Abstracts

Austmarr V: No one is an island. Islands in the Baltic Sea 500 – 1500 AD: Characteristics and networks in an interdisciplinary perspective, Visby 15-16 October.

Maths Bertell

Viking Age Föglö – a travel route and its population

From the 13th century, three place names are mentioned from the islands of Åland: todays Lemböte, Föglö and Kökar. Lemböte and Kökar are known for their medieval churches and Kökar with an additional Fransciscaner monestery. Of the three, Föglö has no obvious landmark motivating its mentioning. From archaeological evidence, we know that these places have been populated for from at least bronze age. Föglö has traces from Bronze Age, Early Iron Age and the Middle Ages, but the Viking Age seems to be missing. This paper will deal with new finds, a disturbing place name situation, retrospective methods and a discussion on the spread of Christianity in the Central Baltic."

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Ny Björn Gustafson

In sight or out of reach?
– On the production of Gotlandic and non-Gotlandic dress jewellery at Stora Karlsö in the Viking period

In 1887 it was established that the cave Stora Förvar on the island Stora Karlsö, off the Gotlandic west coast, held rich archaeological remains. For five years (1888-1892) the cave was excavated and emptied of 4 metres of cultural deposits spanning some 6000-7000 years. Stora Förvar is normally discussed in connection with the rich finds from the middle Neolithic pitted-ware culture, but early on it was established that the cave had also been utilized in the late Iron Age. The full extent of this use was only partly understood by the excavators who appear to have concentrated on the collection of larger objects. An important clue was recovered some 15 years later when two fragments of clay casting moulds were found by the mouth of the cave. One of these came out of a mould for a disc-on-bow brooch, a piece of female jewellery mainly produced and worn in the Vendel- and early Viking period. Much later, in 1973, more of the same came to light when one of the 19th Century spoil heaps was

re-excavated. 246 mould fragments were recovered – among them 3 with interpretable imprints. One of these came from a mould for a Gotlandic box brooch while the other two – intriguingly – came from two separate moulds for oval brooches of Petersen's type 25, an entirely mainland-Scandinavian 9th Century brooch type.

Clay casting moulds are scarcely found on Gotland, mainly due to lack of unaltered and professionally excavated settlements. Accordingly, only one other settlement, the harbour site at Fröjel on the west coast, has yielded a larger amount of interpretable mould fragments. These are of a much later date tough, probably from around the turn of the 11th Century. The Stora Förvar fragments illustrates a seemingly paradox cultural feature: production of jewellery which would be impossible to wear within a Gotlandic cultural context, alongside jewellery which followed the local norm. The contemporary material culture appears to have been very strictly defined, dictating what could be worn and what could not. Thus, large numbers of Gotlandic box- and animal-head brooches have been recovered, particularly in burials. But to date, only three oval brooches has been found in such contexts. All other extant non-fragmented oval brooches are stray finds, presumably from settlements; several of these seems to be unfinished, i.e. not made ready for immediate use. Together with the mould fragments from Stora Förvar this points to a technological milieu where certain non-Gotlandic objects were produced, presumably intended for markets outside Gotland or for visiting non-Gotlanders. This underlines the resilience of the local material tradition – despite opportunities it did not succumb to the mainland-Scandinavian norm. It did get affected by non-Gotlandic features though; ornaments and other small traits reflect cultural interchange in a more subtle form. Thus, the workshop in the cave can be interpreted in two contrarious ways: It can either be seen as more autonomous than the workshops on Gotland proper, partly out of reach of the cultural norm. But it can also, just as the island of Stora Karlsö, be seen as well in sight of Gotland, as an example and agent of cultural interchange.

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Introducing the ATLAS-project
Late Iron Age and Early Medieval mobility around the Baltic reflected through archaeology, aDNA and isotopes.

From an archaeological perspective we see that beginning in the Late Iron Age there were intensified contacts between the regions East and West of the Baltic. In the middle Gotland developed its own material culture, mixing elements from both sides. The archaeological material is rich and relatively well documented and theories have developed and discussed for decades. Now the question of contacts and mobility has been raised again within the context

of the Atlas-project – an interdisciplinary team of researchers combining ancient DNA, isotope-analyses, osteology and archaeology in the hope to gain deeper knowledge and perhaps different answers to both old and new questions. What can we expect to gain from a project of this kind and what do we do with the results?

