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How to Bury the Dead

A study on regional variations in the southern Baltic area during Late Pre-Roman and Early Roman Iron Age

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ABSTRACT

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This article deals with the question of regional variation in funeral customs during a part of the Early Iron Age in the Baltic Sea area. The backbone of this study is a presentation of a comparison between a selection of investigated cemeteries in the south Baltic area, including parts of Sweden, Denmark, Germany and Poland. The starting point is the graves of southern Sweden in general and the Istaby cemetery in particular.

The graves of the elite are very important and interesting from many different aspects, but for the purposes of this study the graves of the more ordinary people are considered to better highlight the main features of the regional variations. The study of burials from Late Pre-Roman Iron Age and Early Roman Iron Age in the southern Baltic includes a world of a thousand details. Several interesting observations are made regarding similarities and differences in the chronology of the cemeteries, cemetery size and complexity, visible grave monuments, burial customs, artefact types and combinations. The different and partly overlapping regional expressions in the ritual systems, makes the contacts with other people, across the sea, especially clear. A correspondence analysis shows three themes of how the dead were equipped and displayed, following rather strict patterns, suggesting that these were widely distributed idealized metaphors.

Despite many differences between the regions, the main feature is the great similarities. One main conclusion drawn from this study is that there were several regional traits in burial practices in the different areas and in many of the single details mentioned above. In contrast to obvious variations, the cemeteries had several traits in common; these give an impression of the occurrence of governing ritual norms that were generally adopted throughout a large area around the southern and western parts of the Baltic Sea. This is a very strong indication of overlying and governing ritual norms and religious beliefs that were shared among the Germanic tribes.

Keywords: Early Iron Age, Late Pre-Roman Iron Age, Early Roman Iron Age, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Poland, cemeteries, funeral customs, burial customs, grave monuments, artefact types, regionality, regional variation, ritual systems, ritual norms, correspondence analysis

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Background and aim

This work is a result of an interest in regional variation in funeral customs during the Early Iron Age, particularly in southern Sweden. I have previously studied the graves of the era in Scania, compared the Roman Iron Age graves of Scania and Zealand and studied the cemetery of Istaby in Blekinge (Björk 2005, 2008, 2011). The graves at Istaby contained a large number of meander-decorated pottery vessels. Meander-decorated pottery is quite rare in Sweden. In fact, there are eight meander-decorated vessels from Istaby, which is about as many as from the rest of Sweden collected. This clearly points towards intensive contacts or even migration between Istaby and another region, probably in the vicinity of present-day Germany or western Denmark.

To broaden the above-mentioned studies, it is important to broaden the comparisons between different graves and cemeteries to a larger geographic area, and to deepen the questions concerning social structures, regional variations and relationships between different regions. A very interesting area from a south Swedish perspective is the south Baltic Sea area. This is because the cultural transformation, here in particular the burial customs, should not be studied in a purely regional context or in isolation, since different contacts between bordering areas reasonably contributed to distribution of goods, ideas and people. In later years, several studies crossing nation borders have been conducted in this area, e.g. *Worlds apart?* and *Die Insel in der Mitte* (Lund Hansen & Bitner-Wróblewska 2010, Heidemann Lutz 2010). This is very satisfying and has vitalised interregional research. It is an important task to further analyse, for example, similarities and differences in funeral traditions in wider perspectives and to publish results for an international audience. Many

studies are still published in Swedish, Danish and Polish, making it a very difficult quest to grasp the material at hand, and limiting the choices for most researchers.

The backbone of this study is a presentation of a comparison between a selection of investigated cemeteries in the south Baltic area, with focus on regional variations in the burial customs. The starting point is the graves of southern Sweden in general and the Istaby cemetery in particular. I believe that there is a great potential in graves to study several different phenomena in past societies. Not least the relationship between different areas. A study of regional variations is important, since contradicting traditions can display clear local and regional phenomena. These can serve as means to reflect on the reasons for the variations in expressions, in terms of social contexts and contact patterns. The ultimate goal is to reach an understanding of why specific things were accentuated in different places and to spread light on the nature of the interactions between neighbouring areas. Chronologically the study is concentrated to the Late pre-Roman and Early Roman Iron Age. The aim is to evaluate the regional variations in an attempt to problematize grand contexts such as the social differences, the ritual systems and the ritual norms. This is followed by a discussion about how different regions influenced each other and, to some degree, the character of the contacts between the areas.

The study primarily points to tendencies in the material and not to statistically based facts. The basis of the work lies in an overall comparative analysis with in-depth discussions about visible grave monuments, burial customs, certain grave goods, disposition of the inhumations and regional expressions of the formalized grave language. We will return to a closer explanation of the last formulation later on.

A general impression is that apart from high status graves and weapon graves, only a small number of more ordinary graves signal direct contact, for example migration, between different regions. An exception is the burials at Istaby, mentioned above, and e.g. the Skälv-burial in Östergötland, Sweden. Although the latter is of slightly later date than the chronological focus of this contribution (from phase C1), it is an excellent example of interregional contact. It has a composition of grave goods that would not be out of place in any female grave on a Wielbark culture cemetery in northern Poland (Kaliff 2001a). As has been shown numerously, graves labelled high status were closely connected on an interregional level. It should be pointed out that it is not of primary interest to compare high status graves in this study. The graves of the elite are very important and interesting from many different aspects, but for the purposes of this study the graves of the more ordinary people are considered to better highlight the main features of the regional variations. So how about the more ordinarily equipped graves? Which similarities and differences can be seen on an interregional geographic level? And what does that tell us about the societies in the southern part of the Baltic Sea area and the contacts between them?

Theoretical approaches to burials, regionality and rituals

In the history of archaeology there is a rich flora of theory formation connected to burials; graves have been used as a primal source material to study a wide range of conditions in past societies, like for instance chronology, ethnicity, settlement archaeology, social differentiation and rituals. The starting point for this study is to give the reader a brief account of how different theories about burials, regionality and rituals have shaped its methodology. Because of my interest in questions concerning regional variations and to what degree we can use burial traditions to understand relationships between different regions, some of the theories connected to these issues need to be commented particularly.

The study is based in a traditional processual archaeology, rooted in empiric study of the material, since there is a need of a firm base to discuss variation and repetitive behaviour in large samples. In a theoretical sense, and indeed a political one, much of the foundation in my case goes back to a Marxist view of society, seeing it as a construction basically built on the dialectic between economy and ideology. The processual methodology and the Marxist ideology naturally give the work a frame of a world of details connected into intricate and rigid systems. But there are several reasons to broaden the perspective and to balance the somewhat rigid and inflexible methods and results associated with this ground. To nuance and contextualize the results of the basic methods, some more post-processual and contextual viewpoints are included in the analyses in the latter part of the study. I see this as a way forward and an attempt to reach further, to a better understanding than perhaps any direction in its purest form is able to do within itself. That every person is formed by the society, and the cultural and social systems he/she grows up in, is without question. Nor can it be denied that every person makes choices that in various degrees are within or outside the prevailing rules. So, is it fruitful to view materialism and conditions of production as incompatible with context, action or intent? Past populations consisted of many individuals and to recognise that they had and made choices based on a variety of circumstances, framed by economical and ideological structures, seems like a good idea.

Death is in archaeology today generally seen as the start of a transition from one state to another, through a rite of passage, where a regular burial could be one part of it. The mortuary practices or rituals in such events are also seen as a way to reproduce society when it is subject to a large change, and to secure a successful transformation of the dead and the surviving. Another important insight is the mechanisms at play in changes of the rituals themselves (Nilsson Stutz 2015). In the latest decades much of the theoretical foundation for studying rituals as practice and ritualisation has been inspired by the influential works on the subject by Catherine Bell. Of special interest here is the establishment that rituals are situational and not per se normative and repetitive, but that they often show recurrent patterns (Bell 1992, 1997). In

this study the repetitive actions and recurring choices of attributes are of special interest, instead of the situational aspects, as the former show a formalisation of the ritual norms that can be seen in large sets of data. This leads us to the question of regional variation.

Regionality is an elusive concept. In an everyday archaeological sense, we often use the term to describe a regional or even local variation of the overall culture, sometimes even a specific phenomenon, distinct or peculiar for a certain area with a coherent material culture, differing in some aspects from that in neighbouring areas. Regional differences are problematic, but they carry important testimony about past societies and the important question is after all why they occurred (Ringtved 1988:38ff). My view on regionality in terms of variations in burials is close to Fredrik Svanberg's concept of ritual systems. He describes these as partly exclusive for smaller groups/areas, though connected to a larger system of religious beliefs common for groups in a larger geographic area (Svanberg 2003). In line with Svanberg's reasoning, I believe that the relevance for a study on regional variation, based on the graves, lies in the possibility to see and evaluate differences and similarities between different areas. I also believe it to be possible to discern what are results of overall social and ritual norms and what has to do with regional/local traditions and even individual choices.

A subject vital for interpretation of past societies is the concept of social stratification, and in funerary archaeology in particular the concept of high-status objects and high-status graves. Unique and very rare objects, objects of valuable metals, as well as more common Roman imports and weapons, have been connected with individuals who held a position of special importance in society. A view normative for Danish archaeology dealing with the Roman Iron Age can be exemplified with one of its prominent figures, Lotte Hedeager. She noted that exclusive materials such as gold and imported artefacts mainly occur in graves with high AOT values (with numerous grave goods). For this reason, those who were buried with these categories of objects are seen as connected to an elite in a system of socially ranked classes (Hedeager 1992:103ff, 123, for AOT values see below section *The number of artefact type*s). In extension her reasoning leads to the assumption that attributes including gold and imports reflect power and wealth. This is connected to the next assumption of an interregional elite exchange system – a prestige goods system – which in turn reflects a stage of early state formation (Hedeager 1992:115, 142). This wealth-centred view has been dominant for a long time, but also criticized in the theoretical debate, mainly because it lacks an approach to the question of why a given set of objects or actions was used to signal identity and rank. In the case of objects of Roman origin, a need of another set of conceptual tools with perspectives from contemporary social theory is underlined, to understand the function and meaning in Germanic mortuary practices (Ekengren 2009:18f). There is an obvious risk of circular reasoning in pointing out certain artefacts as high-status objects. Nevertheless, I believe that the concept of the objects in the graves as connected to the individual's social position is crucial to be able

to discuss differences between individuals at all. This method of structuring the material in terms of finding a basis for a discussion on repetitive behaviour and variation in relation to age and sex is an important way of being able to identify economic and social stratification at a grand level. My conclusion is that the individuals who were buried in an elaborated way, and/or with a multitude of grave goods, held an important position in their local or regional communities. We cannot close our eyes to phenomena such as uneven distribution of wealth, people with power ambitions, violence or the beginning of state formation in prehistoric societies, only because a processual approach does not capture either the details in one single grave in full, or the whole complex picture of people´s actions and intentions. These are phenomena that I think are difficult to reach an understanding of through a purely contextual methodology. But I am more than willing to confess that the weakness of a processual line is that its socio-economic nature does not reveal much action in rituals and religious beliefs. It is in these fields I believe that more contextually oriented studies have a lot to contribute to burial studies.

I have dwelt a while on the problem concerning the interpretation of high-status objects and graves; although this is not a focus in itself in this work, it is a central problem for the theoretical and methodical approach to grave goods. Some of the above-mentioned differences between a processual and a contextual outlook are clear with the perspective of a processual orientation on the grave goods as *representing* the social-political role of the deceased, while the contextual proponents consider this as *constituting* social relationships. It is important to understand that the grave goods can never be seen as a direct reflection of a social system (Ekengren 2013:174f). These achievements in the theoretical debate are easy to appreciate and agree with. At the same time, my objection is that a more system-oriented approach has its advantages, for example in processing large quantities of data to reveal overall patterns in and between large geographic areas.

Source critical considerations

There will be much reasoning in the following about the chronological frames, the numbers of graves and the spatial conditions of the cemeteries. Moreover, there are, of course, several important source-critical variables to consider when moving towards an interpretation of the material. The single largest source critical problem is that, in many cases, the exact sizes of cemeteries are unknown, since they are often partially destroyed by cultivation or land exploitation in recent times, and/or that they are only partly excavated. The problem of the uncertainty of the number of objects preserved in the cremation graves in relation to the inhumations is also vital to be aware of (Rasmussen 2010:19). It must constantly be kept in mind that fragments of fragments are the basis of our knowledge, in more than one respect. The intentional nature

of much of the burial data is of course also important to relate to from a source critical point of view (cf. Härke 1997).

In a way, the author's residence and mother tongue also involve problems from an international perspective. The emphasis of the description obviously has a strong bias in Swedish material and a Swedish research tradition. A neighbouring problem is that there are, and have been, different conditions and research traditions in different parts of the analysed area. When comparing material from a large geographic area, which also comprises several nations, this may seem excessive to point out. There are, however, so different prerequisites that they need to be commented briefly.

The archaeological excavations in Sweden have to a very high degree been carried out in the best arable land, which has been used in historical times; in southern Sweden largely with a coastal connection. This means that hillier and wooded inland areas are very poorly represented in the available archaeological record, despite that it is in these areas there are most known visible grave monuments from the Iron Age.

Different traditions in the ways of publishing results from excavations exist in the different countries and also regarding changes over time. Publications strictly based on the material has not been comme il faut in Sweden since the breakthrough of the post processual school, even if Iron Age research in general has kept on to a German tradition of cultural history to a greater degree than research concerning other periods.

There are also both a judicial and an ethically grounded disinclination among Swedish authorities towards investigations in grave milieus. From a judicially point of view, all ancient monuments have a strong protection and it is an outspoken goal for authorities, and in fact all Swedish citizens, to make sure that they are preserved for coming generations. Furthermore, Swedish cemeteries often have visible grave monuments, valuable elements in the historical landscape, and public objections are heard from time to time against unnecessary disturbance of graves. In total, these standpoints have led to only small numbers of Iron Age graves having been excavated during the last decades, with exception for the ones discovered at land development, e.g. road constructions. The numbers of well dated graves are furthermore low, in Sweden in particular, depending on the fact that, compared to other regions, only few graves contain fibulae (fig. 1), and it is doubtful if any cemetery at all in the Swedish part of the study has been completely excavated (Rasch 1991:133, Björk 2005:97). This last comment is also valid for other regions, such as the north-eastern part of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

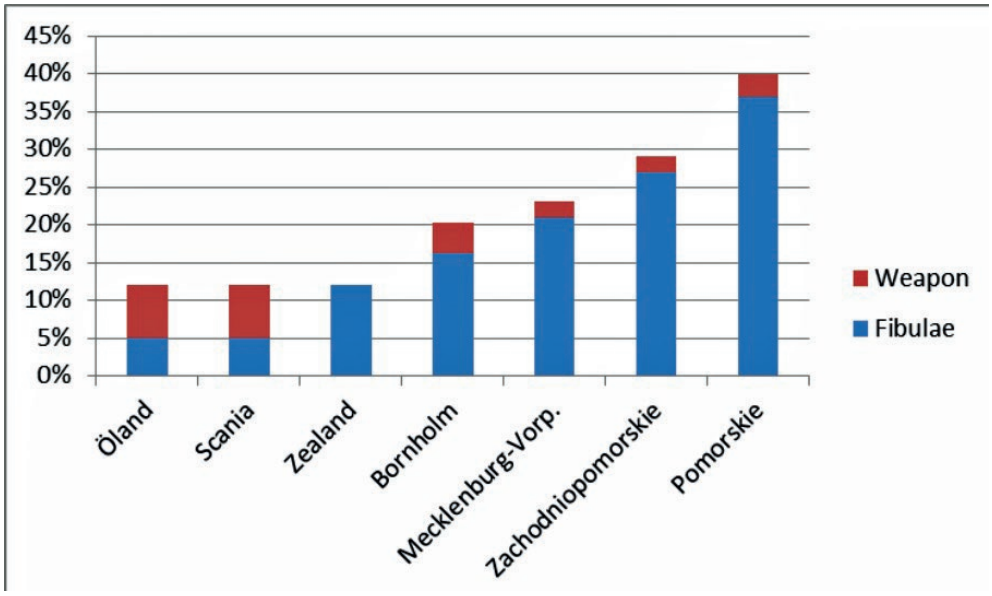

Fig. 1. The percentage of graves with fibulae and weapons in different regions. Based on the cemeteries presented in Table 1.

In Denmark more long-term, and purely research-based excavations, have been conducted at large Iron Age cemeteries, far more than in southern Sweden. In this context, the cemeteries of Møllegårdsmarken on Funen and Slusegård on Bornholm can be especially mentioned (e.g. Albrectsen 1971, Klindt Jensen 1978). In Germany and Poland, a great number of investigations of cemeteries were carried out even before World War II. As a consequence of the war, many artefacts and much unpublished documentation were destroyed or looted, which resulted in research gaps in these countries. Extensive efforts have been made after the war to compile and publish the material, and this work still continues. It is also likely that significantly larger numbers of cemeteries have been excavated in the post war period in Germany and Poland, compared with Denmark and Sweden. The cemeteries are also often larger than the Scandinavian, which makes the collected material from Germany and Poland far greater.

A consequence of the different conditions is that there has been some difficulty in finding comparable sites, both regarding cemetery size and similar social and chronological conditions. This is a problem in itself, probably caused by variation in research strategies of our own time, but also by variations in the archaeological record. The actual variation in prehistoric conditions is of course the core that is in focus to be able to give relevant interpretations of the similarities and variations in the regions.

Last but not least, it must be pointed out that this study is in many respects diachronic, mainly because dates in tables are not made to provide a picture of fine resolution. It would be an extensive work to present all the graves in detail. To some extent, the cemeteries have been selected to avoid the inclusion of too many graves outside the desired time interval, but it has been impossible to avoid a number of graves from both Early pre-Roman and Late Roman Iron

Age. This does not affect the overall picture in a significant way, but rather the contrary. On the other hand, it has been an important task to reach an understanding of the chronological spectrum at each cemetery and in each region. Such a balance is difficult to achieve in full for a comparison restricted to a limited number of cemeteries.

Studied area

The studied area is the southern part of the Baltic Sea area and constitutes parts of Sweden, Denmark, Germany and Poland. The selected Swedish regions are Öland, Blekinge and Skåne (Scania). The Danish regions are Bornholm, Själland (Zealand), Langeland and Fyn. The German region is Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. The Polish regions are mainly West Pomerania and Pomerania (Zachodniopomorskie and Pomorskie) but also one example from Warmińsku-Mazurskie.

