adoranten

2021

Scandinavian Society for Prehistoric Art

Tanums HällristningsMuseum Underslös

Merete Moe Henriksen

Transforming bodies and rock art

Late Bronze Age mortuary rituals at Sandbrauta

Abstract

This article explores how the practice of including rock art in burials from the Bronze Age in Scandinavia was influenced by and incorporated into the new ideas and practices brought about by the introduction of cremation. Three portable stones with rock art found on the exterior of a cairn at the Late Bronze Age site of Sandbrauta in Central Norway are the point of departure for the discussion. Clay from a Late Bronze Age landslide that occurred soon after the ritual activity had sealed off the site, thus revealing the stones with the petroglyphs to be part of the ritual context. It is argued that the stones with rock art displaying different stages of decoration reflect stages in the stones` biography as well as stages in the process of bodily transformation, thus rendering the cairn to be a place for integrated rites involving both the transformation of bodies and rock art.

Keywords: Portable rock art, superimposition, burials, deposition, Central Norway

Introduction

This article deals with portable rock art as part of mortuary rituals in the Late Bronze Age in Scandinavia (1100–500 BC) and focuses on the recently excavated site of Sandbrauta in Central Norway (Fig. 1). Seven stones with rock art were found at the site, three of them in relation to a cairn. The latter were all found on the exterior of the cairn and are the basis for the discussion in this article. Sealed off by clay from a landslide in the Late Bronze Age, the cairn, along with other remains of prehistoric activity, were left almost intact for 2500 years, thus providing valuable insights into the mortuary rituals of the Late Bronze Age.

The close relationship between rock art and mortuary rituals in Scandinavia is most clearly expressed in the many rock art finds from constructions recognized as Bronze Age burials. Rock art from these contexts ranges from the richly decorated slabs that form part of interior constructions such as cists and kerbs in cairns and mounds, with Bredarör on Kivik (Randsborg 1993; Goldhahn 2013), Sagaholm (Goldhahn 2016), Rege (Myhre 2004) and Mjeltehaugen (Linge 2005; Sand-Eriksen 2017) as prime examples, to rock art on outer kerb stones or on stones deposited in or near the burial monuments (e.g. Glob 1969:159–161; Kaul 2004:140–160; Simonsen & Vogt 2005, 2007; Wangen 2009:87; Wenn & Vogt 2017). In addition to these contexts, there are the rare instances where rock art occurs in relation to cultic buildings in close association with burial sites, among them the building at Sandagergård (Kaul 1987, 2006), and the cases where burial monuments were placed above rock art panels, some of which must have been created just prior to the building of the monument, such as the panels beneath the cairns at Hjortekrog (Widholm 1998), Lilla Ryafällen (Skoglund 2006), Törnsfall 107 (Goldhahn 2011, 2012), and Berg in Stjørdal (Haug 2011).

Although stones with carved images were incorporated into burial monuments in various ways throughout the Bronze

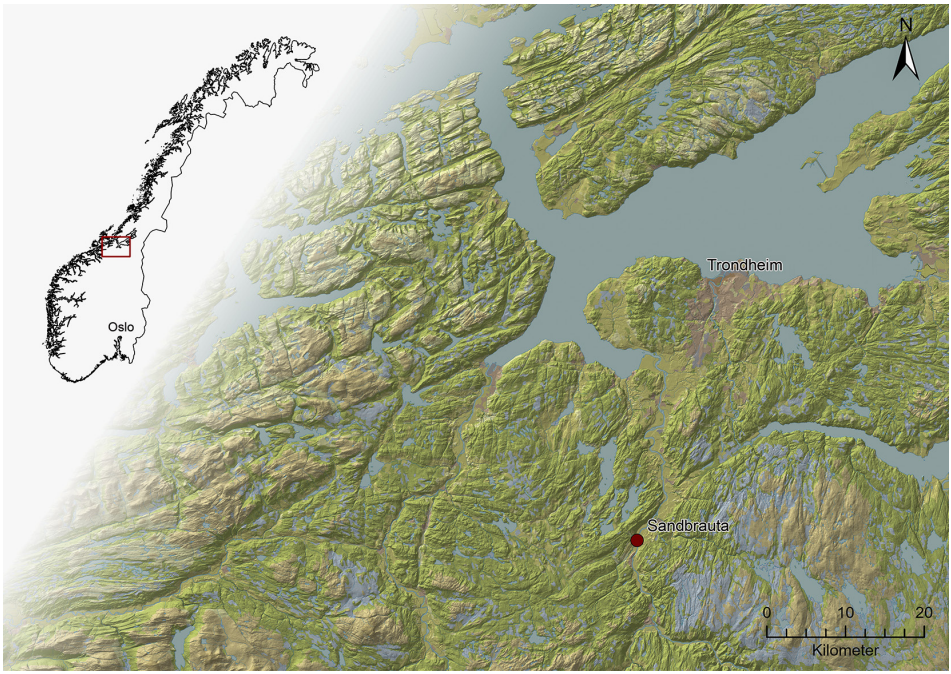


Fig. 1. The location of the excavated site at Sandbrauta, Central Norway. Illustration: Magnar Mojaren Gran, NTNU University Museum.