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The rune stone tradition on Bornholm

In Denmark, the rune stone tradition started in the very latest part of the Iron Age, in the 8th century AD, and lasted until the turn of the 11th century. During this 400 year long period around 260 rune stones were erected, but the distribution was never even. It seems that it followed various political situations in the country. On Bornholm, few runic inscriptions have been recorded until the end of the Viking Age, where a number of rune stones were erected on the island. At the same time, a lively tradition of the making and wearing of metal amulets was probably founded. The paper will present an overview of the Bornholm rune stone tradition, seen in the light of the political situations of the 11th century, including find situations, dating, ornamentation, textual contents, comparisons with the Swedish rune stone material, name customs, and last but not least the preservation conditions.

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Danish Islands in Knýtlinga saga

The geographical position of Denmark strictly corresponds with the system of axes north-south and east-west. The biggest part of it, the Jutland Peninsula, stretches from south to north, while the two major islands of the Danish archipelago lie directly to the east of Jutland: beyond the Little Belt there is the island of Funen, and still further east, beyond the Great Belt, Zealand. The southern territories on the Scandinavian Peninsula, namely Skåne, Halland and Blekinge, are situated east of Zealand. These regions beyond the Sound (Øresund) used to be part of Denmark until the mid-seventeenth century.

However, according to *Knýtlinga saga* (mid-thirteenth century), Jutland lies in the south, to the north of it there is Funen, and just north of Funen Zealand; north of Zealand is the Sound,

and further north there are Skåne and Halland. The Limfjord, stretching from east to west and separating the North Jutlandic Island from the rest of the Jutland Peninsula, is described by the author of the saga in agreement with his general idea of the spatial arrangement of Denmark and thus acquires on his mental map the meridional direction from north to south instead of the latitudinal one. The entire space of Denmark in the saga looks as if a square piece, with Denmark on it, had been removed out of a geographical map jigsaw puzzle and then rotated 90o counter-clockwise, so that the western part of Denmark, Jutland, became the southernmost one while the more easterly islands occupied their position to its north.

How did this idea of the location of Denmark originate? What source might it be borrowed from? If we refer to a number of sources close to *Knýtlinga saga* in genre, chronology and subject matter, we shall see that in Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla* (c. 1230), which had been among the sources of *Knýtlinga saga*, this scheme is not present (as well as in the other great compendia of the Kings' sagas, *Morkinskinna* and *Fagrskinna*, from where Snorri often borrows his information); that Sven Aggesen does not discuss the geographic position of Denmark at all; that the Danish chronicles do not concentrate their attention on these matters; and that Saxo Grammaticus in his preface to *Gesta danorum* (between 1208 and 1218) places a sequence of parts of Denmark exactly from west to east.

Going back in time, we should note that the first author, among those we know, to describe in good detail the geography of Northern Europe was Adam of Bremen (1070s), but in his portrayal of Denmark there are no specific "shifts" of orientation. Turning to King Alfred's additions to his translation of Orosius (late ninth century), we see that he divides the Danes into the "southern" and the "northern" ones, the former being the inhabitants of Jutland, while the latter are the residents of Funen, Zealand and Skåne. Traces of spatial subdivision of the Danes can be found in a still earlier text, the Anglo-Saxon epic poem of the eighth century *Beowulf*, where one can come across the "western", "eastern", "southern" and "northern Danes". A tenth-century runic stone from Lolland mentions the "southern Danes". Overall source material leads to the conclusion that in the world picture of the early North-Germanic peoples there was present the idea of the Danish lands divided into the southern (Jutland) and the northern ones (Funen, Zealand and Skåne). By the way, the earliest known division of Danish dialects along the Little Belt ("Jysk", Jutlandic, versus "Ømål", all the islands) corresponds to this subdivision.

In this paper I am going to share my thoughts on the theory of "Scandinavian shifted orientation" and propose a hypothetic explanation of how the above-mentioned geographic idea penetrated *Knýtlinga saga*.

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Sven Kalmring

Islands in the Rural Sea – Viking-age Towns between Cosmopolitanism and Delimitation

The process of urbanisation far distant from the ancient towns of the former Roman Empire for a long time has been identified as a central topic in Viking age archaeology. Together with the mission of the Roman Catholic and Byzantine Orthodox church it is the emergence of towns in the North that initiated a change of a foremost rather traditional society, the transformation towards feudal state structures and ultimately the integration into the Christian western world.