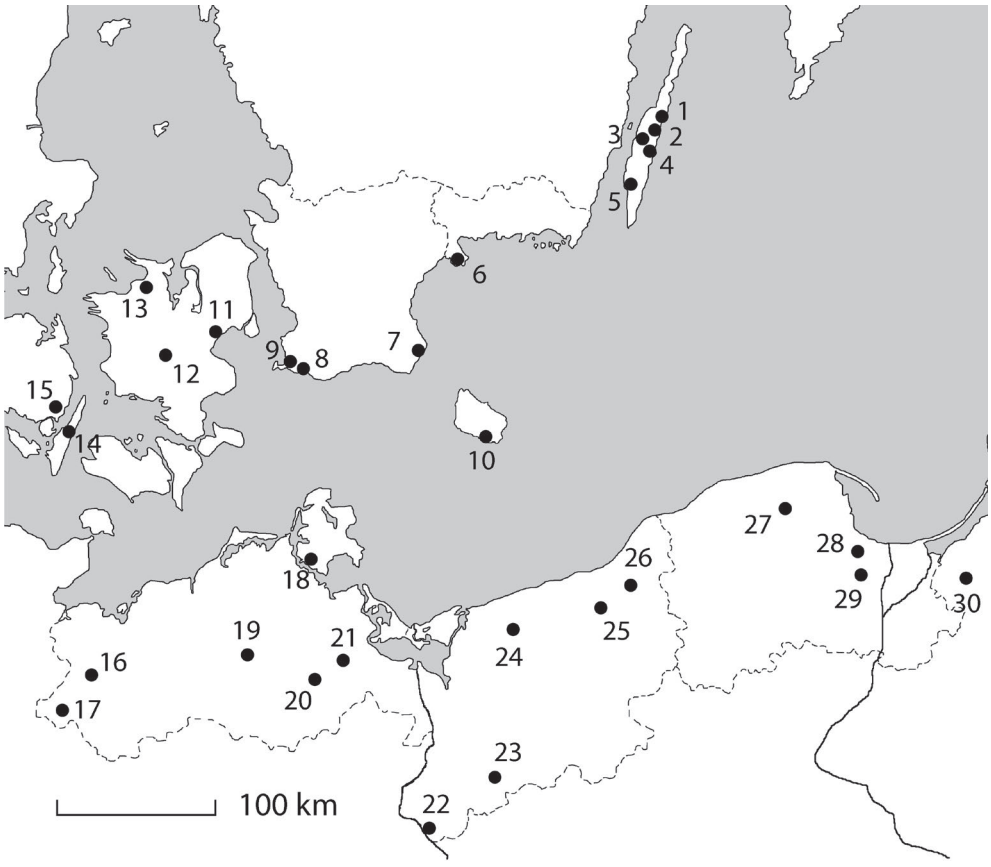

Fig. 2. Map showing the southern Baltic area, the main districts involved in the study and the locations of the cemeteries. The numbers refer to the listing in Table 1. The regions are Zealand, Scania, Blekinge, Öland, Bornholm, Mecklenburg/Vorpommern, West Pomerania and Pomerania, with some additions from Funen, Langeland and Warmińsku-Mazury.

A selection of 30 cemeteries was chosen for a comparative study regarding size, chronology and burial practices. The latter includes treatment of the body, grave forms and grave gifts (fig. 2 and table 1). The cemeteries are presented below. The selection was governed by a number of factors, some mentioned above. One essential condition was that they are well published in a language understood by the author. This has limited the choice to works in Swedish, Danish, English and German. For the northern parts of Germany and Poland, the selection was mainly based on suggestions from a number of helpful archaeologists in Sweden, Germany and Poland (see *Acknowledgement*). Further, the endeavour has been to choose cemeteries with a chronologic emphasis in Late pre-Roman and Early Roman Iron Age. Another important condition in the selection was to obtain a geographical spread of sites within the studied area.

The material was evaluated in particular regarding regional variations, taking into consideration previous comparisons and conclusions made by other scholars. No separate review of documentation, artefacts or dates from each cemetery has been carried out, with exception for north-east Scania and the Istaby cemetery (Björk 2005, 2011). Nor has any total overview been made of every excavated cemetery in the different regions. It would be a very comprehensive effort to compile hundreds or maybe even thousands of sites, which would be far beyond the limits of this work.

The cemeteries that have been studied are:

Sweden
Öland (Gåtebo, Sörby-Störlinge, Brostorp, Övra Ålebäck, Bjärby)
Blekinge (Istaby)
Skåne/Scania (Simris, Maglarp, Hammarsnäs)

Denmark
Bornholm (Slusegård)
Sjaelland/Zealand (Klintegård, Simonsborg, Asnæs)
Langeland (Stengade)
Fyn (Brudager Mark)

Germany
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (Gustow, Badow, Wiebendorf, Rachow, Zinzow, Neubrandenburg)

Poland
Zachodniopomorskie/West Pomerania (Stare Łysogórki, Prądno, Lubieszewo 1, Wygoda, Grzybnica)
Pomorskie/East Pomerania (Lubowidz, Pruszcz Gdański Fst 10, Ulkowy)
Warmińsku-Mazury/Warmińsku-Mazurskie (Weklice)

The locations of the cemeteries are shown in fig. 2. References to each publication are shown in Table 1. As mentioned above the material was especially evaluated in regard to regional variations. A first view of the material especially shows variation in visible grave markers, and in some of the different artefacts occurring in the cemeteries. It also gives a rough picture of the chronology of the cemeteries (table 1).

Chronological systems

In general, wide frames for dating were aimed at to identify major trends in the material. The dating is based on the material that is presented in each publication; the purpose is to detect tendencies rather than to be held up in detailed chronological analyses of each grave. However, some chronological choices must be accounted for, to give the reader a possibility to understand and evaluate the presented information.

The chronology used for the pre-Roman Iron Age is based on the fundamental works of Oscar Montelius (1895). The chronology of the pre-Roman period is, however, still problematic in many cases in present Sweden and parts of Denmark. By far the most common type of artefacts is ceramics, and a finer division than to an early or late phase is seldom possible (Hedeager 1992:26ff). The regional subdivisions established for Jutland, northern Germany and Poland are problematic to transfer to Swedish and other Danish materials (for a brief comment on the synchronization between these regions see Martens 1998:170). A division of the pre-Roman Iron Age, according to a traditional Scandinavian chronology, is seen as a reasonable operational tool in this study, which also primarily deals with the last part of the period (e.g. Jørgensen 1988, Martens 1998).

The subdivision used for the Roman Iron Age is the general categorisation into Early Roman and Late Roman Iron Age, but is ultimately based on Ulla Lund Hansen's work on Roman imports in Scandinavia (Lund Hansen 1987:30). Her subdivision has been criticized by Per Ethelberg who considers it, to some extent, as a regional chronology for Zealand. It can be synchronized with regional chronologies for Bornholm and southern Jutland, but good chronologies are lacking for many other regions (Ethelberg 2000:39ff). Ethelberg's arguments can of course be applied to the chronological system for the pre-Roman Iron Age as well. Although Lund Hansen's chronology for the Roman Iron Age has some limitations when used for other regions, I believe it serves its purpose as coherent terminology in this context – i.e. the supraregional level. In this study, Lund Hansen's system B1-C3 is used in the general presentation and analysis. When single graves or cemeteries are mentioned, however, the phase designated by the individual researcher is used.

The following abbreviations have been used consistently for subdivisions: pRIA (pre-Roman Iron Age), EpRIA (Early pre-Roman Iron Age), LpRIA (Late pre-Roman Iron Age), ERIA (Early Roman Iron Age), LRIA (Late Roman Iron Age), MP (Migration Period).

Table 1. Table showing the basic facts about the cemeteries in the study, such as presence of different burial customs (C = cremation, I = inhumation) and a selection of artefacts of regional importance. The dates are simplified and abbreviations in brackets are those that are not included in the A-D system: LBA = Late Bronze Age, VEN = Vendel Period (general Scandinavian chronology AD 550-800), VIK = Viking Age (general Scandinavian chronology AD 800-1050).

	Area m^2	Nr (C)	Nr (I)	Monument/s	Weapon	Import	Fibula	Neck-armring	Sickle - scythe	Leather-knife Typ I	Leather-knife Typ II	Leather-knife Typ III	Shears	Meander orn. pottery	Dating	Ref.
Sweden																
1. Gåtebo	1800	17	17	Stone settings Standing stones	1	-	2	-	1	3	1	-	-	-	A-B2, (C3)	Beskow Sjöberg 1987a
2. Sörby-Störlinge	900?	25	64	Stone settings Standing stones	8	2	8	-	3	10	6	-	-	-	A-B2, (C-VIK)	Beskow Sjöberg 1987b
3. Brostorp	4000	21	9	Stone settings	6	-	4	-	-	3	3	-	-	1	B1-C1a	Rasch 1991
4. Övra Ålebäck	?	39	21	Stone settings	8	2	2	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	A-B1(B2)	Beskow Sjöberg 1991
5. Bjärby	?	8	117	Standing stones	1	-	-	-	-	3	1	-	-	-	B1-B2 (VIK)	Schulze 1996
6. Istaby	3000	24	58	Stone settings	4	-	3	-	5	2	6	-	-	8	A-B2 (C-VEN)	Björk et al 2011
7. Simris	1800	69	33	Stone setting	5	1	8	2	1	-	1	-	-	1	A-C2 (YBÅ - ÄFR)	Stjernquist 1955, 1977
8. Maglarp	?	14	37	Mounds	3	-	3	1	3	-	1	1	-	1	A-B2 (C – D)	Björk 2005
9. Hammarsnäs	1800	1	139	-	1	-	4	-	2	-	-	1	-	-	A-D	Hansen 1936, Pettersson 2002
Denmark																
10. Slusegård	?	928	467	Stone setting, circular burial trenches	59	23 (10)	226	5	3	-	20	28	9	1	A-D	Klindt Jensen 1978a+b, Lind 1991
11. Klintegård	?	-	66	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	B1-B2	Liversage 1980
12. Simonsborg	1000	-	37	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	B1-B2	Liversage 1980
13. Asnæs	?	-	13	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	B2	Hauschild & Jørgensen 1981
14. Stengade	9900	12	37	-	2	-	8	1	-	-	3	1	-	-	B2-C1 (VIK)	Skaarup 1976
15. Brudager Mark	5250	154	14	-	16	7	27	1	-	-	5	4	6	-	B2-C3 (D)	Henriksen 2009

Table 1.*Forts.*

	Area m²	Nr (B)	Nr (S)	Monument/s	Weapon	Import	Fibula	Neck-armring	Sickle scythe	Leather-knife Typ I	Leather-knife Typ II	Leather-knife Typ III	Shears	Meander orn. pottery	Dating	Ref.
Germany																
16. Badow	9800	1881	-	-	16	1	284	3	-	-	58	65	4	390 (73)	A-B2/C1	Bemmann 1999, Nüsse 2007
17. Wiebendorf	?	718	-	-	37 (4)	7	172	1	-	1?	2	116	10	55 (11)	A-B2	Keiling 1984
18. Gustow	9000 ?	21	12	-	-	1	9	-	-	-	3	-	(1)	1 (1)	A-B2 (YBÅ)(D) (SLA)	Eggers & Stuth 1940, Herfert & Leube 1967
19. Rachow	?	c. 150	?	Stone setting	11	-	62?	-	-	-	17	9	-	10 (2)	B1-B2	Keiling 1987
20. Neubrandenburg	865	174	-	-	2	1 (1)	94	1	-	-	72	-	1	36 (3)	A2-B2	Leube 1978
21. Zinzow	1000	77	1	-	1	-	12	-	-	-	5	2	-	-	A-B2	Richthofen 1995
Poland																
22. Stare Łysogórki	800?	31	2	-	7 (3)	-	7	-	-	-	4	1	1	4 (6)	B1-B2	Hauptmann 2001
23. Prądno	?	166	-	-	-	-	69	-	-	-	19	2	-	?	A3-C1 (C2-3)	Hauptmann 2002
24. Lubieszewo 1	5000	144	2	Mounds	-	-	32	2	2	-	8	-	2	2	HD3-B1	Wołągiewicz 1997
25. Wygoda	1350	150	-	-	6	-	24	2	-	-	3	2	-	2 (4)	A2-B1	Machajewski 2001
26. Grzybnica	3000 0	58	39	Mounds, stone circuits, circular burial trenches	-	-	25	7	-	-	-	-	1	-	B2-C1a (C2-3)	Hahuła & Wołągiewicz 2001
27. Lubowidz	5000 ?	64	241	-	-	(2)	89	27	-	-	6	-	-	2	A3-B2/C1	Wołągiewicz 1995
28. Pruszcz Gdánski	5600	355	170	-	37	3	191	25	-	-	25	7	1	2	A1-C2	Pietrzak 1997
29. Ulkowy	6900	15	110	-	-	-	73	21	-	-	2	-	-	-	B1-C2	Tuszyńska 2005
30. Weklice	2400	157	278	-	4 (1)	3	162	48	-	-	-	-	-	1 (3)	B1-C2 (C3/D1)	Natuniewicz-Sekuła & Okulicz-Kozaryn 2011

Chronology of the cemeteries

It is natural to begin with an analysis of the chronology of the cemeteries. To be able to discuss spatial and possible social structures, a precondition is to understand when and how the cemetery was established, the main period of use and the ending, in terms of chronology. As a basis, a short background is presented to the general chronology for cemeteries in different regions in the area.

In southern Sweden some cemeteries were established during the Late Bronze Age, while the major part seems to be established during the pRIA, and in particular the late part. On Öland, the majority of graves date from LpRIA until MP (Rasch 1991b). In Scania and Blekinge it is obvious that many of the old cemeteries were abandoned, or there was successive change, towards the end of ERIA and during the course of LRIA. Many new cemeteries were established during the same period. This seems to have been a prolonged process compared to what happened in many other regions (fig. 3, also see Björk 2005:98).

The cemeteries of Bornholm were in general established during the same period as in Scania. Similar to Scania, a large number of cemeteries were abandoned during the course of LRIA – in particular between phase C2 and C3. Nevertheless, the especially large cemeteries, Slusegård and Store Kannikegård, continued to be used into MP (Rasmussen 2010:14, Heidemann Lutz 2010:97ff).

On Zealand, the picture is much more radical with most cemeteries established during B1 and B2. There is little continuity of use further back in time, and the next break in continuity happened relatively shortly thereafter, between B2 and C1, with a general relocation or new establishment of virtually all cemeteries (Hedeager 1992 s. 131, Lund Hansen 1995 s. 385, Ethelberg 2000 s. 126f).

On Funen the picture is again more complex. Some of the cemeteries founded during pRIA were in use until the end of LRIA – e.g. the extremely large cemetery of Møllegårdsmarken with its at least 2023 graves (Albrectsen 1971). In many cases, however, there was an interruption in the continuity of use between B1 and B2. Many new cemeteries were established in B2 and continued to be used until C3 or D1 (Henriksen 2009:299).

For the major part of the sites in northern Germany and northern Poland it is clear that they were founded during pRIA and that they ceased, or at least faded noticeably, over the course of phase C1 (fig. 4). This is shown with clarity in a compilation of a much larger comparison material than what is included in this study (Machajewski 2003, Tab. 1). Throughout Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Pomerania, there is a very sharp interruption around C1 in the continuity of use in most of the cemeteries established during pRIA. It is obvious that there was a relocation of the cemeteries in the so-called transition phase B2-C1, around AD 200 (Kokowski 2010:113). In more detail this interruption in continuity began as early as in B2, but was more pronounced in B2/C1-C1a, to begin with in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and later in West

Pomerania. This can be seen in a large part of Germania. Henryk Machajewski and Andrzej Kokowski both regard this interruption as a result of war and population movements – namely the Scandinavian wars and the Marcomanni wars, visible in the Illerup horizon, and through the spreading of Goths to south-east Europe (Machajewski 2003:386 ff., Kokowski 2010:113).

In a roughly simplified schematic overview, it is clear that many cemeteries in use during LpRIA and ERIA were founded in the Late Bronze Age or EpRIA (fig. 3-4). Zealand stands out with marked interruptions in the continuity of the cemeteries between LpRIA-B1 and between B2-C1. Funen had two major interruptions during B1-B2, and C3 or D1, respectively. There was a relatively clear interruption of the continuity in B2-C1 in the western part of northern Germany and northern Poland, as well as in C1 in the eastern parts of this area. Bornholm, Scania, Blekinge and Öland had a later and more prolonged change in the continuity of use stretching from C1 to C3, but in some cases even extending into the Migration period, at least at the large cemeteries on Bornholm. In many respects the old, traditional and archaic cemeteries seem to prevail longer in Sweden, compared to the other studied areas. In conclusion, it is clear that in a wide sense the duration of the cemeteries in the southern Baltic Sea area followed a roughly similar chronological development, even if there are notable variations between the various regions. There is reason to believe that the relocation of cemeteries was directly connected to relocation of settlements.

	A	B1	B2	C1	C2	C3	D	VEN	VIK
Möllebacken	X	?	X						
Valleberga	X	X	X						
Ruuthsbo V	X	X	?				X		
Istaby	X	X	X	?			X	?	
Vellinge	?	X	X	X					
Simris	X	X	X	X	X				
Kristineberg	X	X	X	X	X	X			
Maglarp	X	X	X	X	?	?	X		
Hammarsnäs	?	X	X	X	?	X	X		
Gårdlösa*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Färlöv				X	?	?	X	X	X
Bodarp					X	X			
Dunstorp					?	X	X		
Källby					?	X	X		
Önsvala						X	X		
Stävie						?	X	?	X

Fig. 3. Chronology of the major Scanian Iron Age cemeteries. Based on Björk 2005 (catalogue) and Björk et al. 2011. The Gårdlösa cemetery consisted of several groups of graves along a ridge of some 700 m. VEN = Vendel Period (AD 550-800), VIK = Viking Age (AD 800-1050).

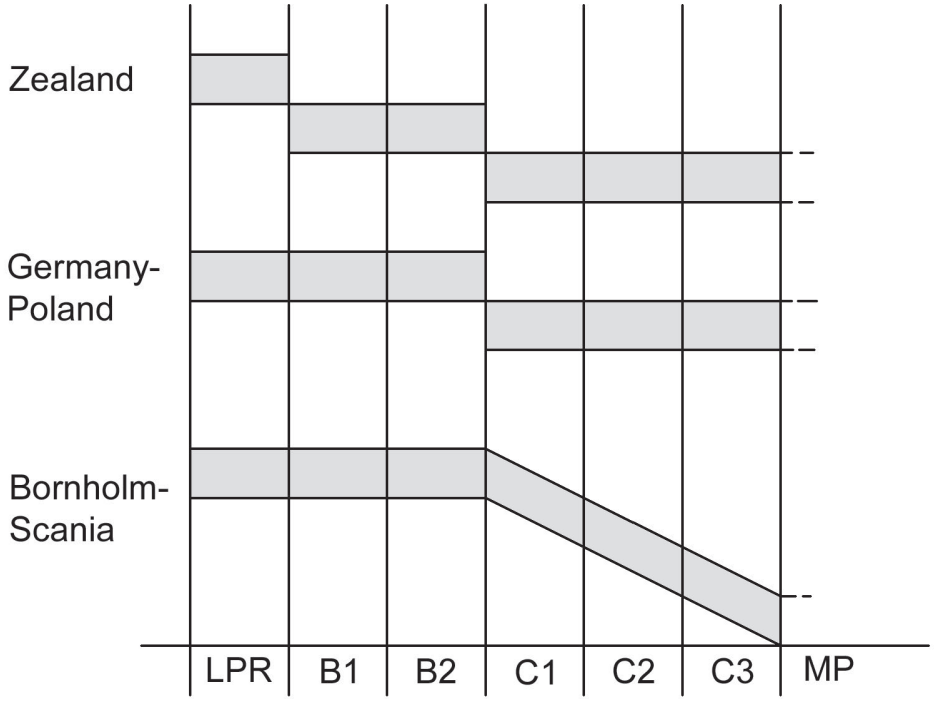

Fig. 4. Simplified diagram showing major general chronological relocations of the cemeteries in the various regions. The stages of relocation are rather clear except for in Bornholm and Scania, where the relocation phase was extended throughout the Late Roman Iron Age, and was not synchronised to a short period of time.

