen for example between Jæren and Karmøy, becomes conceptualised through what a group perceives as symbolically valuable. The presence of female burials in Period II, the strong male warrior ethos present in Period III and the pronounced difference in cist construction between regions is seen as expressive of a ‘cycling’ political landscape with shifting power, alliances and networks.

Other avenues that have only been touched upon here are how these boundaries of constructed group identities were managed. Was it heterodox choices constructed through cooperative communities, or was it orthodox choices arranged by more complex hierarchical organised societies? A dynamic combination of the two is likely, but this needs to be explored further through more extensive archaeological data sets, and the appropriate theoretical framework(s).

Acknowledgements

This article, based on the results from my master’s thesis, and some preliminary ideas from my doctoral work is possible through the many invaluable comments from my supervisor Christopher Prescott. I have also benefitted greatly from the many helpful suggestions on earlier drafts from my colleagues at the local research seminars at the Department of Archaeology, Conservation and History at the University of Oslo.

References


Bendixen, B. E. R. 1877. Indberetning om arkæologiske
Tracing boundaries of local group identities in the Early Bronze Age

Bjørn, A. 1927.
Bjørn, A. 1924.
Bourdieu, P. 1990.
Brøgger, A. W. 1925b.
Brøgger, A. W. 1925a.
Brøgger, A. W. 1925b. Østronsk skule i Norge. Oslo, Universitetsforlaget.
Brøgger, A. W. 1925b. Østronsk skule i Norge. Oslo, Universitetsforlaget.
Isaacs, H. R. 1899. Idols of the Tribe. Group Identity
and Political Change. Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press.


Museum of Bergen.


Petersen, J. 1926. Lista i forhistorisk tid. Universitets Oldsaksamling, Oslo.