This change however did not come overnight, but gradually took place in the period that we call the Viking age. Therefore this period is characterised by sharp contrasts: On the one hand there is the traditional rural and agricultural world controlled by petty kings fighting for supremacy. The royal manors of the leading dynasties are not seldom also connected to cultic places and thing sites. Religious performances or jurisdictional assemblies could even involve annual fairs. On the other hand there are the upcoming towns as utterly alien elements that in traditional landscape which in many cases even are separated due to their location in administrative border zones. To this novel living environment without any indigenous predecessors market trade was not only an occasional event, but constituted the very basis.

These early towns integrated in long distance trading networks were able to attract foreign merchants and craftsmen. Due to that they not only became at target for missionary attempts, but also allow the respective kings to raise taxes in exchange for trading peace. Obviously early towns safeguarded an influx of sought-after import merchandise that to a certain degree even penetrated into the surrounding landscape. But for all that as international trading hubs they formed gateways for new technologies and innovation that also reached the hinterland and by that helped the development of the patrons' realm itself.

As sketched above it would be short-sighted to solely focus on the early urban centres themselves in order to understand the very core to that discontinuous phenomenon on the dawn of high medieval towns. It requires nothing less as a sincere holistic approach: A thoroughful examination of the societal framework of the circumjacent traditional rural world, mirrored in a super-regional comparison with Anglo-Saxon England, Continental Europe as well as Byzantium and lastly an inclusion of the sparse but not less important information from chronicles and legal texts. What sounds like a vast investment in research indeed is quite achievable since most of the jigsaw pieces are partly known for quite some time within the scientific debate.

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Relations between the islands of Austmarr – a research proposal

The runic research group at the Swedish National Heritage Board plans a project about the use of runic writing on three of the largest islands in the Baltic Sea, i.e. Öland, Gotland and Bornholm. These islands all have very long runic traditions, ranging from the Roman Iron Age until the Post-Reformation Period.

The aim with this project is to study the relations between these islands and the outer world in an interdisciplinary runic perspective, including Runology, Archaeology and new methods for analysis and documentation, such as 3D-scanning and RTI (Reflectance Transformation analysis).

The islands of Öland, Gotland and Bornholm have a long and rich research history, but they have been compared to each other to a very limited extent only. Comparisons tend to be made with the nearest mainland and within modern national borders. We wish to see the islands in a constellation of its own. The runic tradition of each island has its own complexity regarding contacts, local customs and dating, while at the same time they constitute a border zone where Swedish and Danish interests meet. Still, they have seldom been systematically compared to each other.

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Magnus Källström

Alike or not alike? The writing traditions on Viking Age rune-stones from Öland, Gotland and Bornholm.

The three large islands of the Baltic Sea show many similarities concerning Viking Age rune stones. The rune stones custom are generally considered to be rather late and is supposed to have been maintained long after the year 1100. There have also been ideas about strong influences from the Mälar region in particular when it comes to ornamentation, but also regarding rune forms and orthography. In my paper I will examine the two latter subjects and compare the writing traditions in runes on the three islands. How similar are they and is it correct to assume influences from Central Sweden?

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A force from the outside. Gotland and the political networks in the Baltic Sea Region in the 15th century

In 1407/08, Gotland was handed over to Eric of Pomerania, the king of the Kalmar Union, by the Teutonic Knights. With the erection of the castle Visborg from 1411 onwards in Visby the lieges of the Danish kings could develop a strong position on the island.

Five noblemen controlled the castle Visborg in Visby and the island of Gotland during the 15th century. All of them tried to pursue certain individual targets by using Gotland as a central hub for their operations. For Gotland and the Gotlanders this was a new situation because earlier the rural society of Gotland had been able to structure and organize their social and economical life quite independently. It seems that during the Middle Ages no form of nobility or local elites developed on the island. During the 15th century new forms of taxation were introduced from the outside by mainland elites. At the same time, new ways of administrating the island were slowly implemented. The amount of money that was available for these political actors was the basement for far-reaching activities in the Baltic Sea Region.

The possession of Gotland thus enabled the lieges to use Gotland as an element for establishing and using political networks in the 15th century. Reciprocally the possibilities of the rural society to trade and to consume diminished with less available funds. The maritime environment shaped and determined economical and political relations from Gotland to the outer world – the insular space set boundaries but opened possibilities for interactions of the actors on the island as well.

My contribution deals with the 15th century as turning point for the history of Gotland. It will show that during the 15th century Gotland became part of political networks, whereas Gotland usually is considered as being mainly a part of economical networks during earlier centuries.