Cemetery size, complexity and arrangement

Size and complexity have been used to give a generalized characterization of the burial grounds, since they vary a great deal in size, disposition and spatial development over time. This is true both within and between the different regions. The duration of the cemeteries is a factor that had influence on the number of buried individuals. In general, the cemeteries that were in use for a long period also had larger numbers of graves than those of short duration. Below, the terms small, medium sized and large cemeteries are used as a gross generalisation for up to 50, 50-200 and over 200 graves, respectively. The term complex cemetery is used for bi-ritual sites with both cremations and inhumations in combination with visible grave monuments. The use of these terms is primarily to categorize the cemeteries and to give a general description of the different regions. The purpose is to evaluate the differences and similarities in size and diversity of cemeteries between the regions on an overall level.

An overview of the cemeteries is painted with a broad brush. It is clear that there are no really large cemeteries in Zealand and southern Sweden. This is in strong contrast to Germany and Poland, where there are several known large cemeteries (e.g. Pietrzak 1997, Bemmann 1999, Natuniewicz-Sekuła & Okulicz-Kozaryn 2011). There are also some instances of large cemeteries

on Funen and Bornholm (Albrectsen 1971, Rasmussen 2010). The examples of completely, or virtually completely, excavated cemeteries in this study are Slusegård, Brudager Mark and Pruszcz Gdański. The reason for the absence of the large cemeteries in Zealand and southern Sweden is somewhat puzzling. It could possibly be found in social conditions, like population size or settlement organisation, e.g. the number of farms functioning as separate units or units of cooperating farms in village-like clusters. Since both single farms and village-like farm clusters are known in southern Sweden, this seems like an unlikely reason. The most likely reason seems to be that in some areas several units shared a common burial ground, which would suggest that the appearance of large cemeteries was due to a combination of large population density and the social organisation. It can be hoped that future interregional comparisons of settlement patterns can shed some light on this topic.

In spite of the varying degrees of excavation in the separate regions, some tendencies are discernible. There is a low degree of complexity in Zealand, where cemeteries from ERIA are small to medium sized and consistently contain inhumations in crouched positions, often closely spaced (Liversage 1980:11ff). On Öland, in Blekinge and in Scania the cemeteries are small to medium sized. Moreover, the binary ritual customs and the visible grave monuments often give the cemeteries a much more varied appearance, compared to Zealand. There is a broad spectrum of cemetery types, from simple to complex, in general with a sparser scattering of graves. Farthest to the west, a cemetery like Hammarsnäs in south-west Scania is closely connected to cemeteries of a Zealandic character, while those in eastern Scania and further east have a more complex structure (Rasch 1991b, Björk 2005:100ff.). A special feature for Öland is that on some of the sites, men, women and children were buried in different parts of the cemeteries (Rasch 1994:195). On Bornholm, the cemeteries are to a large extent relatively complex, small to large and with closely spaced graves. Slusegård and Store Kannikegård are by far the largest of this period. Above all, the picture is dominated by the large cemetery Slusegård, since it has been in focus for a long time. This makes my picture of the Bornholm cemeteries slightly one-sided. Meanwhile, the cemetery Store Kannikegård gives a relatively concordant picture with dates ranging from LpRIA to MP. Nonetheless, the numbers of inhumations are much fewer than on Slusegård. On Store Kannikegård, parts of some 45000 m2 were investigated, with about 920 cremations and 44 inhumations (Lind 1991:51, Heidemann Lutz 2010:307 ff). In northern Germany, there were variations from small to large cemeteries, essentially with a low degree of complexity and with relatively closely spaced graves. The graves are mainly cremations. This is, however, not the case in the coastal areas in Vorpommern and especially on, and adjacent to, Rügen (the so called Gustow group), where inhumations are more common and a sparse scattering of graves seems to dominate, like at many Scandinavian cemeteries (Leube 1970:210f). Northern Poland is characterized by medium sized and large cemeteries with closely spaced graves, especially in the eastern part (Pomerania; e.g. Pruszcz Gdański and Weklice).

There are also complex cemeteries though, especially in West Pomerania, with cemeteries characterized by circular stone settings and erected stones; from B2 and onwards, also by mounds (Cieśliński 2011:117ff). A binary burial custom dominates the overall picture, and both cremations and inhumations occurred side by side in most areas during the ERIA. The exceptions are Zealand and the Elbe Germanic group, exclusively with inhumations and cremations, respectively; with the exception of some rich Lübsow graves in the latter case (Bemmann & Voß 2007:3).

The clearest regional difference is that no distinctly large cemeteries can be found on Zealand, or in the parts of Sweden that are included in the study, even if we look at every location excavated in these regions. It seems as if they in general were much smaller and differently structured than in other parts of the studied area. The lack of large cemeteries may depend on a number of reasons; for instance, varying population density during the Iron Age, or differences in development intensity during the last 100 years, such as construction of buildings, quarrying etc. The self-evident source critical factor to consider is that it is doubtful if any cemetery at all has been completely excavated on Öland and in Scania (Rasch 1991:133, Björk 2005:97). This is probably also true for other parts of the studied area, e.g. Blekinge and the north-eastern part of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

To exemplify some of the observations, in particular the spatial distribution of graves, a closer comparison was made between the cemeteries Istaby (Sweden) and Pruszcz Gdański (Poland). The sites were chosen since they can be considered as thoroughly investigated cemeteries, representative of their regions, having plenty in common, but each other's opposites in other respects. They both had a binary burial custom during B1 and B2, and both were established in pRIA. Istaby only had sporadic graves of later date than B2, while Pruszcz Gdański had a clear continuity until C2, even if the last phase consists of only a handful of graves. Istaby can be classified as a medium sized cemetery with its 82 investigated graves, although it is not yet completely excavated. Pruszcz Gdański, on the other hand, was a large cemetery with 525 investigated graves; it has been estimated that more than a third of the original number of graves were destroyed by gravel quarrying prior to the archaeological investigation. Originally it held an estimated additional 250 graves. At Istaby, there were a number of grave monuments; these were flat, circular stone settings; while at Pruszcz Gdański the burials had no visible grave markers (Pietrzak 1997:7ff, Björk 2011:27ff).

At Istaby, a successive densification took place during its use, but there was no distinguishable spatial enlargement. There was, however, an obvious spatial connection between the circular stone settings and most of the inhumations (fig. 5). With the exception of some central burials, almost all inhumations were placed outside the surfaces once covered by stone settings. Inhumations were located in more or less stone-free surfaces; this indicates that most of them belong to a later phase of the cemetery than the stone settings. The assumption is strengthened by the fact that the central burials in the stone settings were

rich in artefacts, rather uniform in character and had archaic traits. They contained combinations of ceramic vessels and in several cases thin wooden boxes and knives for cutting leather and/or sickles, other knives and awls. None of the central burials in the stone settings contained weapons or fibulae and only one had meander-decorated pottery (grave A15). The custom to deposit weapons and fibulae, in general indicates a somewhat later dating. This proves that the stone settings with central inhumations can be dated to LpRIA or B1. The overall distribution of the burials shows a couple of concentrations in the central part of the excavated area. Most conspicuous is a concentration around stone setting VI and there was a tendency towards the placement of burials in rows (Björkquist & Persson 1979:5). The richest equipped burials were placed in two groups within and east by south-east of stone setting V and VI (e.g. the richest grave A250), and within and north-west of stone setting VII (e.g. the richest equipped weapon grave A20). The most richly furnished graves were thus collected into groups, but there were no obvious differences in the placement of cremations and inhumations. Both rituals seem to have been practised side by side, and there are no clear indications in the ratio or distribution of inhumations and cremations to give information on the layout or change of the cemetery over time.

At Pruszcz Gdański fundstelle 7, an obvious spatial expansion took place during its use. In the first phase A1-B2b burials, mostly cremations, were centred to a small densely used area of some 700 m2. In the following phase, B2c-C2, a successive transition to a larger proportion of inhumations took place, together with a very clear spatial enlargement of up to a total area of about 6000 m2 in the final period of the cemetery (fig. 6). It is also worth noting that the graves were much more sparsely spaced out in the late phase than in the early. A visible spatial expansion of a similar kind occurred e.g. on the Prądno cemetery in north-west Poland too, during its period of use from A3 to C1. However, all excavated graves here were cremation burials, chronologically spanning over the entire period of use (Hauptmann 2002:63ff). A corresponding spatial expansion and a successive transformation from an early phase with almost exclusively cremations, to more inhumations, as is evident on Pruszcz Gdański, can also be seen on medium sized and large cemeteries in other regions. Some clear examples in Denmark and Sweden are e.g. Slusegård on Bornholm, Annelund on Gotland and Smörkullen in Östergötland, Sweden (Rasmussen 2010, Nylén 1994, Liebe-Harkort 2010).

It is clear that the excavated part of the Istaby cemetery was successively densified with graves, rather than a marked spatial expansion in any particular direction. During the ERIA there was a clear densification around the stone settings, but the limited area excavated reduces the possibility to determine if there are later graves in the periphery of the burial ground, which is evident on the cemeteries of Pruszcz Gdański and Slusegård, where a spatial expansion of the cemeteries occurred successively over time.

For some of the cemeteries on Bornholm and on Brudager Mark on Fyn, a division of graves in different spatial groupings has been carried out by

Lars Jørgensen and Mogens B. Henriksen (Jørgensen 1988:25ff, Henriksen 2009:289ff). Jørgensen presents the most far-reaching interpretation of the material, equating the groups with individual households. It is difficult to argue for a similar clear grouping at Istaby or Pruszcz Gdański from a spatial and chronological point of view. There are, nevertheless, two clusters at Pruszcz Gdański with an inkling of a zone with a sparse covering of graves, which could be interpreted as an original division in two separate units, constituting the burial grounds of two social groups. The chronological and spatial distribution of the burials, however, only provides weak support for this (Pietrzak 1997:87ff). In Istaby there is a very strong connection between graves containing weapons together with meander-decorated pottery and graves with sickles combined with meander-decorated pottery. It is clear that the graves with these artefact combinations are grouped in two separate clusters in and north-west of stone setting VII, and south-east of stone setting VI. This could represent two social groups, e.g. families, but a division in two groups is not entirely convincingly recorded. However, it is possible to discern some of the stone settings as the first graves on the site, and thereby that a large proportion of the graves without visible monuments represent a second phase of the chronological and spatial development of the cemetery.

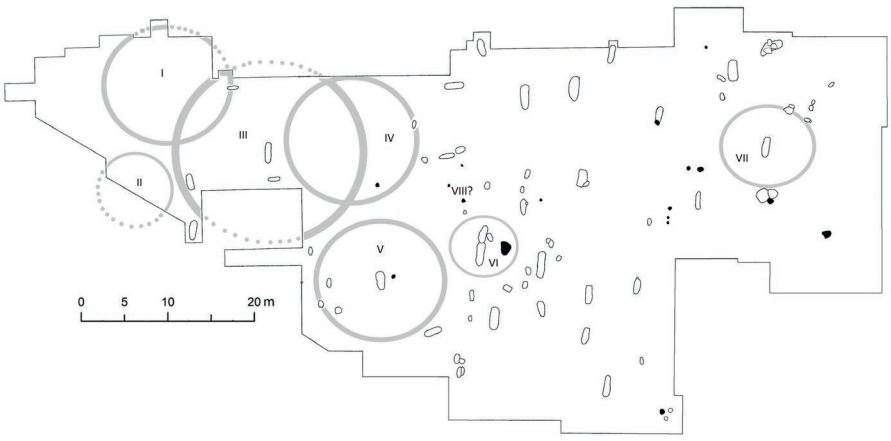

Fig. 5. Plan of the cemetery of Istaby. Note how the inhumation burials to a large degree are located outside the older stone settings.

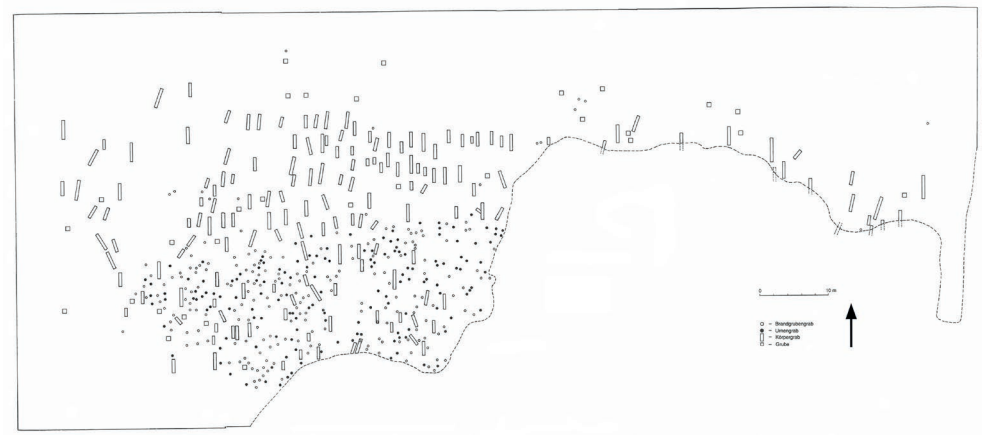

Fig. 6. Plan of the cemetery of Pruszcz Gdański. Note the concentration of the cremation burials and the much wider spacing of the inhumation burials.

The visible grave monuments

The cemeteries in the southern part of the Baltic Sea area exhibit very large differences in the occurrence of visible grave monuments. The following presentation is a brief overview, mainly serving to display general conditions in the different regions.

Sweden is a country rich in stone. Visible grave monuments are plentiful and are dominated by monuments built of stone, in particular circular stone settings. Over 130 000 are known; for example, there are 1425 known stone settings in the small province of Blekinge alone, but very few have been excavated (fig. 7). Sometimes they occur solitarily and sometimes they belong to cemeteries of varying sizes. They differ from a couple of metres up to 30 metres in diameter. The construction of this kind of monument had a very long tradition in Sweden, during a period of about 2000 years, from the Late Bronze Age to the Viking Age (Carlie 1994:62ff). Stone settings from LpRIA and ERIA have been investigated in most Swedish provinces, except in the interior of the northern part of the country. The most common form is the circular stone filled settings, but they can be rectangular too, not least during LpRIA on the island of Öland (Rasch 1994:190). In addition to stone settings, there are also such monuments as mounds, cairns and standing stones during LpRIA and ERIA. These types also had a long continuity of use, which means that single monuments can often only be given a wide dating until excavated (Carlie 1994:49f, 81f).

Some grave monuments built of stone occur on Bornholm, in northern Germany and northern Poland, but very few compared with Sweden. Instead, Denmark, Germany and Poland have a greater number of mounds – not least of the high-status Lübsow-type.

On Bornholm, monuments are relatively rare, but circular stone settings are present at least from pRIA and occasional mounds from LRIA (Larsen

1950:24f, Heideman Lutz 2010:117f). On Zealand, visible monuments are even more unusual. Single burials from ERIA have been found in mounds however, in particular on the north-east of Zealand (Liversage 1980:16). In the northern part of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern single stone circles with cremation urns are present during pRIA (in particular from EpRIA), but also circular filled stone settings (Reinecke & Rausch 1997:65ff, Keiling 2010). In the large cemetery at Mühlen Eichsen, dated from 6th century BC to 1st century AD, small filled and unfilled stone settings occur, with close parallels in Sweden (Ettel 2002, 2014). A later phase of burials under monuments is also seen in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. These are a small number of inhumations in cairns or stone circles, principally richly equipped burials of so called Lübsow-type; burials with Roman imports and weapon graves. This category of inhumations is spread throughout Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, but with a centre of gravity in the south-western part of the area (Leube 1970: Abb. 151). In northern Poland, there are at least some 20 cemeteries with standing stones, circular stone settings and stone circles. They are associated with cemeteries of the same kind as those in Grzybnica och Węsiory (Hahuła & Wołagiewicz 2001, Cieśliński 2012). Mounds are more common, often with inner cairns. The construction of mounds was introduced during B2; these are mainly associated with richly equipped burials, including the princely graves in Lubieszewo (Lübsow) which are eponymous for all the princely graves of the time. In a geographic sense, the cemeteries with mounds, above all, occur in West Pomerania and Pomerania. The mounds with inner cairns show a close connection in construction between this area on the one hand and Öland, Gotland and the Swedish mainland on the other (Cieśliński 2011:181).

Fig. 7. A round stone setting at Ronneby, Blekinge, Sweden (National Register of Ancient Monuments: Ronneby 119:3). Photo by Brita Tronde, the Regional Museum of Kristianstad.

In conclusion, it is evident that visible grave monuments are much more common in southern Sweden than in the other parts of the studied area. This shows that a larger proportion of the Swedish graves involved burial customs with a different kind of preparation and a more labour-intense procedure than most of the graves in the other regions. The Swedish cemeteries in general also have a more varied visual appearance. The distribution and intensity of contemporary agriculture of course plays an important role for the representativeness. It should be kept in mind that seemingly unmarked graves may have had small, modest markings of wood, earth or stone, which might have disappeared and/or be difficult to verify by purely archaeological methods.

Burial customs – treatment of the body

The two main lines in how corpses were treated involved the choices people made between cremation or inhumation of their kin. The variation in this respect must also be carefully considered in an evaluation of chronological and regional differences. This problem has been touched upon in many respects, but seldom as a single issue but rather to discuss a certain period, a certain region, or e.g. to discuss the diffusion of the inhumation custom to the Germanic area or between Germanic regions (for Swedish examples e.g. Stjernquist 1955 and Björk 2005). In this work, special focus is set on the inhumations, as they will be discussed in more detail regarding the formation and design with respect to construction, body position, and the kinds of objects that accompanied the dead and where they were placed.

To begin with we will take a closer look upon the regional and chronological variation between the two main customs of body treatment. The short review below is based on the cited works, and on the cemeteries examined in more detail in this study (table 1).