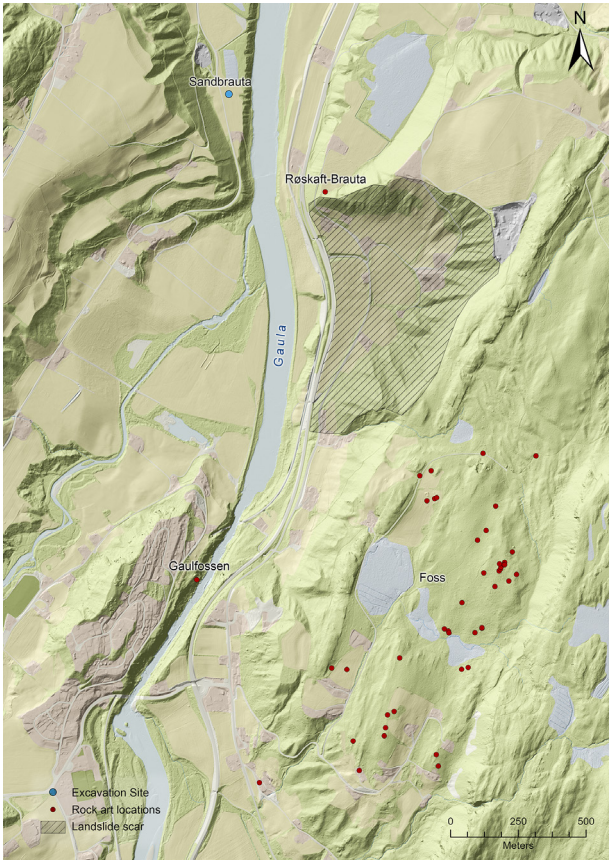
Age, rock art from burials has mainly come to be associated with the more elaborate and well-documented sites predominantly from the Early Bronze Age, such as the burials at Bredarör on Kivik, Mjeltehaugen, and Sagaholm, sites that have proved formative for the interpretation of the entire group of rock art from Bronze Age burials (e.g. Kaul 2004; Syvertsen 2005; Goldhahn & Ling 2013). Far less attention has been paid to the more modest portable rock art from Late Bronze Age contexts interpreted as burials. Rock art from these constructions often comprises stones or slabs found loose in the fill of cairns. The cairns often lack sufficient contextual information, as only a few have been documented in accordance with modern excavation standards (Goldhahn 2012:20). They can also be hard to date accurately, as many of the constructions contain few artefacts and only a limited amount of human remains. Moreover, their period of construction and use was often restricted to the period that falls within the Hallstatt plateau. As a consequence, the major change in funerary practices, with the shift from inhumation to cremation, is seldom addressed when rock art relating to burial monuments from the Bronze Age is discussed.

The rock art from Sandbrauta was deposited at a time when cremation was firmly established as the preferred burial practice in Scandinavia. The practice, which was introduced in the second millennium BC, gradually replaced the practice of inhumation, and became predominant in the Late Bronze Age and in the centuries that followed (Kaliff 2007:91). The shift from inhumation to cremation was marked by a profound change in the perception of the body and the deceased. From still having a likeness to the living body and thus something recognizable and familiar, cremation transformed the body into a fragmented substance with all recognizable features removed. Further-

more, as objects were no longer placed with the body as signifiers of status and identity, the formerly close relationship between such objects and the body was altered (Sørensen & Rebay 2008:60–61).

The transformation from a complete body into fragments would have allowed for extended rituals in both time and space in the intermediate phase between the act of cremation and the final deposition (Kaliff & Oestigaard 2004; Oestigaard 2013). These extended rituals have left behind a complex set of remains that do not always conform to modern-day categories and concepts. This is clearly illustrated by the scarcity or entire absence of cremated human remains that is often encountered in the burial-like constructions from the Late Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age. Excavations carried out the last two decades in part of Scandinavia give the impression of a practice whereby only a select number of individuals were buried, and only parts of those individuals were interred in constructions that are invariably referred to as graves or burials. Thus, the term 'grave' used in the present-day meaning of the word (i.e. as a final resting place for the dead) does not fit well with the character of the prehistoric contexts we seek to understand (e.g. Kaliff 1998, 2005, 2007; Kaliff & Oestigaard 2004; Röst 2016).