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Merili Metsvahi

The legend about the brother-sister-marriage connected with the lake Kaali in Saaremaa

Estonia's most unique geological object is the lake Kaali the basin of which has meteoric origin. Different kind of folklore has emerged about the lake during the last millennium. In my presentation I'll talk about the most widespread folk legend that has been connected with the lake – the story about the marriage between the siblings. According to the legend the building where the marriage took place sank into the ground during the wedding and the lake appeared in the place.

After giving an overview of the legend versions found in the manuscript folklore collections of the Estonian Folklore Archives, I'll provide an interpretation of the legend. I'll indicate that the story goes back into the 13th century and reflects the changes in the Estonian family organization that accompanied the colonization of Estonia by patriarchal Catholic Europe.

The history of familial relationships is a truly under researched topic in Estonian scholarship. During the whole 20th century nothing more has been said than in the territory of Estonia there has always been a patriarchal social organization. Only during the last decade some work has been published that gives a much more adequate picture of the Estonian family history. From the research done by the historian Nils Blomkvist (2005) and the archaeologist Marika Mägi (2009), it has become evident that before the colonization of Estonia, the position of woman was strong and society most probably matrilineal and matrilocal.

I'll explain the legend in connection with the former matrilineal society structure and the huge social change that was forced on Estonian peasants from the 13th century. The brother and sister from the legend belong to the upper class family. It is known that among Germans settled in Livonia, marriage between close relations was not unusual. The established norm was to marry a social equal, but the number of (Baltic) German families in Livonia was strictly limited. Several cases of special dispensation for intermarriage between the cousins are known from the late 13th and from the 14th century.

A marriage acceptable and even desirable to the representative of a more patriarchal and individualistic society was totally incomprehensible to someone coming from a matrilineal society with collective social order. A woman's marriage to a young man born to a mother from her own family was, in the eyes of Estonian peasants, a deed so horrendous that the ensuing chaos of ravaging forces of nature was seen as the only possible outcome. It is possible that in the Balto-Finnic variety of matrilineal kinship, a young woman's marriage to the son of her maternal aunt or uncle was as inconceivable as the marriage of brother and sister.

According to my interpretation of the legend the Estonians' outlook on exogamy and endogamy, as well as on kinship and relations in a wider sense clashed with the totally

different notions of the newcomers. Telling the story alleviated the tension resulting from the different outlook of different social strata. The story was told because it confirmed the understanding that ”our” way of organising the world would prevail, while ”theirs” could lead to a collapse and create chaos, namely the lake Kaali that was most probably a fearful place at that time.

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Islands in the Baltic as reflected in ancient literature from Homer to Jordanes

The Baltic Sea had been perceived in Antiquity and the early Middle Ages as part of the Northern Ocean encircling the world. It is the eastern part of this Ocean, the European one, and thus the Baltic, that had been since ancient times subject to cosmological and mythological speculations and, later, to real examination by ancient Greeks and Romans. Already in Homer Odysseus undertakes an ocean voyage in the Northern Ocean and on his way he passes three islands – the island of Laestrygons (giant man-eaters), the island of Kirke Aeaea, and some country of Cimmerians where there is the entrance to Hades. All these islands, as befits islands in the Ocean, possess a fantastic, fabulous nature, and at the same time they are gateways to the other world.

Not only poetry, but also popular scientific and romantic literature of Antiquity placed a number of islands in the Northern (Baltic) Sea. These are the glorified by the Roman poets *Thule* discovered by Pytheas, a Greek sailor from Marseilles in the third century B.C. (it is well known what different localization the island had undergone in the Middle Ages), the mythical island of Hyperboreans *Elixoia* placed by a third-century B.C. novelist Hecataeus from Abdera in Northern Europe “beyond Celtica”, and the island *Scanza*. At the turn of the eras the Roman fleet first entered the waters of the “Northern Ocean” and, according to Pliny the Elder, reached Jutland beyond which the Romans saw the sea stretching as far as Scythia.

Nevertheless, ancient belief that the Baltic Sea was the Northern Ocean but not an inland sea, and that Scandinavia (*Scanza, Scatinavia*) was not a peninsula but one of the islands of this

sea was preserved in ancient and medieval science and literature as long as the second half of the eleventh century when the German chronicler Adam of Bremen for the first time identified Scandinavia as a peninsula with the result that the Baltic Sea proved to be an inland sea.