On Öland, the custom of inhumation burials was already established during EpRIA. During LpRIA, cremation starts to dominate the picture, which it does until B2 when inhumation becomes predominant again (Rasch 1994:190 ff). In Scania, cremation dominates throughout pRIA, with only three known inhumations from LpRIA as the earliest known examples of this custom. During B1, inhumation is established more firmly, but cremation still occurs in about 50 % of the total number of graves throughout ERIA. There are, however, evident differences in various parts of the region, with a marked centre for the inhumation custom in south-western Scania, reasonably explained by the geographic nearness to Zealand (Björk 2005:54, 125, 2008:98, 2015:156). From Zealand, we know of only a small assemblage of cremations from LpRIA. In glaring contrast to that period, there is a considerable amount of inhumations from ERIA, when this burial custom dominated completely (Liversage 1980, Björk 2008:90f). On Bornholm, a binary ritual custom prevailed during ERIA. Viewed from the evidence of the Slusegård cemetery the number of inhumations was growing over time, with ca 10 % during

LpRIA, ca 20 % during B1 and ca 40 % during B2 (Lind 1991:21). In Fyn, the earliest inhumation burials are from B1 with rising numbers during B2 when they amounted to some 18 % (Albrectsen 1971:198). Cremations dominated completely in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern during LpRIA. This continued almost during the entire ERIA, with the exception for a slightly larger number of inhumations in Vorpommern, and above all on Rügen (Leube 1970:210f). In Vorpommern, as well as in West Pomerania, a number of inhumation graves occurred as early as in ERIA, of the so called Gustow group (Bemmann & Voß 2007:4). This points to a close relationship with the rest of the south Baltic area, such as western Denmark, Pomerania, Bornholm and southern Sweden. In the whole of northern Poland, cremations were the most common burial ritual in general, but they were accompanied by inhumations to various degrees. Inhumations seem to have been most frequent during B1-B2 (Kokowski 2010:120, Cieśliński 2011:19), although at some cemeteries inhumations are in fact predominant (e.g. Weklice; Natuniewicz-Sekuła & Okulicz-Kozaryn 2011). There are also examples of early inhumations from LpRIA in this area, for instance a couple of graves on the Pruszcz Gdański cemetery (Grave 127A and 495A, Pietrzak 1997:93).

In inhumations from LpRIA and ERIA, the deceased were predominantly placed face upwards in a supine position, but there are some regional differences. In ERIA in southern Sweden, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and northern Poland the dead were placed in supine position, often in log coffins. However, some individuals were buried in a crouched position lying on one side (Rasch 1994:191, Björk 2005:193ff, Leube 1970:211, Kokowski 2010:120). On Bornholm (Slusegård cemetery) the distribution is about even between supine and crouched position and it is evident that placing the dead face upwards subsequently became more unusual (Lind 1991:38). In Zealand, the crouched position dominated almost completely throughout ERIA (Liversage 1980:12).

In most of the studied regions, the orientation of the inhumations is characterized by a dominance of a north-south position with the head pointing to the north. There was some variation on Öland; but in general, a clear domination for north-south orientation prevailed (Rasch 1994:191). In Scania, an east-west orientation was about as common as north-south during ERIA. During LRIA, this changed to a very clear dominance for a north-south orientation (Björk 2005:57f). Even on Zealand, the inhumations are characterized by varied orientation in ERIA, but there was nevertheless a clear dominance for north-south (Liversage 1980:11ff.). Also, at the Slusegård cemetery on Bornholm a northerly orientation dominates (Lind 1991:27). In northern Germany, a tendency to variation in orientation within the region is visible. In Vorpommern, a north-south orientation was most frequent, while east-west was more common in Mecklenburg (Leube 1970:211). Judging from the cemeteries Pruszcz Gdański, Ulkowy, Weklice etc., north-south orientation was the most customary in northern Poland (Tuszyńska 2005:77, Natuniewicz-Sekuła & Okulicz-Kozaryn 2011:24).

There are several interesting similarities and differences in the burial customs. The most striking feature is the total absence of cremations in Zealand during ERIA, and a preference to place the dead in a crouched position in that area. The other regions seem to have had binary ritual systems with both cremations and inhumations, and in most areas a preference to place the dead supine with a north-south orientation in inhumations. To some extent the inhumation tradition seems to be a coastal phenomenon in the south Baltic Sea area, but it would require a statistically based study to confirm or reject the validity of this impression.

Regional variation in artefact types

The occurrence of a selection of some regularly occurring artefacts at the studied cemeteries is shown in Table 1. Even at this conceptual level, the objects accompanying the dead show some very distinct regional differences. To a certain degree one can suspect that a variation in the intensity of excavation in different areas blurs the actual distribution, but on a general level this is probably a minor problem. A fairly common artefact in graves throughout the studied area is the s-shaped skinning knife. Other artefacts, like sickles, arm rings, weapons or Roman objects, were more exclusive for particular regions, sub periods and specific levels of society. The arm rings, weapons and Roman objects could of course be divided into single types, instead of into uniform categories, but in this case they are treated as simplified, overall categories as well as the other artefacts, with the purpose of signalling a particular focus in the repertoire. The items with the greatest regional significance are leather knives, sickles/scythes, scissors, arm rings and weapons (fig. 9-10, table 1). The meander-decorated pottery is also an artefact type with regional relevancy. In fact, ceramics are the most usual grave goods in most parts of the studied area, with an exception for some of the cemeteries in Poland where fibulae are at least as well represented (Pruszcz Gdański and Weklice). The full variety of pottery is, of course, a far too extensive topic to discuss in detail in this presentation, but the meander-decorated pottery will be spotlighted.

The leather knives from the Early Iron Age have been divided into three main categories by Ulf-Erik Hagberg (fig. 8, see Hagberg 1967:115ff). The Öland type (I) is present in large parts of Sweden, and the half-moon shaped type (III) has a main distribution in Denmark, Germany and Poland. Different varieties of the s-shaped type (II) occur in all areas. Type II was probably made primarily for skinning, while the others are regional variants of the same object, designed for preparation and cutting of skin and leather (Räf 2001, Henriksen 2009). Knives of type I and II, for instance, occur in graves on Öland and in Scania in LpRIA and ERIA (Räf 2001:27f, Björk 2005:73f). The cemeteries in this study indicate that leather knives of type II and III occur in LpRIA and ERIA in the rest of the area, with some reservation for Poland.

Another kind of artefact marking regional differences in the southern Baltic area are scissors/shears. They are relatively frequent in northern Poland and Germany, and they occur now and then in Denmark, but they are extremely rare in Scania. In contrast, sickles (and to some degree scythes) are common in graves in the southern half of present Sweden and on Bornholm during LpRIA and ERIA, while they are rare in the rest of the area and even completely missing in Zealand (Penack 1993, Björk 2005:71f). This is one of the clearest regional markers in the south Baltic area and it is seen on the distribution map fig. 9, which is based on the works mentioned above, with some additions made in connection to this work. The presence of sickles in inhumations under stone settings is a strong combination in an area from eastern Scania to Öland. This is in stark contrast with the counter-poles Zealand and Gotland, on each side, which have no recorded graves with sickles at all (Liversage 1980, Cassel 1998). This regional pattern is also clear when comparing the artefact types on the cemeteries included in this study (table 1).

Arm rings are common in female graves from the area of the Wielbark culture in northern Poland, but not in the other areas. There are, however, some examples of single individuals in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, on Bornholm and Öland who were buried with arm rings (e.g. Rasch 1994:189). In other parts of Sweden, apart from Öland, this is very rare. For instance, there are only three burials with arm rings from Scania – all with single rings and all from LRIA (Björk 2005 s. 210, 228, 241). A unique female C1-burial from Skälv in Östergötland contains a purely Wielbark culture assemblage, amongst other artefacts including two arm rings (Kaliff 2001a). Distinctive for the Wielbark culture is that tools and weapons are very rare in burials. In general, iron objects were avoided entirely. As a consequence, men's graves were sparsely equipped while the females' graves were proportionately richly equipped (Kokowski 2010:121, Cieśliński 2011:172).

There are no weapon graves from LpRIA or ERIA on Zealand and they are rare in northern Poland, at least in ERIA (Liversage 1980, Watt 2003, Kokowski 2010, Kontny & Natuniewicz-Sekuła 2013). On the contrary, weapon graves are in general common in Germany, although not in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (Leube 1970, Weski 1982), but there are quite a few in Sweden. In Scania-Blekinge and Bornholm, there are weapon graves from the whole of the Roman Iron Age. They are normally simply equipped, with single lance- or spearheads, but there are also some graves with more or less complete sets of lance, spear, sword, shield and spurs (Nicklasson 1997, Björk 2005, 2011). Fluctuations in the weapon grave traditions in Germany and Poland have been illustrated clearly by Jörg Kleemann (2009), who visually shows the abrupt end of the tradition in the area of the Wielbark culture in B1 (fig. 10). Since then, Bartosz Kontny and Magdalena Natuniewicz-Sekuła have discovered some graves in the Wielbark area from B2 that contain at least spurs (Kontny & Natuniewicz-Sekuła 2013). It can be questioned if these graves represent actual weapon graves, or if the spurs only reflected integrated parts

of the costumes of some persons, not intended to reflect warrior positions in themselves.

Roman imports comprise an entire field of research; with necessity only described in extremely short terms here. As a whole, there are relatively few graves with Roman imports from the ERIA period in Bornholm, Scania and Blekinge with a total number of 12 graves. This is equal to the total number of graves from this period with Roman imports in Zealand alone. This shows that Zealand has a larger proportion of graves containing imports compared with the more easterly regions, which has long been well known (Lund Hansen 1987:400ff). In a larger context it is clear that Scania and Blekinge have few Roman objects at all from LpRIA and ERIA, compared to the other regions in this study (Eggers 1951, Karte 3-4). A small number of finds not known by Eggers, or found relatively recently, do not radically change this picture (Lund Hansen 1987, Björk 1999).

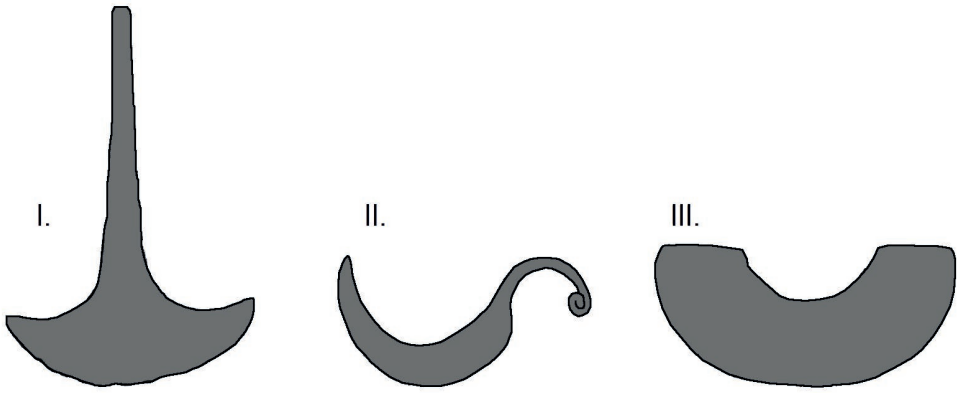

Fig. 8. The three types of leather knives. The Öland type (I), the half-moon shaped type (III) the s-shaped type (II), according to Hagberg 1967 and Rääf 2001.

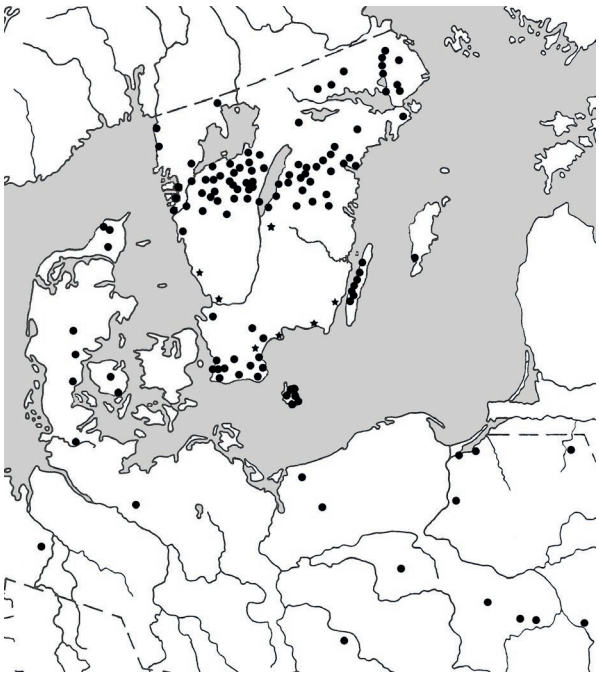

Fig. 9. Distribution of graves from LpRIA and ERIA with sickles. Based on Penack 1993, Björk 2005 and additions from Nicklasson 1997, Wranning 2009, Björk & Wickberg 2013 (additions = stars).

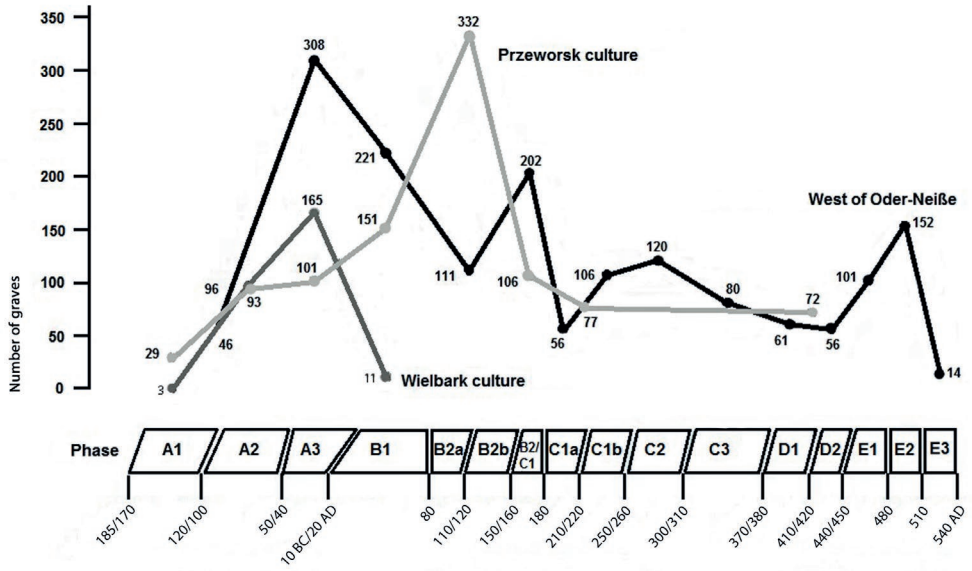

Fig. 10. Fluctuations in the weapon grave tradition in northern Germany and Poland. Picture based on Kleemann 2009.

Important artefacts in the graves are of course also fibulae. Apart from being well suited for dating, they can also provide insights into social status, workshops, costume traditions, relationships, e.g. trade between different areas and other aspects of regional variation. The only evaluation of the material carried out here is quantitative, and it has already been mentioned that few graves contain fibulae in Scania and Öland (about 5 %) compared to other regions. On the other end of the scale is northern Poland, where some 27-37 % of the total number of graves in this study contained fibulae (fig. 1). This is in itself a clear regional expression. We will return to a possible reason for this phenomenon below.

Combs only appear more regularly in graves from the transition between B2 and C1 on Öland and in Scania (Rasch 1994:194, Björk 2005:79). This seems to be the case in Zealand as well (Liversage 1980:98). In Poland this happens a little earlier, with a number of examples of graves with combs from B2, e.g. on the Weklice cemetery (Natuniewicz-Sekuła & Okulicz-Kozaryn 2011).

Sets of beads of glass and amber are rare in graves during B1 and B2 in Scania and Zealand (Björk 2005:78, Liversage 1980). They are a little more common in northern Poland. The sets of beads were in general small during LpRIA and ERIA, with a marked increasing frequency during the LRIA (Tempelmann Maczyńska 1985, Olldag 1994:242f). There are, however, single graves from B1 and B2 at different cemeteries with sets of 20 beads or more, such as Istaby grave 250, Grzybnica grave 58, Pruszcz Gdański graves 98 and 115 and Weklice graves 74 and 84 (Björk 2011:45, Hahuła & Wołagiewicz 2001:28, Pietrzak 1997, Natuniewicz-Sekuła & Okulicz-Kozaryn 2011). At least, the Grzybnica and Weklice graves belong to a late stage of B2. Without further study it is not possible to make more general assumptions on the matter of regional variation.

Spindle whorls are relatively common in graves in Zealand and occur more sporadically in Scania. There seems to be a connection between Zealand and south-west Scania, regarding a more frequent occurrence (Björk 2005:80, 126f). This may be due to a small comparative material in surrounding areas; for instance, since there are four graves with spindle whorls at the Istaby cemetery (Björk 2011:48). Spindle whorls are also common on Bornholm and in Poland (e.g. Armfelt 2010:329, Pietrzak 1997, Natuniewicz-Sekuła & Okulicz-Kozaryn 2011). Consequently, no clear regional significance in the distribution of this artefact type in graves can be identified so far.

The meander-decorated pottery has a special role in this study since it displays a distinct form of ornamentation with both regional and chronological relevance. In particular, it is important from a south Swedish perspective since the style is rare in Sweden but abundant on the Istaby pottery. Meander-decorated pottery is common in northern Germany and on Jutland. It was mainly dated to LpRIA by Kossinna, but on the Bulbjerg cemetery in Jutland, it was chiefly dated to B1 (Kossinna 1941:188ff, Høj 1984:164ff). In our area, the meander-decorated pottery has a clear quantitative dominance in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, as expected. In the Wielbark culture area, it has been dated to B1-B2/C1, with sporadic presence in C2-D (Wołagiewicz 1993:148f, Lista 21, p. 208, Abb. 4). Meander-decorated vessels from Sweden are few and dated to B1-C1. The small number of vessels with a meander pattern from Zealand and Slusegård on Bornholm are dated to LpRIA-B2 (Björk 2011:80ff). It must be pointed out that meander-decorated pottery is not uniform in ornamentation, pottery shape or chronological distribution. This in itself would of course need to be studied in greater detail than what is reasonable in this context.

It can be confirmed that some of the artefacts provide an insight to regional traits. In some cases, there are mere hints as to differences; there is a clear need of a larger comparative material to confirm conclusions. In others, the differences are very clear. The sickles, leather knives, arm rings and so on, all show that what was placed in the grave was not only conditioned by a religious, hierarchic or economic statement, but also part of a regional tradition of behaviour: the regional ritual system.

Burial customs and artefact types in the southern Baltic area

Summing up burial customs, artefact types etc. from a point of view of regional variation, some patterns are clearly evident when considered on a large scale. However, these overlap to a large extent in several areas and are not as clear-cut on a more detailed scale. Binary ritual customs seem to have been most common. In most areas, there were several options simultaneously, perhaps even conflicting influences, as in Scania-Blekinge, northern Poland or the

island of Bornholm, with inhumations and cremations side by side and also a wider variety of choices in the compositions of grave goods. The exceptions are Zealand with a strict inhumation ritual, and seemingly to some degree, the Gustow-group in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (connected to the Elbe cultural group).