Fig. 2. The distribution of known rock art sites in Horg Parish, Melhus Municipality, with the Sandbrauta site and the landslide scar to the north. Illustration: Magnar Mojaren Gran, NTNU University Museum.



A major concern in this article is how the use and significance of rock art in 'burials' from the Late Bronze Age was influenced by and incorporated into this new set of ideas. Accordingly, the aim is to shed light on the practice of including rock art as part of mortuary rituals in the Late Bronze Age by a close examination of the structure of deposition as witnessed at the well-preserved cairn at Sandbrauta.

The Sandbrauta archaeological site

Sandbrauta farm is located in Melhus Municipality in the Gauldal valley, c.40 km south of Trondheim Fjord, and the site forms part of a distinctive Bronze Age landscape in that part of Trøndelag County (Fig. 2). Some 2.5 km farther south, on the Foss plateau near the village of Hovin, a large cluster of rock art sites from the Bronze Age and Iron Age can be found on terraces rising up to 240 m above sea

level (Marstrander & Sognnes 1999:50–63, Brevik 2018). Recently discovered finds of rock art have added to the area's significance, making the sites one of the largest concentrations of rock art in the southern tradition in Central Norway (Brevik 2018:200). The waterfall Gaulfossen, a long and narrow gorge connected to the Gaula river, constitutes a central feature in the same ritual landscape, and recent finds of rock art of both the northern and southern traditions on the panels facing the waterfall attest to its importance in prehistoric times (Brevik & Steberg løkken 2018). Close to the Sandbrauta site and on the opposite side of the river, lies the farm of Røskaftbrauta (Fig. 2), where a stone slab with an engraved boat image, together with cup marks was revealed during land clearance in 1950. The engraved stone was found among a heap of stones, which most likely were the remains of a Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age cairn (Marstrander 1951; Marstrander & Sognnes 1999:49–50).

The investigated site at Sandbrauta was located on the riverbank of the Gaula, with the river to the east and a steep hillside to the west (Fig. 3). The open plan excavation was carried out in 2017 and 2018, and c.500 archaeological features were recorded within an area of c.13,000 m^2. Among the features were five stone constructions with cremated bone fragments comprising the remains of a cairn, three smaller cists, and a built-up structure with slabs, a menhir, two houses interpreted as cultic buildings, cooking pits, and one stone-lined hearth with traces of bronze casting. Additionally, a 10–15 cm thick cultural layer relating to these structures was identified. The stone constructions containing cremated bone fragments were located on the brink of an old meander scar, with the three smaller cists aligned in a row close to and north of the cairn (Fig. 4).

The features were covered by up to 2 m of landslide clay. A landslide scar is visible on the hillside just opposite the river from Sandbrauta, c.250 m farther southwest (Fig. 2) and is most likely the origin of the landslide debris that covered the site. The ^{14}C dates of archaeological features below and above the clay fix the time span in

Fig. 3. The Sandbrauta site on the river terrace west of the Gaula river. Photo: Martin Callanan, NTNU, Department of Historical and Classical Studies.

Fig. 4. Part of the site at Sandbrauta, with the cairn and associated features. Illustration: Magnar Mojaren Gran, NTNU University Museum.

which the landslide occurred to c.800–400 cal. BC (Solberg & Hansen 2018).

The ^{14}C dates from the site span from c.2100 BC to c. AD 400, with a significant peak in activity in the Late Bronze Age, at c.1100–800 cal. BC. The four small cists, the cairn, the two houses, the activity related to the casting of bronze objects and most of the cooking pits probably should be placed within the same time frame.

Based on the type of recorded activities and their co-existence in time and space, the Sandbrauta site is interpreted as part of a ritual complex that was mainly in use in Montelius Periods IV and V. As such, it belongs to a group of distinctive sites that are dated to the Late Bronze Age in parts of Scandinavia, and that are characterized by the existence of stone settings or low cairns interpreted as burials, often in close association with cultic houses and traces of bronze casting (e.g. Kaliff 1997; Wangen 2009; Karlenby 2011; Melheim 2015:94–110, Sörman 2018).

The sealed context provided by the clay cover at Sandbrauta afforded a unique opportunity to explore how the rock art on the exterior came to be part of the cairn, and thus acquire knowledge about the use of rock art in mortuary contexts. In the following sections, the cairn and the associated rock art are presented in detail. The cairn was situated in the northern part of the excavated area, immediately south of three smaller stone cists and a cultic building, where the latter was positioned close to the remaining four stones with rock art at the site (Fig. 4).

