

NEW PERSPECTIVES ON THE BRONZE AGE

PROCEEDINGS OF THE
13TH NORDIC BRONZE AGE SYMPOSIUM
HELD IN GOTHENBURG
9TH TO 13TH JUNE 2015

edited by

Sophie Bergerbrant and Anna Wessman

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Cover illustration: Bronze Age mound *Store hög* at Hol, Sweden, taken by Emma Nordström, 2017

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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.

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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

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Introduction

Sophie Bergerbrant and Kristian Kristiansen

The 13th Nordic Bronze Age symposium was held in Gothenburg 10 years after the 9th symposium was held in Gothenburg. The 9th symposium, organised by Joakim Goldhahn, was noteworthy for being the first Nordic Bronze Age symposium with over 100 participants and a large number of presentations. This philosophy of welcome and openness, and therefore planning on a large scale, has been followed by succeeding organisers. The 12th Nordic Bronze Age symposium in Aarhus 2012 further expanded the traditions of the symposium by opening it up to an international audience. It did this by combining the symposium with the final conferences of a large international research project. We decided to combine the local aspects with the international, and to have both English and Scandinavian speaking sessions. The hope was to continue the tradition started by the 9th symposium, i.e. to make it a meeting place for students as well as people working at museums, on rescue excavations and researchers at universities. Also, to make it a place where beginners and experienced conference presenters could feel equally welcome. The conference was held over five days, including the opening ceremony and the excursion, with three days of three parallel sessions. The symposium started with a keynote lecture given by Morten Allentoft on *Population Genomics of Bronze Age Eurasia*, and was followed by a performance by Jens Christian Kloster and Gaute Vikdal from *Klang av Oldtid*, where the different sounds of Bronze Age lurs were presented. In the course of the following days, a total of 86 papers were presented. The symposium closed with a conference dinner and two excursions: one to Tanum and one to the so-called Bronze Age Strait. The excursion to Tanum was organised and led by Johan Ling and the one to the Bronze Age strait by Anna Wessman.

The conference was organised by Sophie Bergerbrant with help from an organising committee: Kristian Kristiansen, Johan Ling and Peter Skoglund. The various sessions were planned and organised by session organisers: Mads K. Holst and Helena Victor (Ny perspektiver på bronzealderens grave); Nils Anfinset and Anna Sörman (Craft and material in the Bronze Age); Mette Løvschal and Kristian Brink (Bebyggelse och landskap); Ulf Bertilsson and Johan Ling (Hällbilder i bronsålderskontext); Marianne Skandfer

and Joakim Wehlin (The northern perspective 2000 BC – AD 1); Lene Melheim and Serena Sabatini (Nordic–Mediterranean relations in the second millennium BC); Agne Civilyte and Uwe Sperling (Baltic Sea Connections); and Christian Horn and Jeanette Varberg (Who's who — Did identity matter in the Bronze Age?). The archaeology student organisation, GAST, provided help with logistics and practical arrangements during the symposium.

History of the Nordic Bronze Age Symposium

The history of the Nordic Bronze Age Symposium began modestly in 1977 with 13 participants, and has now expanded to over 120 participants: a tenfold increase (for an overview and discussion of the different topics from the early Nordic Bronze Age symposium see Goldhahn 2005). This expansion reflects a major change in the interest and significance of Nordic Bronze Age research; from having taken the back seat during the 1970s, it has now taken the driver's seat in terms of expanding research themes, publications and international impact.

The first Isegran meeting was concerned with the New Archaeology, and how to interpret Bronze Age settlement organisation and economy, but took place before the many discoveries and breakthroughs of the new settlement excavations (Marstrander ed. 1983). Burials, single finds and settlements were analysed and new theories were discussed. Regarding the composition of the participants, there were only three junior researchers: Øystein Johansen, Kristian Kristiansen and Stig Welinder; the senior scholars included professors Bertha Stjernquist, Carl Fredrik Meinander, Unto Salo and Evert Baudou, as well as Carl Cullberg, Henrik Thrane and Bo Gräslund. There were three women: Hille Jaanusson, Bertha Stjernquist and Kjerstin Cullberg.

During the next meeting in Odense in 1980, with 19 participants, the theme was Bronze Age settlements, focusing on the many new large-scale settlement excavations and their impact on the organisation of Bronze Age society (Thrane ed. 1980). In Lund in 1982, with 32 participants, the theme was 'structure and transformation of Bronze Age societies', and

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included a variety of studies such as analyses of bronzes (Herner, Kristiansen, Larsson, Lundmark, Poulsen), the environment (Carlsson and Welinder) and settlement structures and wealth accumulation (Jensen, Thrane). Broadbent also presented a critique of the chieftdom model. All in all, it was a wide-ranging symposium with a good mix of junior and senior attendees, although still only a minority (eight) were women (Stjernquist ed. 1983).