The sickle and the leather knife were characteristic for Scania-Blekinge, the arm ring for West Pomerania-Pomerania and the meander-ornamented pottery for Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. The total absence of these artefacts, as well as weapon graves, is the characteristic feature for Zealand. Bornholm, on the other hand, is a special region in many respects, since all compositions and varieties of traits present there are also found in the neighbouring areas. This clearly shows that influences came from several directions, which thereby indicates the role of Bornholm as a marine crossroads.

The conditions which were observed are significant in regard to contacts between different areas, the stability of the regional customs and common norms or values in the mental superstructure. But it is also indicative about other conditions. Minor local variations in the funeral traditions cannot be the only reasons for observed differences, since they are clearly visible on a macro level. The area of Zealand, in particular, developed a very strict set of burial practices even if the region had well-developed contacts with neighbouring areas. Some of the regional variations could be an effect of different strategies for accumulating and maintaining wealth in different areas. It has been proposed that one of the reasons for the different strategies could have been differences in social systems, for example as parts of various kinship and marriage systems in Jutland and Scania on one hand and on Zealand on the other (Hedeager 1992:132ff, Björk 2008:101ff). This is supported by comparisons with ethnographic theories and records, showing that a bilateral inheritance system combined with an endogamous marriage system provides optimal opportunities for accumulation of land and other valuable assets through strategic marriages, which is indicated by some of the high-status graves on Zealand. This is particularly marked later, in the LRIA (Ethelberg 2000).

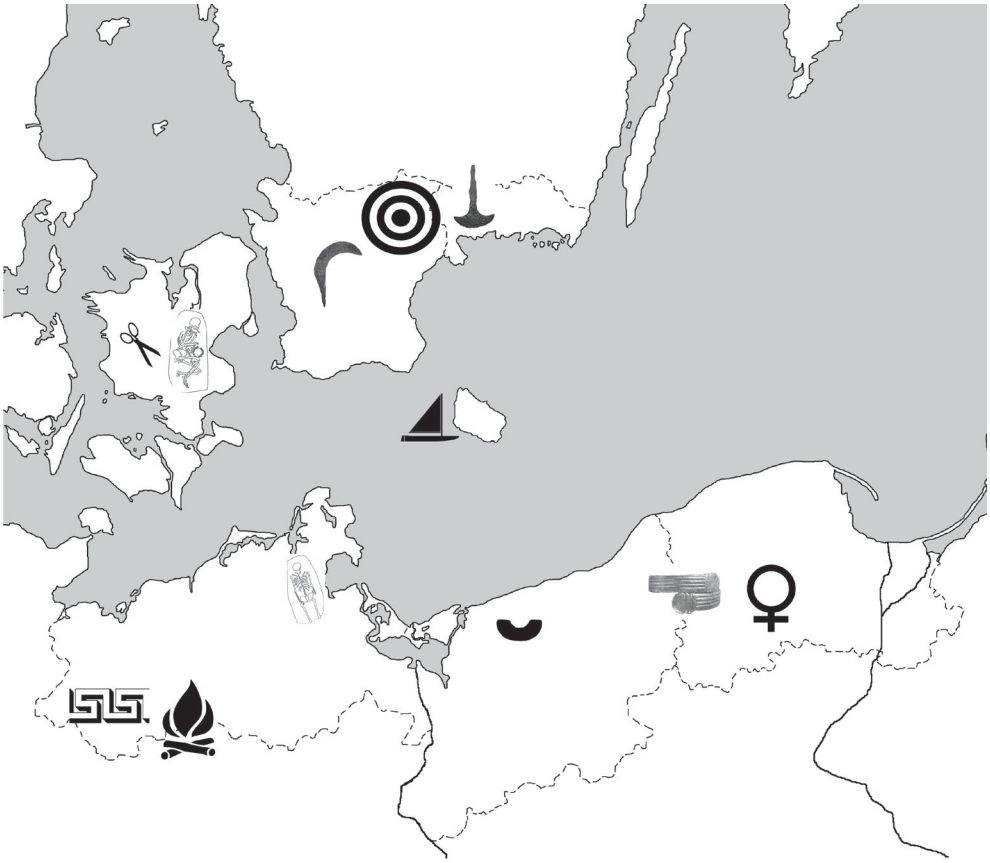

Fig. 11. Regional division simply illustrated by symbols for key artefacts, body positions, cremations, boat graves and visible monuments (concentric symbol for stone settings in Scania).

The composition of artefacts

Choices of artefacts and the composition of depositions in individual graves and in the regions as a collected whole, can further show the regional similarities and differences and the values that governed the selection of artefacts. The complexity of the composition of the grave goods has always been considered a measure of the deceased and their kinsmen's fortune, social status, age and sex. To be provocative, the research on Iron Age graves has been holding on to a view of status as only connected to how many valuable objects that were placed in the graves. Graves with exclusive objects such as Roman imports, gold, weapons and many fibulae have been easiest to date accurately and have been in focus both in the scientific discourse and in descriptions of the Iron Age society directed towards the public. Besides the fact that the number of objects and the exclusiveness of some artefacts are coarse tools for evaluating rank or meaning between people or regions, it is also an expression for the utterly economic view of our own times, projected onto the Iron Age society. In addition, the one-way focus on the graves with richest equipment is an intrinsic problem. This limitation has, to a certain degree, led to an absence of comparative studies of the major part of the graves, making it hard

to evaluate local and regional variation in the burial rituals of the great mass of people (cf. Svanberg 2003:131 as an example regarding Viking Age graves in southern Sweden).

In an attempt to evaluate the compositions of artefacts as a whole in this study, the subject has been divided into two main parts. The first concerns an examination of the number of artefact types in the graves, indicating quantitative variation. The second concerns a correspondence analysis, which shows more of a qualitative variation.

Number of artefact types and combinations

A cherished way to analyse graves dating from the Roman Iron Age, at least in Scandinavia c. 1990-2010, has been to calculate a value of the number of artefacts in each grave. This is called AOT-values (short for the Danish "antal oldsagstyper" = number of artefact types) derived from calculating all the artefact types in a grave, to be able to compare it numerically to others. This calculation can be directly connected to a socio-economic view of society and can simplified be called a measure of the social differentiation between graves or groups of people (e.g. Hedeager 1992:103ff). A developed AOT method involves calculating the value of an object based on the average number of objects in the graves where it occurs. This gives a more nuanced picture of the object´s intrinsic value and the hierarchical location of the individual grave (status score analysis – e.g. Holten 1989:93ff, Ethelberg 2000:145ff, Rasmussen 2010:32ff). This method has not been used here, since it would require a separate study, and the purpose here is not a detailed analysis of an individual cemetery or a region. Instead, a common count is applied, without status core analysis, simply to get a rough idea of differences or similarities between the regions on a very general level.

The reasons to discuss and use the AOT method in this study are firstly because in a broad manner it shows basic variations in ratio of artefacts between graves, cemeteries, regions and over time. Secondly, it is because it has been recurrently used in previous work by the author to show the degree of social stratification displayed in the graves. The method was used to analyse the Early Iron Age graves of Scania, which show a clear pyramidal structure in the distribution, similar to the Danish graves. Most graves contain no or few objects and the higher up in values the fewer are the graves. The complexity and the average number of objects in the graves increased over time and was much higher in LRIA compared to in ERIA. The Scanian graves from LpRIA, B1 and B2 have values between 1-13 and an average value of 2.2 (Björk 2005:104ff). The Istaby graves containing objects from B1, B1-B2 and B2 (a total of 39) have values between 1-11 and an average value of 3.5 (Björk 2011:94). Mogens Henriksen has analysed the Brudager cemetery on Fyn in this way, but with a finer resolution in the chronology. In the analysis it can be seen that the graves from B and B2, and B2-C1 and C1 (a total of 54)

have AOT-values between 1-8 and average values at 4.1 and 3.6, respectively (Henriksen 2009 s. 323). Finally, the Weklice cemetery has been used as a comparison to the above-mentioned cemeteries. The graves from B1 and B2a-c have values between 1-10 and an average value of 2.8 (Natuniewicz-Sekuła & Okulicz-Kozaryn 2011:25ff). The only clear observation from this calculation is that the smaller assemblages from Brudager Mark and Istaby reach higher values, probably due to a more significant effect of single rich graves. The values of Scania and Weklice are not startlingly different, with average values of 2.2 and 2.8. The clearest differences in the comparison are that more graves with pottery occur in Scania, and more graves with fibulae and arm rings occur in Weklice.

Not surprisingly, when combining quantitative AOT analysis and qualitative observations, it can be seen that there are clear connections between high AOT values and presence of objects with high status (e.g. Hedeager 1992:108ff, Henriksen 2009:324). Objects viewed as high status are here given a broad meaning, equal to rare, and presumably representing a substantial economic and/or symbolic value. As an example, this can be seen at the Istaby cemetery in grave A250, which had by far the highest AOT value at 11, and contained gold-foil beads, a dress pin of silver and silver-coated fibulae, among other things. None of these artefact types were retrieved in any of the other 81 burials at the site (Björk 2011:45f).

It can be concluded that the number of objects varies both regionally and chronologically. For example, it is uncommon to find more than three types of objects in a grave in Scania from B1-B2, where the majority of graves with artefacts contain one or two types (Björk 2005:105). The same trend is visible in other areas as well; for instance, in the Weklice cemetery more than six types of objects in a grave rarely occur, the vast majority of graves contain one to four types (Natuniewicz-Sekuła & Okulicz-Kozaryn 2011:25ff).

A closer investigation of inhumations at the Istaby cemetery shows that they can be divided into four-five different levels, based on the numbers and compositions of objects (Björk 2011:91). The first is represented by graves without any grave gifts; the second by graves with one pottery vessel or a resin sealed wooden box; the third by graves with one pottery vessel or a resin sealed wooden box and one additional object; and the fourth by graves with one or several containers and several other objects. Two graves can be discerned from the last group, as much more richly equipped than the rest of the graves in the cemetery. The two most common levels of compositions of objects in the inhumations are the categories without any artefacts at all, and the category with pottery vessel/s and a number of additional objects (categories 1 and 4).

The inhumations of Istaby were divided into four categories.
Category 1. 22 graves without any artefacts
Category 2. 7 graves: 3 graves with one utensil/tool and 4 graves with only pottery vessel/s
Category 3. 6 graves with pottery vessel/s and one utensil/tool

Category 4. 23 graves: 2 graves with several utensils/tools and 21 graves with pottery vessel/s and one or several utensils/tools

The last category can be subdivided into three groups, consisting of 4 graves with pottery vessel/s, utensils/tools and visible grave monuments; 3 graves with pottery vessels/s and weapon; and, finally, 1 grave with pottery vessel and fibulae, beads etc. (the above-mentioned A250). This does not give the clear-cut pyramidal structure as would be expected from most AOT studies, with a very broad base and tapering towards the top. It is more similar to observations made at the cemetery Valleberga in south-east Scania, with 12 investigated cremation and inhumation burials dated to LpRIA and ERIA (Strömberg 1975:43ff, Björk 2005:88f, 213). Here, there was one stone setting, four cremations (two of them with one fibula each), one weapon grave from B1, three graves with sickles and three graves with log coffins. The duration of the cemetery was short, and a large proportion of the graves contained objects (80 %). According to the categories above for Istaby, the distribution for Valleberga is 2, 4, 3, 3. As is often the case, we must keep in mind that these observations are based on small assemblages. A drawback, at least for Valleberga, might be that this is a result of coincidence, as for example that only a relatively rich part of the cemetery has been investigated.

Jørgensen and Rasmussen have made a similar division as above into different categories of graves for different phases of the Roman Iron Age on Bornholm, in particular those of the grand Slusegård cemetery. Their studies are based on the above-mentioned more refined status score analysis (as opposed to the more basic AOT, with the same value for each type of object). Rasmussen's analysis is in fact a refinement of Jørgensen's, with a combination of quantitative and qualitative facts, and she distinguishes five groups of graves, apart from those without objects (Jørgensen 1988:21ff, Rasmussen 2010:32ff). The similarities with the picture from Istaby and other cemeteries are evident.

Based on the relatively standardised compositions of objects in Istaby it is clear that the content was rather strictly formalised. This is underlined by the number of objects and the positioning of the objects, which we will return to below (*Choreography of the inhumations*). The division of the graves into clear categories, shown in Istaby and other cemeteries, provides a reason to make some interpretations in socio-economic terms. The simply equipped graves, often with a knife and sometimes a pottery vessel, give an everyday impression, where the indispensable everyday knife is in the foreground. These graves have no special emphasis. The graves with a more complexly composed stock of objects, such as sickle, leather knife, s-shaped knife, straight all-round knife and awl, are also regularly present. These objects were often put in a resin-sealed wooden box, mostly placed on the chest or stomach of the deceased. Similar sets are known from a large number of graves from the LpRIA and ERIA on Öland. Work tools like these are often found in small storage boxes of wood or bark, which are indicated by the rings of resin sealing found in the graves. In

the Öland graves they were often placed at the feet of the deceased (Hagberg 1967:115).

There are different suggestions as to what the types of artefacts represent and why there was a change to an emphasis on other categories over time. As an example, the leather knife of type I and III are audited. Concerning the leather knives, Ulf-Erik Hagberg found that all the graves containing such at the Sörby-Störlinge cemetery on Öland were female graves (Hagberg 1967:115). This view was taken up by other researchers and has also been substantiated by osteological analyses. All the 18 osteologically analysed graves with leather knives on Öland contain remains of female individuals, but this is not true on mainland Sweden (Rasch 1991, Räf 2001:30ff). In Denmark in general, and for the Slusegård cemetery in particular, half-moon knives of type III are considered to be razors. Mogens Henriksen opposes other Danish scholars and considers them to be a regional version of the leather knife, based on the similarity with the type I knives and the angle of the edge (Henriksen 2009:162f, see also Hedeager 1992:122), and I support this interpretation fully. A completely common knife, with a straight blade, quite simply works better for shaving. It seems strange that people should have switched to razors with poor functionality, after having made effective ones for generations during the Bronze Age. The change to another type of metal does not seem to be a reason for such degradation.

But let us return to the interpretations of what the objects represent. Hagberg considers the presence of leather knives in female graves during ERIA as an indication that these were important for them at this time (Hagberg 1967:115). Similarly, Erika Räf identifies a strong connection on Öland between the presence of sickles and individuals determined as women. She believes that tools for craft and agriculture in graves represent a gender construction, and that what was signalled at this time was the production performed by women (Räf 2001:31). I rather prefer to adjust the interpretation to see that what was signalled was the role of the adults (of both sexes) as producers and breadwinners during ERIA, while there was a shift to a stricter emphasis on status during LRIA (see below).

Henriksen has discussed the social and regional conditions in Scandinavia and he calls attention to the fact that objects in graves from LpRIA and ERIA to a great extent stress the agricultural production. Similar kinds of symbolism occur in graves from different regions, but there is no easy way to compare social differences. The social differences were expressed with somewhat different tools and other attributes in each region. Henriksen's conclusion is that graves primarily reflect ritual actions and norms, and secondarily social status (Henriksen 2009:318ff). I agree in general, and in particular concerning the emphasis on the agricultural production, but with an objection to what the graves reflect. Henriksen's view was thus rephrased in connection with the work on the Istaby cemetery, where ritual norms and social status were perceived rather as an integrated whole, hard to separate in completely independent

components (Björk 2011:94). In other words, parts of the fabric that makes up the ritual practice.

On Bornholm, a first appearance of exposure of status can be seen in the female graves at the transition to LRIA (Jørgensen 1988:46ff). In another context, I have shown that the same tendency is visible on an overall scale in Scania (Björk 2005:107). For both ERIA and LRIA, it can just as well be argued that it was the social position that was signalled, albeit the attributes changed from tools to formal dress with all adornments. However, the change of focus, from an emphasis on production to an emphasis on position, is a strong reason to interpret it as connected to a change, not only of attributes, but a change in what people wanted to accentuate.

The standardised compositions of objects show that what was enclosed with the dead was clearly formalised; within a general supra regional level, as well as in regional and local ritual norms. This refers to the formalisation seen in the burial custom, grave construction and the regional variations, which to a large extent seem to have had to do with the dress and personal adornment in the respective regions. But how can we get a clearer picture of the regional pattern of repetitive sets of objects and what they represent? The variation of types of objects in graves and their positioning provides further possible ways to interpret them.

Correspondence analysis

The graves obviously contain traces of both a socio-economic spectrum and religious beliefs, as well as an element of symbolism pointing towards heroic metaphors (e.g. Hedeager 1992, Cassel 1999, Jennbert 2006). It has been, and still is, an obvious problem to present an overall interpretation of burial customs that integrates socio-economic and hierarchic factors, ritual norms and symbolic meaning. Burial customs have often been interpreted in light of either one or the other of these approaches. It seems like a good idea to use a combination to reach an understanding of the whole and to grasp divergent phenomena and changes in burial customs.

Even if we observe obvious regional variations in the composition of artefacts, we can clearly see some standard sets of artefacts repeatedly occurring together in graves throughout the whole of the southern Baltic area. But how can we investigate complex relationships such as these in a fruitful way?

In order to gain a clearer picture and try to understand the repeated composition of standard sets of artefacts with many covariant variables, a correspondence analysis was conducted on the material from period B1-B2 in three of the areas. Birgit M. Rasmussen's work on the Slusegård cemetery (2010) has been an important source of inspiration here. The analysis was performed through input of data in the program CAPCA (http://www.archaeoinfo.dk/), and all graves with two or more artefacts were included. The chosen areas were Zealand, Scania-Blekinge and Pomerania. One

single cemetery - Pruszcz Gdański - was chosen as an example for northern Poland; not because it represents all of northern Poland, but because of the large numbers of well-dated graves in Poland. To include more graves from Poland would most likely give the Polish material too much impact on the result. Other important reasons for the selection were the facts that the areas are clearly separated, from a geographic point of view, and that there are comparable numbers of graves from each region/cemetery, with a total of 97, 99 and 66, respectively. Included in the selection are 64 graves from Scania/Blekinge, 33 from Zealand and 52 from Pruszcz Gdański containing two or more objects. The individuals who have been determined osteologically as to sex are distributed very unevenly between the regions. In Scania-Blekinge and Zealand, the number of individuals that have been determined is low, but the relationship between the sexes is relatively equal. In Scania/Blekinge, there were 7 men, 7 women and 11 children, while in Zealand there were 22 men, 17 women and 3 children. On the Pruszcz Gdański cemetery, there is a very heavy dominance of mature women, with 6 men, 37 women and 6 children. It can be stated that the number of objects in this study varies in terms of both regions and chronology. Graves from B1-B2 do not commonly contain more than one or two objects per grave in Scania and Zealand. In the other extreme, in Poland, graves without any objects are relatively unusual. The analysis shows large differences between the areas. To a high degree, the same types of objects occur in the graves, but because of the combinations, as well as some area-specific types of objects, the statistical outcome results in quite different graphs, difficult to interpret. The analysis shows large differences between the areas, but no clear groupings can be seen in the correspondence analysis except for Scania. Assembling the data from all three areas in the same analysis gives a completely different clustering though, and interesting groupings emerge (fig. 12). This probably has to do with the fact that the material from Poland and Denmark is almost completely female, with mainly female attributes, while the male attributes dominate in Scania-Blekinge. Some standard sets are repeated in the more complex compositions, which in a gathered analysis can be roughly divided into four major groups. I have titled the groups Production, War, Male high status and Female formal dress. There is admittedly some difficulties in translating the complex and geographically dispersed graves into these groups. For instance, tools and weapons are very rare in graves from the Wielbark culture and objects belonging to the female dress are seldom seen in Scanian graves before LRIA. Nevertheless, the identified groups have clear similarities with the groupings on the Slusegård cemetery on Bornholm, where a main division can be seen between men and women (Rasmussen 2010:22ff, fig. 9). The concordance is intriguing, and is taken as an indication that the proposed groups existed as a main frame for a funeral standard. Furthermore, I would say that the Slusegård groups would probably fit well within the groups titled war/production and female formal dress in figure 12.