The cairn

The cairn, measuring 8 m in diameter and 0.5 m in height, had been built on top of the cultural layer that covered the site. The cultural layer had been used to construct a small mound, which was capped with stones. Larger rounded stones had been placed as a kerb encircling the cairn.

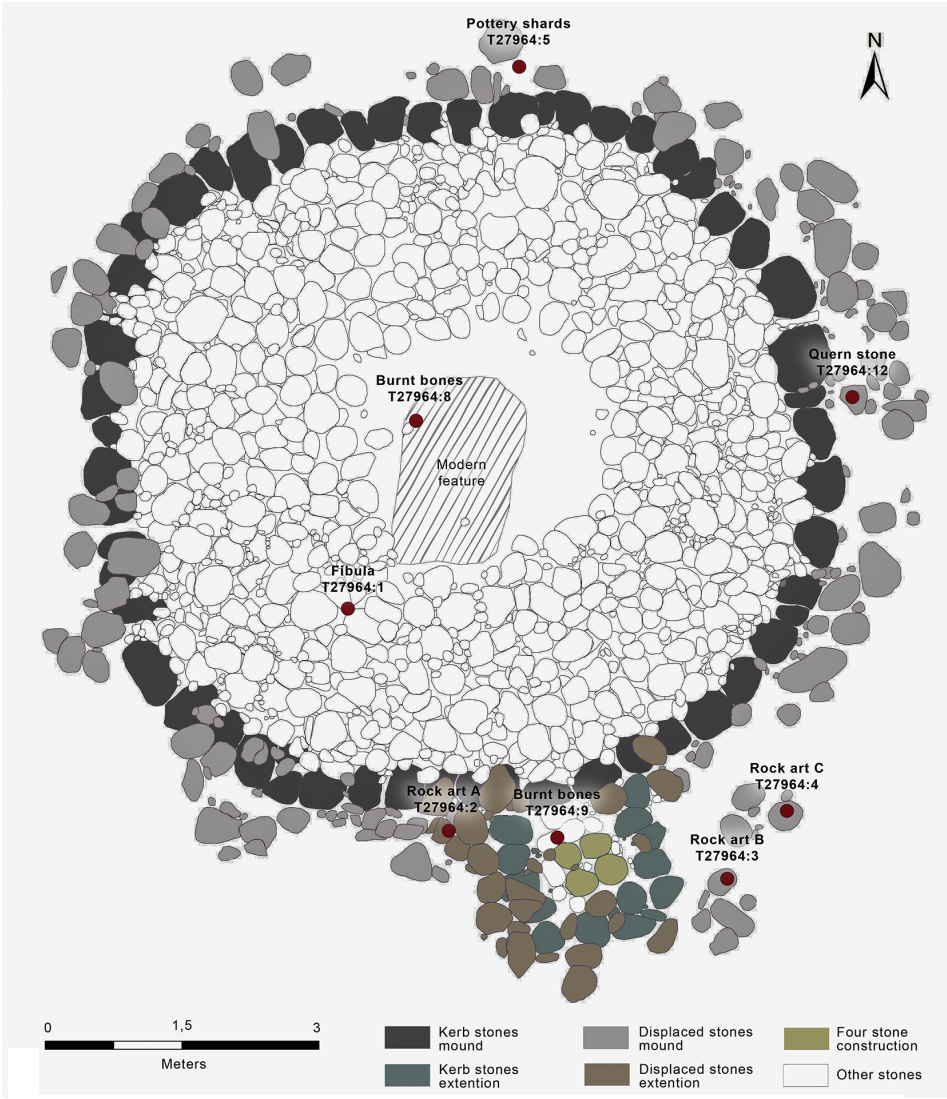


Fig. 5. The horizontal distribution of finds in the cairn at Sandbrauta. Illustration: Magnar Mojaren Gran/Hanne Bryn, NTNU University Museum.

The cairn had a rectangular extension to the south, with four stones forming a construction in the central part. The extension was enclosed by a kerb in a similar manner to the kerb around the main part of the cairn (Fig. 5).