The symposium returned to Isegran in 1984, organised by Stig Welinder, with many young researchers who summarised parts of their PhDs in several of the papers, which were dominated by quantification of data. But a new generation of Bronze Age researchers took part in this meeting, which also saw a change in gender balance: of the twelve contributors to the conference book, half were women (Mikkelsen *et al.* eds. 1986).

During the next meetings, the number of participants remained more or less constant at around 30, but with a still increasing number of younger researchers. ‘Regional variation’ was the theme of the 5th meeting at Sandbjerg in south Jutland in 1987, organised by Jens Poulsen, which had 34 participants (Poulsen ed. 1989). The sixth meeting took place in Umeå in 1990, organised by Thomas Larsson and Lars Forsberg. Its theme was ‘Economy and subsistence during the Nordic Bronze Age’, which was right in line with the dominant research being carried out in Umeå at the time. Once again the gender balance was fifty-fifty (Larsson and Forsberg eds. 1993).

It was five years before the 7th meeting in Stavanger, organised by Trond Løken. The theme was ‘regions and interaction’, and it stimulated a doubling of the number of participants to 64 (Løken ed. 1998). Nordic Bronze Age research had started its expansion, and the meeting saw many new faces, individuals who were to become regulars at future meetings. The 8th meeting took place

in Copenhagen, organised by Klavs Randsborg and Flemming Kaul, and the venue was the conference hall of the National Museum. Unfortunately, the proceedings were never published.

The 9th Nordic Bronze Age symposium took place in Gothenburg in 2003, organised by Joakim Goldhahn, and it became the largest to date, with 126 participants; a two-volume conference publication resulted (Goldhahn ed. 2005). Indeed, the ‘symposium’ had developed into a major conference.

The 10th meeting took place in Trondheim in 2006, and was organised by Geir Grønnesby and Merete Moe Henriksen. It was attended by more than 60 participants. A well-produced conference volume included 14 of the 22 presentations (Grønnesby and Henriksen 2009). Once again, the symposium had a relatively even gender balance.

The 11th Nordic Bronze Age Symposium was held in Helsinki in 2009, organised by Mika Lavento, was similar in size to the previous conference, and specially included colleagues from the Baltic countries. It represented a welcome change by including the whole Baltic region.

The 12th meeting was again a large conference, and was organised in conjunction with the Marie Curie project, *Forging Identities*, and also included wider European participation. Helle Vandkilde and her team of young Marie Curie researchers succeeded with the huge task of seeing the proceedings into print, again in two volumes (Suchowska-Ducke *et al.* eds. 2015). Which brings us forward to the current publication from the 2015 meeting in Gothenburg, which you now hold in your hands.

The 13th symposium in Gothenburg had 122 registered participants from twelve different countries, thus expanding well beyond the Nordic region. The gender

TABLE 1. THE NUMBER OF REGISTERED PAPERS FOR EACH SESSION, NUMBER OF MALE AND FEMALE PARTICIPANTS AND THE NUMBER OF PAPERS FROM THE SESSION INCLUDED IN THIS VOLUME.

Session name	No. of papers	Male presenters	Female presenters	No. of papers in proceedings
Ny perspektiver på bronzealderenes grave	16	5	13	5
Craft and material in the Bronze Age	21	15	11	5
Bebyggelse och landskap	10	6	6	4
Hällbilder i bronsålderskontext	13	10	3	5
The northern perspective 2000 BC – AD 1	9	6	4	3
Nordic–Mediterranean relations in the second millennium BC	13	10	16	4
Baltic Sea Connections	5	2	4	0
Who’s who – Did identity matter in the Bronze Age?	7	5	4	3

balance at the symposium was more or less equal. While the fact remains that we have not yet achieved equal opportunities between men and women in terms of hiring, pay and the academic ladder, the positive strides made in hosting a more gender-balanced conference, and all the benefits that will have for expanding and enriching research, demonstrates what a long way we have come in this area.

This book is divided into seven sections. Each part is introduced by a short paper that provides an overview of the current state of research for the theme and introduces the various papers included in the section.

Next Bronze Age Symposium

As shown above, the first Nordic Bronze Age symposium was held in Isegran research station south of Oslo in 1977; it therefore felt appropriate for us to pass the torch to Oslo for the next conference, which will be held at Blindern, Oslo University Library, 6–10 June 2017, 40 years after the first symposium was organised. This volume marks another stepping stone in what has become an important tradition in Bronze Age research. It is presented with deepest respect and gratitude to all who have come before, and looks to the future — particularly regarding the new opportunities offered by science — in eager anticipation of discoveries yet to come.