So far, we have discussed the basic preconditions for and the immediate results of the analysis. A basis for my reasoning about graves has been the strong

common themes in the funeral customs, and the way the dead were equipped in the Scandinavian Iron Age, showing something of the social ideals of that age (cf. Härke 1997). Funeral customs during the period of ca AD 200-1000 have been discussed in an article by Kristina Jennbert (2006). Her idea is that the grave can be seen as a montage of life style attributes and the burial customs as a language of death. She has interpreted the strong themes as idealized metaphors, following rather strict patterns. They show how the dead persons and their relatives wished to be remembered – and they were a strategy to secure the reproduction of the family or clan. As support for this interpretation, she stresses the recurrence of a number of metaphors displayed in the objects. She divides them into the categories *War & violence* (horses, weapon etc), *Hunting* (hunting birds, dogs etc), *Negotiation & communication* (domestic animals, beakers, board games etc), *Personal impression & attractiveness* (animal ornamentation, combs, costume details etc), *Work experience* (tools, specialist tools etc) and *Wealth* (domestic animals, powerfully expressed materiality and monumentality of the grave itself). By creating a heroic version of the dead, the family's continued welfare and social status was secured, and the deceased was honoured at the same time.

Although it is necessary to point out that Jennbert's suggestions are based on many assumptions, it is an interesting view that deserves attention. I believe this approach is an excellent starting point even to interpret older graves, prior to AD 200, since we already can see many of the recurring themes at this time. The approach was tested on the material from the Istaby cemetery and the experience was in my view positive (Björk 2011:95f). At first glance, the selection of objects and the placing of them in the Istaby graves looked rather standardized. Not surprisingly, this suggests that there were firmly formalized ritual expressions among the population of Istaby. At the same time, it is obvious that different phenomena were emphasised in some of the graves. If we omit the omnipresent ceramic vessels and the knives, three main categories of metaphors/themes, inspired by Jennbert's terminology, could be identified. These are *Work*, *War/Violence* and *Personal impression*, in this order. Combinations of themes are almost as usual as the pure categories, which makes the metaphors look non-rigid, but subject to interpretation and negotiation. The clearest cases of combinations are stone settings with central inhumation graves and plenty of tools that combine the categories *Work* and *Wealth*.

The overall interpretation is that the groups reflect the sex of the dead, but also that the surviving kin in Istaby wanted to display their dead in a similar way as people did in Scania, Bornholm and Öland. The four groups that were identified have sets of artefacts with strong symbolic reference to *Work*, *War/Violence*, *Wealth* and *Personal impression*. The standardized sets of objects show that what was deposited with the dead in the grave was clearly formalized, in overall supraregional and regional ritual standards. This refers to the formalization in burial custom, burial construction and the elusive regional particularity, which seems to have been connected, to a certain extent,

to costume and personal embellishment in the different regions. Another interesting observation is that the male identity is reflected as rather diversified, unlike in Zealand or northern Poland. Three themes are clear in male graves: *Work*, *War/Violence* and *Wealth*. The female identity on the other hand seems much more uniform. The clearest theme in female graves is *Personal impression*, but also to some extent *Wealth*. The women in northern Poland were strongly reflected by being buried in the formal female dress. Gender identity seems to have been extremely important and limiting. The male identity thus seems heavily to emphasize activities, bordering on being unable to deal with the stable and managing impression of how females were displayed.

When studying the death ritual and Germanic social structure from 3rd to 7th centuries AD, Mads Ravn comes to similar conclusions and describes women as the markers of wealth, while men communicated what they were (Ravn 2003:135). In a study of Lombard graves from the 6th and 7th centuries AD, Irene Barbiera describes the same kind of phenomena, but from a somewhat different point of view. She notes that: *"It is not a coincidence that no typical 'Lombard' male costume was suggested by archaeologists. In fact, males were not buried with dress accessories, like females, but mainly with tools or weapons, so a different concept or rather a different kind of memory was created for men as opposed to women"* (Barbiera 2009:67). The creation of these different kinds of identities or memories was of course closely related to long-established gender roles.

Turning back to the graves of the Baltic area during the ERIA period, the large regional differences must be remembered, with differences in the emphasis on male or female graves. On an overall scale, or at least a Swedish level, the extreme polarization points towards a gender-segregated society with male ideals characterized by instrumental production and war. The female ideal seems to be connected with an image of the well-dressed mistress of the prosperous farm. But the picture is far from clear-cut. We do well to remember the production-oriented female graves on Öland. Perhaps it gives us a glimpse of an archaic and more equal way to display gender roles, which were under transformation during the RIA? Similar ideas of a change towards a more outspoken patriarchal society around AD 200 have been suggested for Öland. Recently, this has been underlined; since some women have been buried in high status graves at this time, and there was one case of a woman who was killed with excessive force. Possibly these are signs of social competition (Räf 2001, Wilhelmson 2017:207f).

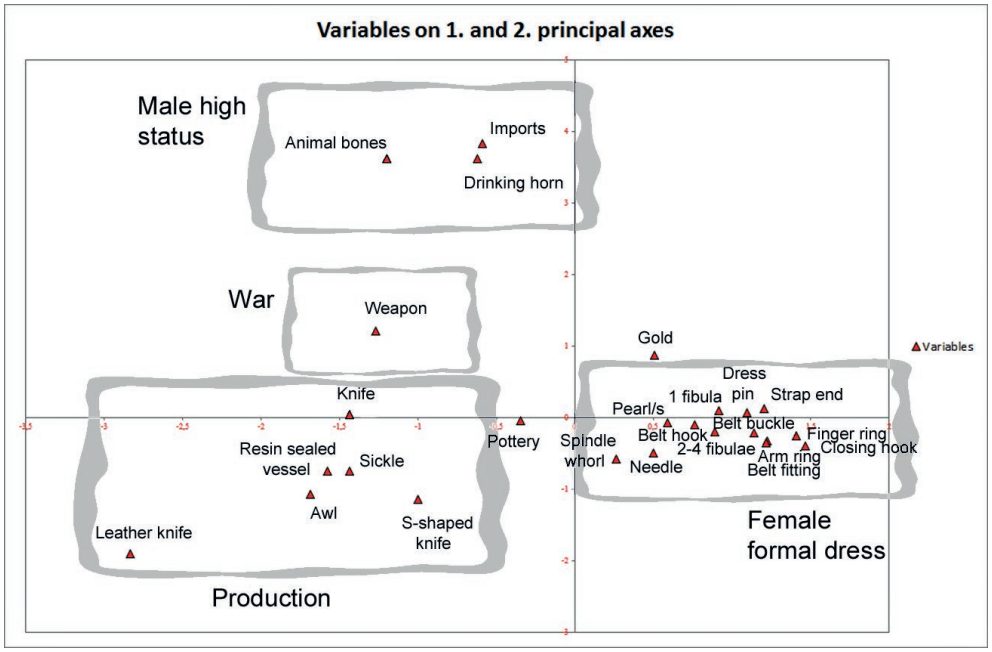

Fig. 12. Correspondence analysis of the B1-B2 graves of Zealand, Scania-Blekinge and the Pruszcz Gdański cemetery (Pomerania). Four clear groups are identified and given a general interpretation in relation to interpretations by Jennbert 2006 and Rasmussen 2010. The position of the triangles (artefact types) can be described as how often they occur in combination with each other.

There are rather large variations in the graves of the studied area, yet there are many common traits in them on an overall scale. The differences are interpreted as regional and sometimes there is local emphasis on certain traits. The similarities appear in many aspects: how the dead body was treated; which kinds of objects the dead person was equipped with; how the graves were constructed and arranged etc. Much of this has been pointed out earlier, especially in Germany, and I would add Poland, where a cultural historical research tradition has been stronger than in Sweden, particularly (Weski 1982, Lund Hansen 1987, Nicklasson 1997:18ff, Härke 1997). The sets of grave goods, but also the whole disposition or choreography of the inhumation graves can be seen as regional variations on stable common themes. I believe these common and widespread archetypes are a strong indication of a mutual mental superstructure, spread in the areas populated by Germanic peoples.

An important remark is that we must consider other phenomena in our interpretations too, such as burial customs relating to the treatment of the body (inhumations-cremations), orientation, body position and other ways of arranging the body before burial and in the grave. I have not incorporated these factors in the correspondence analyses here, but I recognise them as important aspects for further studies, to reach a better understanding of the burial traditions and regional ritual systems.

Position of objects and choreography in Istaby inhumations

By now it is obvious that burial customs as a whole rested upon very stable norms with certain regional rules and preferences. This is reflected in the treatment of the dead body, in the way it was perceived that graves should be constructed and in which objects that were placed in the grave. It has been found that there are a number of clear regional markers among the objects enclosed in the graves, but also that there are number of widespread and stable mental metaphors, displayed above all in the composition of objects. A relevant question is if the regional traits are underlined further by the positioning of the objects, primarily in the inhumations.

To gain an overview of where and how the objects were placed in inhumations at the Istaby cemetery, the distribution of selected objects was depicted, inspired by Mogens Bo Henriksen's account of the Brudager Mark cemetery (Henriksen 2009:113, Björk 2011:93f). In fig. 13, it is clear that the ceramic vessels in Istaby almost always were placed at the head end of the grave, often slightly to the left of the head (seen from above). Most of the knives were also placed in this part of the grave. The small wooden storage boxes with resin sealing were placed either in the same place as the ceramic vessels, on the chest/stomach or by the legs/feet. In many cases the wooden boxes contained complex tool sets and these vessels obviously played a different role than the ceramic vessels (which probably contained drink or food). Especially the positioning of the ceramic vessels at the head end recurs in several of the studied regions. Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in particular is hard to evaluate in the selected material, due to the very few excavated inhumations. Before considering this further, some interesting ideas on the choreography of the inhumations need to be introduced.

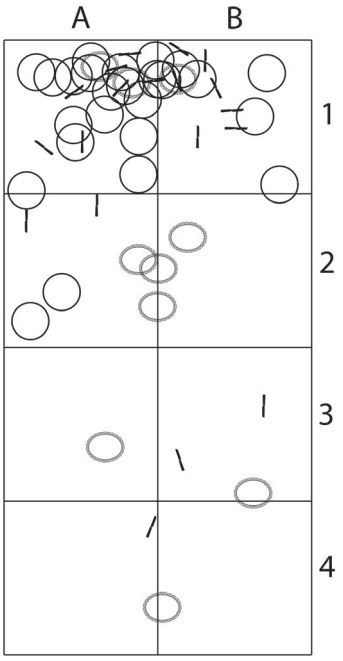

Fig. 13. Schematic picture showing the positioning of some artefact types in the inhumations at the Istaby cemetery. Note that the head end of the graves has been placed upwards (north), even when the actual orientation was east-west or south-north. Ring = ceramic vessel, Oval = resin sealing (from small wooden box), Line = ordinary knife.

The reasons for the varying positioning of objects in Germanic so called princely graves, during the Roman Iron Age, have been examined more thoroughly than usual in a dissertation by Fredrik Ekengren. He has focused on the Roman vessels and one of the angles he tested is based on the spatial arrangements and the formalised character of the graves from a concept titled

the choreography of the grave (Ekengren 2009:61ff). He argues that studies of presence and absence of objects must be supplemented by consideration of the practical use of the objects in the funeral. This facilitates an understanding of the different levels of meaning: the exegetical, the operational and the positional meaning. In this quest, he addresses the objects as part of a narrative structure, and distinguishes two different major ways to place the artefacts – an active mode and a passive mode. In the active mode the objects were placed as if they were being used or close at hand, while in the passive mode they were placed at the foot end, head end or alongside the body. To summarise briefly, Ekengren recognises that the deceased were staged quite consciously in the graves and that there are some stereotype patterns and recurring ingredients in the graves. This leads him to the conclusion that the arrangement of the body with the objects surrounding it was a way to create a state of being for the deceased, within a ritual framework. The regular patterns show that it was primarily not the individual's biography that was displayed in the ritual sequence, but a stereotyped, ideal mortuary identity. In this context, he refers to the thoughts presented by Jennbert, among others. But the ritual sequence also had a level that gave the participants room to manoeuvre within the ritual framework. *"This level may explain the variations that are visible on a smaller scale, of which some perhaps can be attributed to aspects of the deceased´s individual biography"* (Ekengren 2009:114ff). He clearly stresses the idea of the generative nature of ritual and material culture.

Based on this, the choreography of the inhumations during Roman Iron Age can roughly be said to consist of the way they were constructed, the position of the body, which objects that were included in the grave and where in the grave these were placed. In the presentation below, I have used the categories identified by Jennbert (2006), which I believe can be clearly identified in the correspondence analysis discussed above. These are: *Work experience*, *War & violence*, *Personal impression* and *Wealth*. A common trait of the inhumations from this time is that they often contain ceramic vessels, predominantly displayed in a passive mode, as expressed by Ekengren (2009). As in previous sections, a general survey of the graves is presented, with examples in the form of individual graves that are regarded as typical for different regions or phenomena. In other words, it is not a question of a statistical comparison, and the picture is therefore not as refined as in Ekengren's study. The active mode can be exemplified by the ceramic vessels in Simonsborg grave 7 and Ulkowy grave 75, where the vessels are placed close to the hands. The fibulae and arm rings in Lubowidz grave 13, Lubowidz grave 198 and Ulkowy grave 75 can also be interpreted as representing an active mode, placed as they were used in life. The ceramic vessels etc. in Bjärby grave 1967-2, Istaby grave 613, Stengade grave AK, Slusegård grave 954 express a more passive mode, with a stereotyped formal placing of the vessels at the head end (fig. 14). Could this point towards a more active mode in the graves with individuals in crouched positions, and thereby a preference for a more active mode in parts of Denmark, Germany and Poland compared with Sweden?

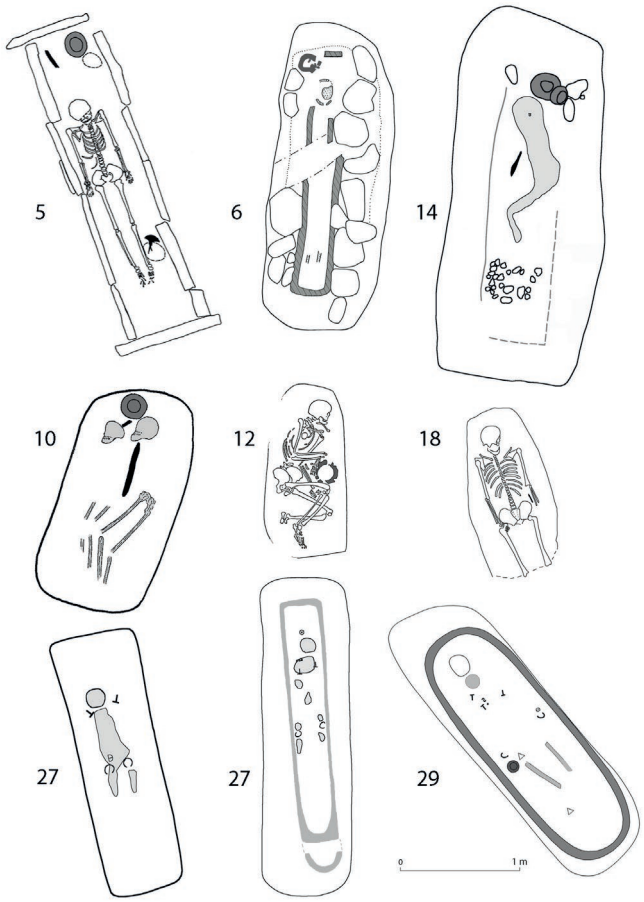

Fig. 14. Examples of inhumations from different cemeteries. The numbers refer to the listing of cemeteries in Table 1 and fig. 2. Counted from the upper left and horizontally they are Bjärby grave 1967-2, Istaby grave 613, Stengade grave AK, Slusegård grave 954, Simonsborg grave 7, Gustow grave 5, Lubowidz grave 13, Lubowidz grave 198 and Ulkowy grave 75.

The archetype *Work experience* is pro primo expressed by tools and utensils of some selected categories, such as sickles, leather knives, scissors/shears and spindle whorls. As established above, the graves with these attributes express a passive mode in most cases, although sometimes they do express an active mode. The category *Personal impression* is based on combinations including artefacts such as beads, fibulae, finger and arm rings. These attributes are situated in the graves as if they were worn and as parts of the dress. They are thus primarily displayed in what I interpret as an active mode. *Wealth* is reflected by features such as visible grave monuments, Roman imports (particularly drinking sets), gold, exclusive fibulae and to a certain degree by the sheer number of objects.

The category that has been reviewed a little further here, as a test, is the *War & violence* archetype. It is represented by weapon graves. Weapon graves constitute a category of their own, with partly their own properties and choreography. At Istaby, the weapon graves consist of a double-grave with two individuals provided with a lancehead, a shield (boss, handle and probable shield edge fitting), a knife and a meander-decorated vessel (grave 20), and two single graves with one-edged swords, knives and ceramic vessels (graves 611 and 903). In the grave with the lance and shield, the lance-head was placed in the uppermost part, above the heads of the individuals (grave 20). This is a natural position regarding the length of the shank of the lance. The shield

lay on the deceased´s torsos and upper part of the legs. This is a classical and somehow self-explanatory, protective position for shields in inhumations.