Writers of Imperial Rome, Tacitus, Pomponius Mela, Pliny the Elder, Ptolemy and others have brought to us a vague idea of the existence in the Baltic Sea of several islands, some of which might have referred to the southern offshoots of the Scandinavian Peninsula. These islands are *Baunonia* lying opposite Scythia, *Balcia*, or *Basilia*, *Oeonae insulae*, *Scatinavia* situated among numerous islands of the *Codanus sinus* to the east of Jutland, and some others.

Authors of the sixth and seventh centuries, Jordanes and Anonymus from Ravenna, following on the whole geographic canons of Antiquity, were aware of a massive migration of Germanic peoples, mostly the Goths whose ancestral home was on some islands in the Baltic Sea. The Ravennate in his description of Northern Europe (Cosmographia I, 11) reports that “in the ocean (*infra oceanum*)” “beyond *(post terga*)” the land of the Francs there lies Britania, beyond Germany and beyond the land of the Saxons – some unnamed islands, and “beyond the land of the Roxolans, deep in the ocean, there is a large island of Ancient Scythia, an island which many scientists and historians glorify; Jordanes, the most learned cosmographer, calls it Scanza. Western tribes came out this island; we have, after all, read that in ancient times therefrom came out the Goths and the Danes together with the Gepids”.

Thus, the paper demonstrates how the islands of the Baltic Sea, that at the outset of antique civilization had been the product of cosmological and mythological schemes, turned by the early Middle Ages into real geographical objects.

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Viking Age Gold Rings on Gotland

Á gerðum sér þeira	On their Clothes one sees
ok á gollbaugum	and on their goldrings
at eru i kunnleikum við konung	that they are friends of the king
(...)	(...)
es þeim Haraldr valði	how Harald donated them.

In the 19th stanza of the *Haraldskvaeði* (Hrafnsmál) Þórbjörn hornklofi characterises one of the most important attributs of men in the early middle ages in Scandinavia. The norwegian source of the 12th century1 describes that men were recognizable as the kings men because of their gold rings as attributes. It is only one example of many texts which describes the

function of gold rings in that particular context. But Viking age gold rings have been so far denied as an artifact group of its own right due to the massive predominance of silver and the influx of Islamic darāhim into the Baltic. Because of sources like the one quoted often unreflectively connected to the followers to the king interestingly enough those rings were never found in high class burials, but exclusively in hoards. And this applies not only to goldrings but silver as well. Moreover they appear mostly as complete specimens and have seldom been chopped down like Hacksilver rings which means that they probably have not been used as means of payment in everyday life.

The aim of the PhD thesis is to try to solve the apparent contradiction between two disciplines, which means to question the reason for the absence of rings in Viking Age graves and to find out the actual function and meaning of Viking Age gold rings and to come to a historical reconstruction based on both the Nordic written sources and the archaeological source material. So far the written sources show no specific pattern in describing and using rings, which means that goldrings where used for all kinds of actions – as symbols and gifts like the ones described above but also as kind of money to buy land or cattle. The archaeological sources in contrast show a very clear pattern when it comes to the composition of goldring hoards which were deposited always very sheer without any other objects and metals but gold.

So far 486 Viking age gold rings in the north and the areas occupied by Scandinavians could have been compiled. Among them with 77 specimens in total the gotlandic material proved to be a large group. Apart from the large number of goldrings it seems that Gotland have had a special way to handle rings as part of a dress code. While on the Swedish mainland the ring as grave good disappears bronze and silver rings can be found in female burials on Gotland and Bornholm. In the paper I would like to examine this antipode and discuss the possible reasons for the different treatment of rings on Gotland.

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Archaeology on Gotland: Odin and the mask from Hellvi

For an archaeologist, it is not especially inspiring to survey a site known to be looted. The scientific value of the excavation result is already incomplete, in question and always very difficult to interpret.

Excavating a looted site has its own particular challenges and is frustrating to say the least, although the circumstances did not make the site, or the investigation, completely

uninteresting. This is a story about one such place. And this one, after all, has a relatively happy ending.

In the winter of 2010/2011 a collection of artefacts was handed over to the County Administration Board on Gotland. The items were an odd assortment in terms of origin, function and chronology. The story that came with the objects was that a man found them using a metal detector during the early 1980s. They were then stored at his home, and when he died they were inherited by the person who submitted them to the local authorities. According to the informant, all objects came from the same area, something that seemed unlikely based on the composition. One of the objects was particularly interesting. It was a familiar face from the past, the face of Alexander the great. And one legend turned to another to fit the new environment in a symbolic way.

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