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New perspectives on Nordic Bronze Age graves

Kristian Kristiansen

New approaches

Recent research into Bronze Age burials has been informed and transformed by the application of strontium isotopic analysis (Eriksson *et al.* 2008; Montgomery and Jay 2012; Oleze *et al.* 2010), revealing human biographies (e.g. Frei *et al.* 2015) and by increased interest into the rituals surrounding burials (Mikkelsen 2014; Woodward and Hunter 2015). This latter trend is in part related to large-scale excavations and the possibility of linking burials to other phenomena such as cult-houses (e.g. Ångeby this volume), pyres and settlements (Arcini and Svanberg 2005; Artursson 2011; Röst 2016), in part related to a new focus on all aspects of the graves, from construction to content (Holst 2013, 2015; Holst *et al.* 2013; Holst and Rasmussen eds. 2013, 2015). All of these new trends are represented in this small collection of articles.

Overview of papers

Five papers from the session have been reworked into articles for the book. Chronologically, they span from the Late Neolithic to the Late Bronze Age, and touch upon a number of questions from chronology and social stratification, to rituals and eschatology.

The first article in this section is Anette Sand-Eriksen's *Mjeltheaugen: Europe's northernmost Bell Beaker expression?* The article discusses the possible presence of Bell Beakers in Norway based on the rock art slabs found in the monumental mound Mjeltheaugen in western Norway. Sand-Eriksen compares the motifs on the slabs with rock art from Bell Beaker graves in other parts of Europe. She finds that the motifs on the slabs are similar to Bell Beaker ornamentation and objects. Based on this and other evidence she argues that the mound is a result of Bell Beaker impact, and concludes that it was part of the establishment of a new elite in the region.

The second contribution *Bronze Age burials in megalithic graves in Falbygden* is by Malou Blank. Based on a large number of new radiocarbon dates as well as the presence of artefacts from the Bronze Age, it demonstrates the frequent occurrence of burials from the Bronze Age in the megalithic monuments in

Falbygden, Västergötland. The area is well-known for its large number of megalithic monuments, and Blank shows that both passage graves and gallery graves were used for burials during the Bronze Age, while there are few examples of the traditional Early Bronze Age mound burials. She concludes that many ritual traditions of the Neolithic communal burial practice survived in the region during the Early Bronze Age.

In the article by Bergerbrant, Kristiansen, Allentoft, Frei, Price, Sjögren, and Tornberg), *Identifying the non-barrow burials (commoners?) of the South Scandinavian Bronze Age*, new results from 'The Rise' project are presented. Burials from the Late Neolithic and the Early Bronze Age are identified, which shows that many Early Bronze Age individuals in Scania were buried outside the mounds, in flat graves, passage graves and gallery graves. It has previously been suggested that c. 20% of the Early Bronze Age population were buried in the mounds, which represented the local elites. The missing part of the population is perhaps to be found in other forms of flat graves, but more radiocarbon dates on flat-ground cemeteries and gallery grave are needed in order for us to better understand the situation, and the social dynamics leading to it, in the Bronze Age.

The two final papers in this section deal with Late Bronze Age burials with a focus on rituals and eschatology. Gisela Ångeby's paper *Visible ships were the graves of Bronze Age ritual specialists* takes as its starting point a recently excavated Bronze Age cemetery at Övraby 87 in Halland. Among the excavated structures was a cult-house, and some ship-shaped graves that are different in being intentionally visible rather than hidden in the superstructure of the burial, like other ship-shaped burials in the region. The ship-shaped graves are the focus for a discussion of their religious and social meaning. The author argues that ship-shaped burials were actively used by ritual specialists as a tool for social manifestation and to reinforce exclusivity.

Still within the ritual sphere but with a different focus is Karen Margrethe Hornstrup's discussion of organic material in Late Bronze Age cremations in her contribution *From bird wings to fool's gold. Organic materials and rock from burials of the Late Bronze*

Age. The article focuses on cremation burials in north-west Jutland, but other Danish material is included in her discussion. By dividing the organic material, such as resin/pitch, amber and animal bones into categories such as functional, cosmological objects and amulets, she finds that amulets form the largest group. Hornstrup concludes that Late Bronze Age cremations are much more complex and multi-layered than previously assumed.

The articles in this section demonstrate how important information can be gleaned from rescue excavations. They also underline the need to keep an open dialogue between all sections of archaeology — and to embrace new scientific developments that can be applied to the study of the past. We are also reminded that there is new knowledge to be gained when we revisit old finds with new questions, new methods or new theoretical perspectives.

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