In both Istaby grave 611 and 903, the swords lay at the respective right or left shoulders and sides in each grave, and a ceramic vessel and a knife were placed at each head end (fig. 15). To place a sword on or immediately beside the shoulder and down along the arm in inhumations during B1 and B2 was a custom occurring in the population in at least part of southern Scandinavia. Besides in Istaby, we see it for example in the graves from Simris and Slusegård (Stjernquist 1955, Pl. II, Stjernquist 1977, fig. 2, Klindt Jensen 1978a and b, e.g. grave 520 and 960). This has also been observed on Öland, where swords usually were placed at the deceased's side, from the shoulder to the hip (Rasch 1994:190). Based on the finds from grave 520 at the Slusegård cemetery, Jørgen Ilkjær has made a reconstruction of a sword belt with the sword hanging by the waist (Ilkjær1993 Abb. 144). If this was the usual position for a sword on a living warrior, this means that the sword must have been put beside the body at the funeral, instead of being left hanging by the waist. This in turn clearly indicates that a somewhat passive mode was a preferred position in the graves. The level of individual choices is hard to see, apart from the role of the dead as a warrior, which was highlighted. Nonetheless, he was displayed rather as a historical document to remember, or an idealised memory, than as an active warrior. A main conclusion from these observations is, in line with Jennbert and Ekengren, that the objects in the graves reflect four central statuses or ambitions in society: adult position (= age and gender), production, war and high status.

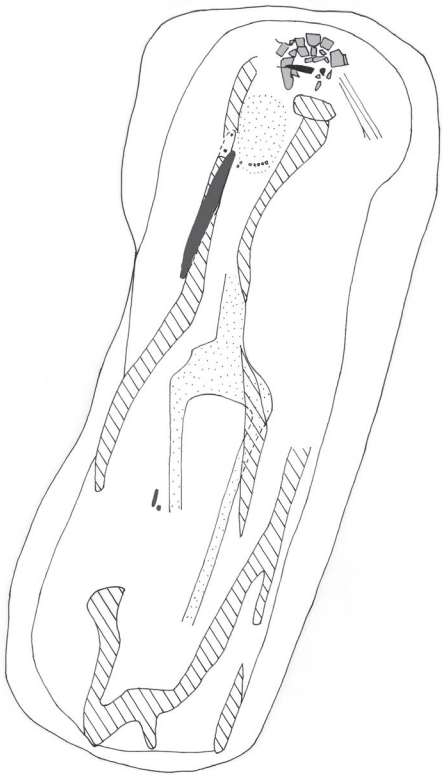

Fig. 15. The weapon grave Istaby 903 (Björk et al 2011). Note the position of the sword at the right shoulder and arm, in a somewhat passive mode, one knife on the right side at the upper leg and one knife and the ceramic vessel at the head end, outside the tree trunk coffin. Also note the colouring showing an imprint of the deceased´s body and the wooden cist.

The positions of the objects in the inhumations show that there were definitive views, not only about which objects that were put into the graves, but equally much where and how they were to be placed in the grave chamber in relation to the deceased, and at what stage of the funeral. It can be concluded that many of the smaller objects, like different kinds of tools and, above all, containers of wood or ceramics, mostly are found at the head end of the graves. This is no coincidence, but a widely spread trait in the inhumations of the Roman Iron Age, which reasonably rests on basic conceptions of how to act at funerals and how to stage graves. In conclusion, the examples above show, in yet another way, that firmly rooted ritual sequences existed, which governed much of what we can see in the funerals in Scandinavia, Germany and Poland. Through studies of single graves from a certain place or time, taking a direct approach by applying an action theoretical or narrative perspective that portrays whole sequences of actions, a field opens up with possibilities for regional studies on a more detailed and individual level. This is an exciting field with great potential.

Variation within a region - the Scanian example

As an example of variations within a region, Scania is presented in more detail than the rest of the regions. The following text is based mainly on Björk 2005 and 2008.

Scania can be divided into at least four main areas, with major influence routes in different directions, based on the burial traditions (fig. 16). Below, a general characterisation is given of Scania and of the different Scanian sub-areas, based on the graves. Due to the scarcity of material from the pRIA, this is valid first of all for the RIA. Scania is characterized by binary ritual systems with cremations and inhumations side by side in many cemeteries, as well as areas where cremations dominate, bordering on areas where inhumations dominate. There are strong concentrations of inhumation burials on the coastal plains, while the cremations seem to dominate the interior. It is very clear that the inhumations have a marked centre of gravity in south-west Scania. Reasonably, this has its explanation in the geographic vicinity to Zealand, which was completely dominated by the inhumation tradition. The larger cemeteries in Scania are often found in conjunction with the old road systems, visible in the earliest-known maps from the 17th - 19th centuries. This is a pervading feature, regardless of location within the province. It has been established that cemeteries were founded between the Late Neolithic and ERIA. They are in general abandoned during the LRIA or the MP. This tendency is more or less visible in the whole province. The large cemeteries with many individuals, predominantly inhumations, are known only from southern Scania. Several of them were excavated before the 1950s. There is reason to believe that the numbers of cremations in different areas, to some degree, are under-represented, since they are much harder to discover for a layman.

So far, the general background. The characteristics for graves of north-east Scania are that they contain a large number of weapons, and to some extent even imported objects and gold/silver. Burial customs, as well as monuments, are highly varied. Cremation as well as inhumation were practised throughout the period, and graves were sometimes marked with a mound or a stone setting. Specific to this area is that graves containing sickles so far only appear under mounds and stone settings (with a possible exception of one damaged grave excavated in 2011 - Björk & Wickberg 2013).

In the south-east of Scania, graves contain many objects and, in many cases, several objects per grave. Weapons, imported artefacts along with gold and silver objects are relatively frequent. Burial customs as well as monuments are, as in north-east Scania, very varied. Cremations and inhumations existed throughout the period, and the graves were often marked with a mound, a stone setting or erected stones. A specific trait in this area is the occurrence of inhumations in massive stone cists, which are virtually not found in other parts of the province.

From the south-west of Scania there is a great deal of material, signified by the rapid establishment of inhumation during the ERIA. Cremations and grave monuments occur, but they are not as common as in adjacent areas. Gold and silver objects are relatively common, while weapons and imported artefacts are rare. Significant are the crescent-shaped knives found in graves from the ERIA. During the pRIA and ERIA, there are several examples of low mounds with surrounding circular ditches (sw. "Tuegravar") in the area. This type of grave monument is as yet unknown from other parts of the province.

The interior and northern parts of Scania represent a problematic gap in the surveyed material. Only a small number of graves, mainly stone settings and stone circles, have been excavated by archaeologists. In one place it has been affirmed that the graves contained large quantities of quartz, which is clearly connected to a custom known in provinces directly to the north of Scania. As far as it is known, this part of Scania harbours only cremations. No certain inhumations from the ERIA are known. Furthermore, grave goods are remarkably scarce compared with the surrounding coastal plains.

North-west Scania is at least as problematic as the interior and the northern part of the province. A handful of graves/cemeteries, some of them unpublished and/or very widely dated, make up the whole material. Although this is far too little for any certain observations, a few observations can be noted. There is a cemetery near the city of Ängelholm, which has many similarities to burial customs seen on other coastal plains during the LRIA. This is similarly indicated by a couple of graves from the ERIA from the Bjäre area (the most north-western part of the province). If we move inland along Rönneå River, only some cremation graves are known, reminiscent of those in the interior and the northern part of Scania.

The distribution of some artefact types exhibit differences, with further clear regional relevance. This is especially true for knives for leather working of Hagberg's Type I. Type I is a regional variant typical for Sweden and extremely

rare in the other regions in the southern Baltic Sea area, as we have seen. In Scania, this type is only found in the north-eastern part of the region, which clearly links it to Blekinge, Öland and the rest of the Swedish mainland. On the other hand, s-shaped and crescent shaped knives of Hagberg's type II and III are predominantly found in south-west Scania (Björk 2005:74). Ceramic traditions and boat-shaped inhumation graves show a very strong connection between the south-eastern part of the region and Bornholm (Stjernquist 1955:163). Other clear examples of the variation of different artefacts in different parts of the province are weapons and Roman objects, as well as weapon graves and graves with imported Roman objects, which are mostly found in eastern Scania. Further, grinding stones and stones with cup-marks occur in graves from the interior and the east of Scania, also indicating a regional tendency. Finally, sickles and scythes only come from the coastal plains. An obvious change in the traditions is the overall increase in the number of objects in graves during the LRIA. This period also marks the fading end to the custom of placing tools like sickles and crescent-shaped leather knives in graves, which was rather common during the LpRIA-ERIA.

As a conclusion in terms of local and regional variation, the grave material of north-eastern and south-eastern Scania shows several connections, for instance in the occurrence of bi-ritual customs, grave constructions, grinding stones, cup-mark stones and weapon graves with a full classical inventory. The south-west of Scania and the interior region instead contradict each other. In the south-west, the inhumation tradition was dominant at an early stage, while it was not likely to have been practised at all in the interior parts of Scania. This polarisation seems to have been clear in the grave goods as well. In summary this shows a greater variation in eastern Scania, as opposed to a greater uniformity in the traditions in the south-west, the interior and northern Scania. The differences were not as clear-cut as they may seem above. Rather, in many cases, an image of a gradual change over some distance occurs, indicating ritual systems, common for smaller areas, but partly overlapping each other. The regional traits in burial customs are perceived as very long-lasting ritual traditions, which were related but with specific courses of development in different parts of the district. In extension, this indicates that people in the various areas of the district partly interacted in different ways and partly had separate ritual traditions. Thus, it is reasonable that they, to some extent, belonged to different groups, whether based on ethnicity in terms of tribes, or on kinship in the form of, for example, clans.

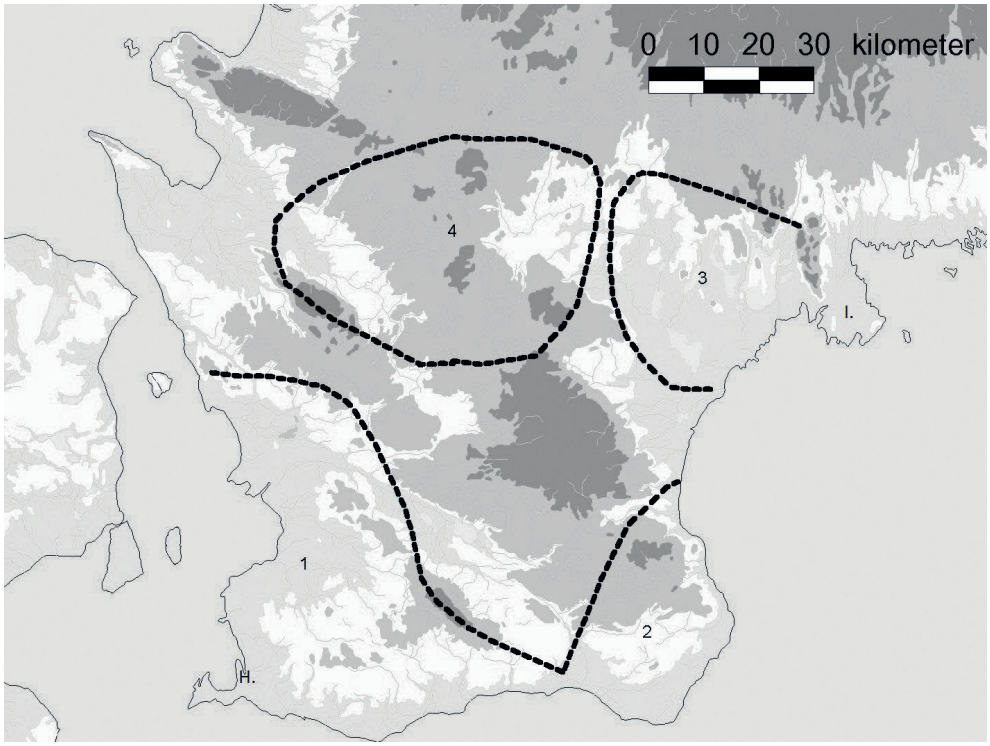

Fig. 16. Suggested division of the district of Scania into four areas with differences in burial rituals. The cemeteries of Hammarsnäs and Istaby are highlighted with capitals, H and I.

Influence markers

Certain types of graves in Scania and neighbouring regions, and to some degree even whole cemeteries, can serve as key sites since they evidently point to certain directions of contacts, relations and influences between areas. To evaluate the extent of how influences between different regions are visible in the graves, two cemeteries are chosen here as examples. The cemeteries are Hammarsnäs in Scania and Istaby in Blekinge (fig. 16). In both these cases, traits can be seen that signal routes of influences, and they can be perceived as localities in border areas or contact zones with typical features from more than one region.

The Hammarsnäs cemetery is interesting as a key locality with clear traces of influences from a neighbouring area (fig. 17). Hammarsnäs consisted almost completely of inhumations - 139 of 140 graves. About 10 % of the deceased were buried in crouched positions, which is a high number for Scania cemeteries. Less than half of the graves contained any objects (Hansen 1936, Pettersson 2002). Even if the total size of the cemetery is still unknown, it is obvious that the cemetery has many traits in common with funeral customs on Zealand. This is as clearest in the treatment of the body, with the domination of inhumation and the unusually high degree of individuals in a crouched position, but is also reflected in the weak representation of objects in the graves, with few graves containing anything else than ceramic vessels.

Both these circumstances give the cemetery a strong resemblance to the burial traditions on Zealand. An interesting fact, showing the great variation even between closely located sites, is in this case that Hammarsnäs clearly contrasts to the adjacent and contemporary cemetery at Hököpinge, only some kilometres away, which essentially contained cremations (Jansson 2005, Björk 2015a:155f).

The Istaby cemetery is also somewhat of a rare bird in southern Sweden. It has many similarities with the cemeteries in Scania and on Öland and Bornholm, such as the bi-ritual burial custom and artefacts like weapons and tools. But at the same time, it stands out with its large amount of meander-decorated pottery (Björk 2011:78ff). It is, with exception for Simris, the only cemetery in southern Sweden where more than one meander-decorated vessel has been found. The medium-size vessels and in particular the meander-decorated vessels have a clear connection to the richly equipped graves with tool sets or weapons.

Weapon graves and graves with tools signal war and production, as argued previously. The occurrence of meander-decorated pottery is an element that probably gives us a glimpse of the conditions of cultural relations between populations in the southern Baltic area. I believe that this particular kind of pottery, which is rare in southern Sweden, points towards long distance contacts, expeditions or maintenance of alliances. These seem to have challenged the major existing and long-established contact routes across the Baltic Sea, which we will examine closer in the next section. The meander-decorated pottery can be seen as an expression of an attempt by the population at Istaby, or at least a part of it, to establish a distribution channel of their own; a route to groups of people on the continent that passed beside those controlled by others.

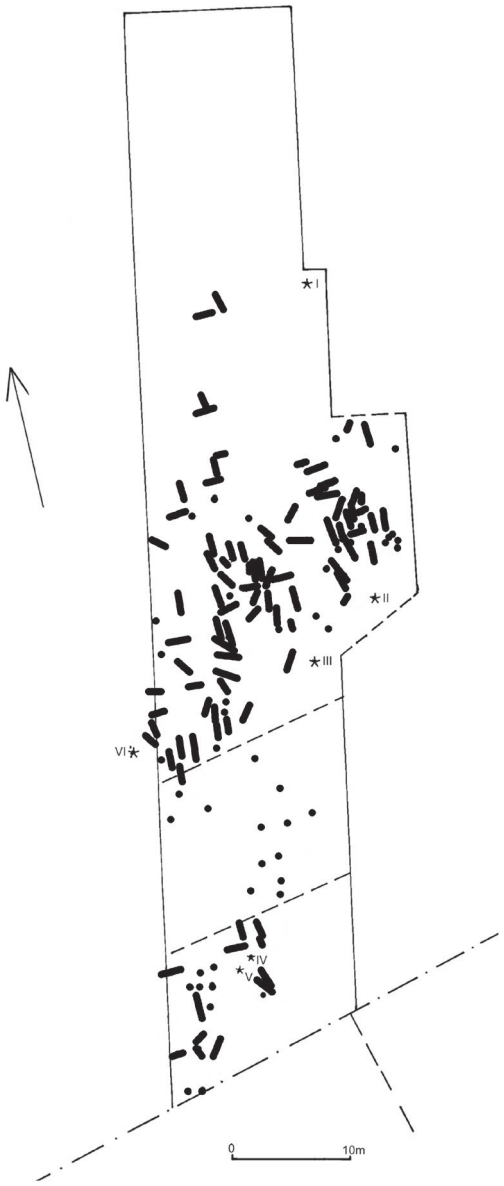

Fig. 17. The Hammarsnäs cemetery in south-west Scania. Out of 140 hitherto excavated graves 139 were inhumations. Reconstruction of size, location and orientation based on Hansen 1936 and Pettersson 2002).

In conclusion, we can see that there are indications that both Hammarsnäs and Istaby had contacts that reached across the Baltic Sea. In the case of Hammarsnäs, the contact area was at rather close reach, but the contacts of Istaby appear to have been considerably farther away. The coastal connection of the sites makes contacts with other people, across the sea, a probable common denominator. This puts focus on contact routes and seafaring.

Boat burials and major routes on the southern Baltic Sea

Boat burials in the southern Baltic area are connected to the links between Zealand, Bornholm and the Wisla area seen in the LRIA (Heidemann-Lutz 2010). With the investigation of the Slusegård cemetery on Bornholm, a number of boat burials from B2 to C2 were given special attention (Crumlin-Pedersen 1991). Around the year 1990, only a small number of contemporary boat graves, or presumed boat graves, had been discovered in bordering areas of southern Scandinavia. For a long time, it seemed as though boat graves were a phenomenon mainly concentrated to Bornholm. A possible boat grave was later discovered at the Ulkowy cemetery (Tuszyńska 2005:78), but it was not

until the investigation of the Weklice cemetery in Warmińsku-Mazurskie that several certain boat graves appeared, and this opened for new interpretations. Now we can see a clear chronological and geographical tendency of boat graves from B2 to C2 occurring in a belt from northern Poland to Jutland in Denmark (fig. 18, Natuniewicz-Sekuła & Rein Seehusen 2010). The reflection in the burial ritual implies that an important connection was maintained along this route, with Bornholm in the middle, which is also shown in studies of other material from LRIA (Cieśliński 2009, Heidemann Lutz 2010).

Based on the results of the LpRIA and ERIA graves, I propose that these major routes existed as early as in ERIA (fig. 19). There are clear traces of a connection between Zealand – Bornholm - northern Poland, as well as between Zealand and Scania, seen through the inhumations in crouched positions. Further, there are several similarities between south-eastern Scania and Bornholm, concerning early inhumations, pottery style and weapon graves (Stjernquist 1955:163). Everything suggests that the most important communication routes passed through Bornholm, which lay as a hub for sea transportation in the Baltic even at this time. There are very weak indications of contacts in other directions. An exception may be Istaby in western Blekinge, which seems to have been oriented towards northern Germany or Jutland, based on the pottery. There are no graves with Roman imports from this part of Blekinge, which might show that the population here did not have access to these imports. Or were they reaching to gain something else?

A recent study on the migration of people in part of the Baltic Sea shows that contacts over the sea were of some magnitude, at least on the island of Öland during the Iron Age. Based on the variation of strontium in a sample of teeth from people buried on some of the island's cemeteries, it can be concluded that as much as 30% of the analysed population from Roman Iron Age were born in other regions: mainly on Gotland, in the Mälar lake area, by present-day Stockholm, and in Scania (Wilhelmson & Ahlström 2015, Wilhelmson 2017). This clearly shows the intensive contacts between Öland and neighbouring regions. The nature of the relationships between the different regions around the southern Baltic Sea will be discussed a little more below, in relation to previous interpretations.

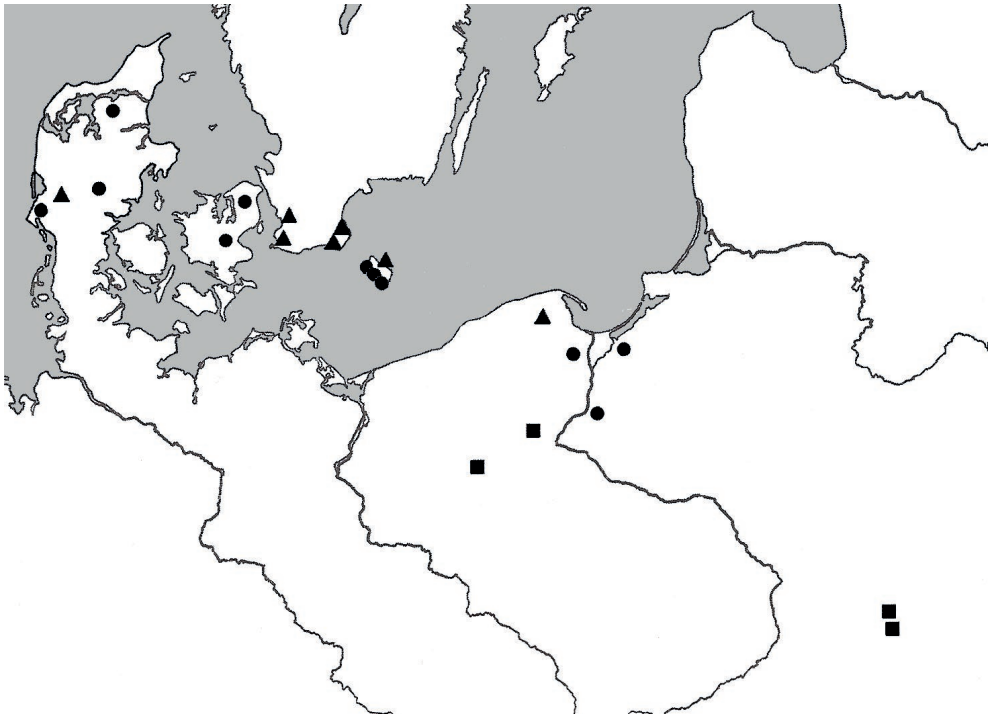

Fig. 18. Map of the distribution of boat burials in the southern Baltic area during B2 to C2. After Natuniewicz-Sekuła & Rein Seehusen 2010.

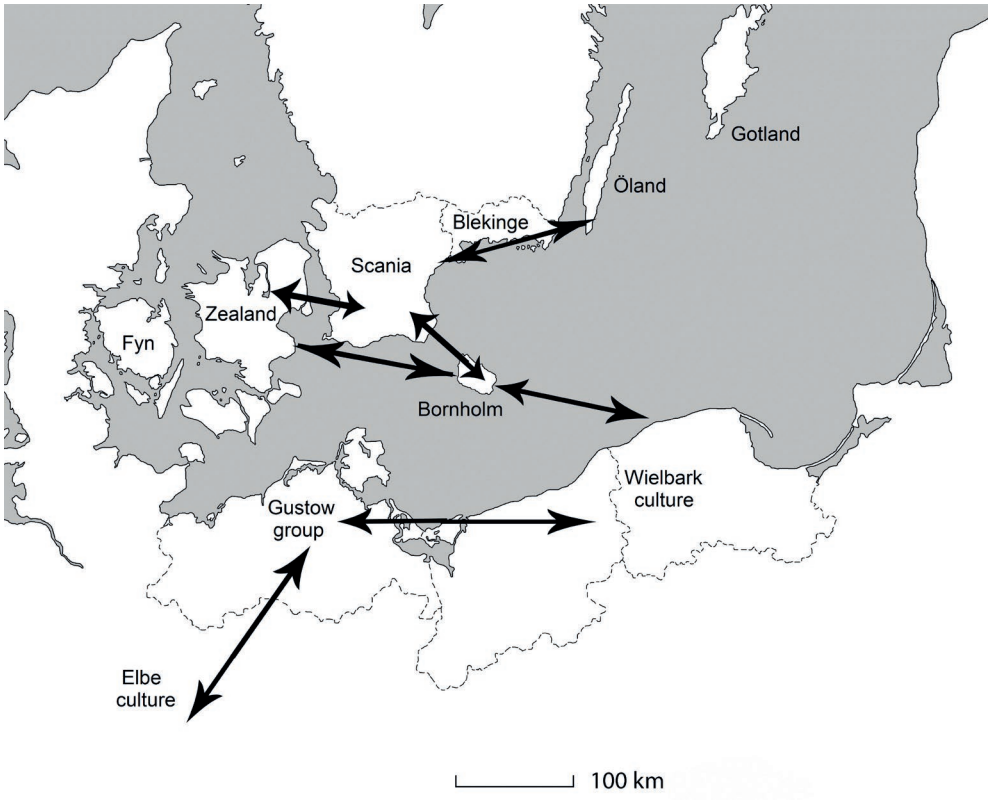

Fig. 19. Major contact routes on the southern Baltic Sea during B1-B2, as indicated by burial customs. Note the very close resemblance with the results for the C-phases (Heidemann Lutz 2010, shown in fig. 20 below).

Contacts in light of previous interpretations

Contacts between different regions by sea, rivers or on land and a mixture in the material culture, in this case especially in graves, with elements of objects from neighbouring areas, is an interesting field of research. Several scholars have stressed the importance of the contacts across the Baltic Sea between southern Scandinavia and the Wisla area. The connection from Scania to the south and south-east is visible as early as during the Bronze Age, and an early communication route to the east of the Celtic area during the pre-Roman Iron Age has also been highlighted. This contact route seems to have remained important for a very long period of time (Artursson & Björk 2007:299, Kaul & Martens 1995:111, Kaliff 2001).

With a focus on the Roman Iron Age, the often-made association between the Wielbark culture in northern Poland and the historically known Gothic tribe must be mentioned. There are strong arguments for such a direct connection (Urbańczyk 1998). Of special interest in this case is the Gothic tradition of Scandinavian origin. On the basis of the material culture, Przemysław Urbańczyk argues that the Wielbark/Gothic culture was formed in a local context and that it was not Scandinavian in its origin, but he does not exclude that some immigration took place.

Adam Cieśliński in turn sees clear connections over the Baltic Sea between the Wielbark cultural area and the Swedish coastal areas – in particular Gotland. He argues that the similarities in some of the grave monuments are so clear that they can indicate a direct immigration of small population groups in northern Poland.

Die einzigen archäologischen Attribute mit unzweifelhaft skandinavischem Bezug bleiben die Steinkonstruktionen, zu denen unterschiedliche Steinsetzungen, Steinkreise und die besonders interessanten Grabhügel zählen. Vor allem die Grabhügel spielen eine Schlüsselrolle beim Verständnis der Beziehungen innerhalb des Ostseeraumes. Ihr ziemlich „unvermitteltes" Auftreten an der südlichen Ostseeküste, allerdings in bereits entwickelter und verschiedenartiger Ausprägung, könnte tatsächlich auf eine Einwanderung kleiner Bevölkerungsgruppen aus Skandinavien hindeuten. (Cieśliński 2011:183).

Further thoughts on the nature of the contacts between neighbouring groups have been presented by Thomas Hauptmann. He has presented ideas about the cultural status of the population in the middle and lower Oder area during the RIA. He designates it as a border area between the large Germanic cultural groups. The Elbe Germanic group gives a dominating impression, but there are also clear influences from the Wielbark culture and the Przeworsk culture. This has been labelled the Lubusz group (kultura Luboszycka). Hauptmann uses the term multicultural position to describe the spectrum of the grave goods in this part of the Oder area (Hauptmann 2001:264).

Lene Heidemann Lutz has thoroughly analysed the cultural positions of Bornholm and Vorpommern in relation to surrounding areas during the second half of the second century until the beginning of the third century

(Heidemann Lutz 2010:258ff). She established that these two areas did not affect each other in any significant way in burial customs or material culture during this time. This is illustrated in figure 20. Her description of Bornholm and Vorpommern as intercultural border groups is probably an adequate way to describe the situation. It illustrates the conditions of e.g. the Gustow group in Vorpommern, which has no clear-cut cultural affiliation, with traits of both the Elbe Germanic culture group and the Wielbark culture.

The communication routes along the coasts and via the large islands in the south Baltic Sea area are partly self-evident, and Bornholm had an obvious key-position. Bornholm in the early LRIA is described by Heideman Lutz as a colourful mixture of cultural elements and artefacts from a large part of the Baltic Sea regions (Heidemann Lutz 2010:259f). The tendencies she illustrates did not arise out of nothing in the LRIA. Several of the observations highlighted in this study, like burial customs and objects used in these, indicate that the situation described by Heidemann Lutz, with two main contact routes across the Baltic Sea, can be followed much further back in time. One part is the route between Zealand-Bornholm-northern Poland, and the other part is the route between southern Sweden-Bornholm-northern Poland. Exactly when these patterns of influences were established is of course hard to identify, but it can be concluded that there are many circumstances to indicate that the routes were established at the latest during B1-B2. Moreover, in important respects, it was a similar situation as during B2/C1 and C1a. Apart from these main marine routes, it is clear that other regional contacts were upheld as well. For instance, there are evident connections in the burial customs between Zealand and south-west Scania, and between south-east Scania and Bornholm (Björk 2005, 2008). In fact, the material similarities between Bornholm and south-east Scania in B2/C1 and C1a are so close that they may have constituted not only a cultural unit but also a political one, according to Heidemann Lutz (2010:259f). In contradiction to the dominant position of Bornholm, other contacts across the sea can be seen as an explanation to the local particularity at Istaby. The meander-decorated ceramics of the Istaby cemetery strongly point towards a relation between western Blekinge and an area in northern Germany or on Jutland (Björk 2011), running in an opposite direction than most of the major routes that have been observed. This contradiction shows that the coarse picture of the contacts cannot be taken for anything else than an image of the major routes, and that individual actors or groups obviously sometimes made other choices than to stick to the strongest established patterns and thereby probably the strongest economic and political powers.

The descriptions above by Cieśliński, Hauptmann and Heideman Lutz are all likeable as imaginary constructions and they suitably visualise the conditions of the interregional contacts. At the same time, we must keep in mind that they are compressed ways to describe prehistoric situations that were very complex; and they are even more compressed here by my extraction of their conclusions. We cannot grasp all the variations from the traces our ancestors have left, but there is no doubt that there are or were no pure cultural groups other than

as our mental constructions. All groups of people were and are intercultural in some respect. People gathered impressions and left expressions in different directions – directly or indirectly by e.g. war, migration, marriage, other alliances or exchange and trade. On either a material or a mental level, or both at the same time. With this said, it is still easy to adhere to the descriptions of these scholars.

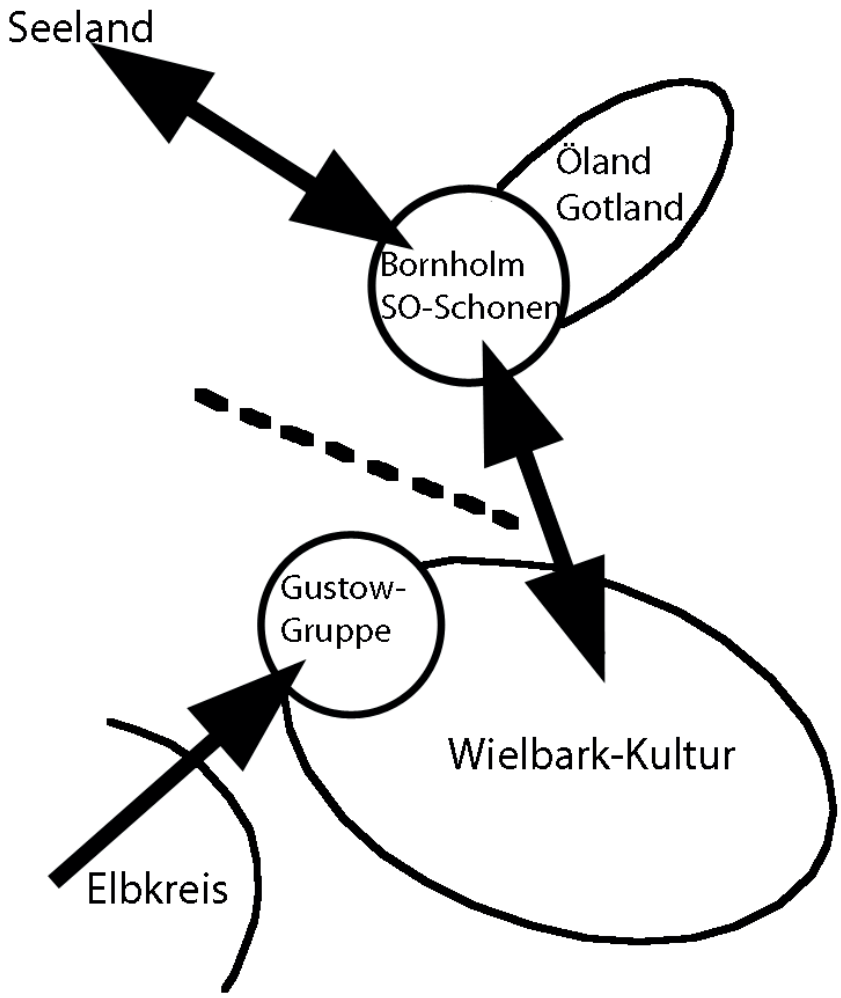

Fig. 20. A map showing an interpretation of the major contact routes on the southern Baltic Sea during the Late Roman Iron Age. Based on Heidemann Lutz, 2010, fig. 121.

Conclusions and comments

The study of burials from LpRIA and ERIA in the southern Baltic includes a world of a thousand details. To avoid drowning in the details, I have chosen a limited number of cemeteries for this study. By comparing them we can see that there were a number of clear similarities and differences between cemeteries and areas. What do the variations in time and space, which I have dwelled on, actually mean? It has been shown that they provide a complex

picture of how to bury the dead. I have focused on differences between the regions, and there are indeed differences. The lasting impression is, however, the great similarities. There are many features in common concerning matters such as how to treat the dead body, which objects accompanied the individual into the grave, how the graves were constructed, when rituals changed etc. At the same time, there are many regional and sometimes even local features in the traditions. Much of this has previously been pointed out for the studied period and area on several occasions in the history of archaeology. Both similarities and differences provide input for interpretations. I have interpreted them in terms of common, guiding ritual norms, with a wide variety of different possible factors and combinations of these, resulting in a coarse-grained picture of regional traditions.

The picture is complex and in its basic features it may reasonably be a result of a background in common norms. Similarities and variations are believed to depend on a number of circumstances, such as specific contact patterns between some of the regions, but also separate regional and local traditions (i.e. ritual systems), choices of building material for monuments depending on regional and local conditions, ethnicity, kinship structure, age, gender and supra regional elite behaviour. The common burial norms are mirrored above all by similar ways to express recurrent heroic metaphors in the graves.

Emphasis on certain factors in burial customs during B1-B2 varied to some extent in different parts of the studied area. Several differences are observed, although only tendencies can be shown, since this study was based on a limited number of sites. This concerns types of grave monuments, ratio of inhumations and cremations, arrangement of the bodies, kinds of grave goods and so on. There were obviously differences as well as similarities between the areas. The obvious variations, along with the common traits, were without any pervasive changes over the period studied, which gives an impression of relatively stable and gradually changing cultural and material conditions in the area as a whole.

One of the strongest conclusions we can draw is that some areas had clearly defined rules for the burial rituals – like Zealand – with well-determined and rather strict rules for the proper sets of grave goods, and for how to treat and arrange the dead body. In other areas there were several options simultaneously, perhaps even conflicting influences, as in Scania-Blekinge-Öland, northern Poland and the island of Bornholm, with inhumations and cremations side by side and a wider variety of choices in the composition of grave goods. Bornholm is a special region in many respects, since compositions and varieties of traits found in all the neighbouring areas were present there. This clearly shows that influences came from several directions. The geographic position of Bornholm makes this easy to understand. At the same time, well-established contacts, or absence of such, cannot be the only reason for the observed differences. The area of Zealand developed a very strict set of burial practices, contrary to neighbouring areas, albeit it obviously had well developed contacts with them. Some of the regional variations thus probably had other roots, e.g.

different strategies for accumulating and displaying wealth in different areas; for example, as parts of various kinship and marriage systems.

The sets of grave goods have been discussed as an example of regional variations on some common themes. These were discussed in terms of the dead displayed as expressions of idealized metaphors, following a rather strict pattern, which indicates a spread of mental superstructure in the areas populated by Germanic people. I have argued that the objects in the graves mark and reflect four central statuses or ambitions in society: adult position (= age and gender), production, war and high status. The main points of the different metaphors varied to some extent in terms of both chronology and geography. The variations are suggested to be reflections of the regional specifics in terms of traditions, social stratification and cultural relations; altogether this constitutes various regional ritual systems in different parts of the Baltic Sea area.

The main conclusion drawn from this study is that there were several regional traits in burial practices in the different areas and in many of the single factors mentioned above. Despite obvious variations, the cemeteries had several traits in common; these give an impression of the occurrence of governing ritual norms that were generally adopted throughout a large area around the southern and western parts of the Baltic Sea. This is a very strong indication of overlying and governing ritual norms and religious beliefs that were shared among the Germanic tribes.

Finally, this odyssey in the south Baltic Sea area shows that the comparison of a large number of cemeteries from the area is associated with many difficulties, even if the study is restricted to a limited time period. More comprehensive regional compilations are needed to facilitate the mission of supraregional comparisons. A strong wish is that extensive compilations will be made of all investigated graves from the Pre-Roman and Roman Iron Age in the countries around the Baltic Sea. Considering the possibilities that computerised comparisons and GIS processing offer today, a creation of a common database would be an important transnational project to gather around. A database of this kind could be an extremely powerful and effective means to deepen the research on the societal development around the Baltic Sea during the period, in much more detail than what has previously been done.

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