The central part of the cairn was disturbed by a 1.3 × 2 m wide and 0.6 m deep cut, which had been dug in order to remove stones that later had caused problems for farmers who cultivated the field. During the examination of the modern cut, several large stones and one boulder were found. The boulder had been dug down into the cairn, and anything that might have remained of archaeological features in the centre had been removed in the process. However, small fragments

Fig. 6. The Early Bronze Age fibula (T27964:1) from the cairn at Sandbrauta. The pin on the far left is 15 cm long. Photo: Åge Hojem, NTNU University Museum.

of cremated bones, totalling 0.3 grams (T27964:8), were found during the excavation of the cut. As bones were only found in association with stone constructions or hearths at the site, the cremated bone fragments were probably deposited in the cairn. It was not possible to determine whether those bones were of human or animal origin. The rectangular extension itself did not contain any artefacts, but a limited amount of bones, 0.5 grams (T27964:9), was recovered from beneath the stones, close to the four-stone construction. It is worth noting that a few grams of cremated bones were also found in the smaller cists north of the cairn.

A fragmented bronze fibula (T27964:1, Fig. 6) was found in the southwestern part of the cairn, 1.5 m from the inner delimitation of the kerb. The fibula was not accompanied by human remains, nor was it possible to detect any construction details indicative of a burial. The fibula was in the cultural layer that made up the foundation for the stone cover. Other artefacts associated with the cairn included 10 fragments of asbestos-tempered ceramics (T27964:5), and a quern stone (T27964:12) found in the area just outside the kerb stones to the east (Fig. 5). The ceramic fragments were found 30 cm from the kerb stones in the northern part of the cairn and were from the same vessel. The quern stone was found with the working surface facing downwards.

With regard to the chronological position of the cairn, two charcoal samples from the built-up layer beneath the stones in the main body of the cairn have been dated to 1618–1532 cal. BC and 1387–1226 cal. BC respectively (Table 1), providing a terminus post quem for the construction of that part of the cairn to Montelius Period III at the earliest. The bronze fibula was found in the same layer as the charcoal samples. Although exact parallels for the fibula have not been found to date, its leaf-shaped bow with wolf-tooth pattern, the spirals at each end, and the hourglass shape of the head pin are consistent with a Late Period II or Period III date (Oldeberg 1933:25–28, 37–40; Broholm 1944:123–127). However, as in the case of the ^{14}C dates, the fibula only provided a maximum date for the construction of the cairn, as the fibula could have been in use for some time before it was deposited. With regard to the remaining artefacts, the typologies of the quern stone and the asbestos-tempered ceramics could not be used for dating the cairn. Quern stones were in use from the Late Neolithic, at least in some parts of Norway (Prøsch-Danielsen & Soltvedt 2011) and have been found in burial contexts dating from the Late Neolithic onwards and well into the Iron Age (Melheim 2015:34–35; Meling 2020:93). While asbestos-tempered ceramics are known from a number of Bronze Age contexts in Norway, including Trøndelag (Wendelbo 2020), the fragments from Sandbrauta were not preserved in a state that revealed information on either type or function.

Although radiocarbon dates and the finds themselves do not provide an accurate date for the cairn, the type of construction, the cremated remains, as well as the character of the finds associated with the cairn, are all in line with similar constructions and associated remains and finds dating from the Late Bronze Age

Table 1. Radiocarbon dates from the cultural layer that made up the foundation for the stone cover in the cairn. Calibrations were performed with OxCal v4.4.4 Bronk Ramsey (2021); r:5. Atmospheric data from Reimer et al (2020).

Sample ID	Context	Lab ID	Sample	^{14}C Age BP	Calibrated age BC (1 σ)	Calibrated age BC (2 σ)
609534	Cairn	TRa-13968	Charcoal, Betula	3040 ± 15	1376-1264	1387-1226
609790	Cairn	TRa-13969	Charcoal, Betula	3310 ± 15	1611-1539	1618-1532

Fig. 7. The cairn and the associated rock art at Sandbrauta. Illustration: Hanne Bryn/Magnar Mojaren Gran, NTNU University Museum.

and the Early Iron Age in Scandinavia (e.g. Kaliff 1997; Wangen 2009; Röst 2016). A Late Bronze Age date also corresponds closely with the peak in activity dating to c.1100–800 BC at the site, based on the total number of ^{14}C dates. It should also be noted that cremated bones from the smaller cists immediately north of the cairn have been radiocarbon dated to Montelius Periods IV and V. Thus, although a Period III date for the construction of the cairn cannot be ruled out, a Late Bronze Age date seems more likely.

The engraved stones

Three stones with petroglyphs were found among the stones associated with the cairn. One of them had been incorporated as part of the cairn, while the other two were found in close proximity to it (Fig. 7). Throughout the excavation, all stones in the cairn and those relating to it were carefully examined for carved images, and all three stones with images were documented in situ prior to their removal.

Stone A

Stone A (T27964:2) was a fragment of a sandstone slab measuring 0.21 × 0.27 m, with a naturally rounded edge. The fragment was found in the southern part of the cairn, close to the extension, where it had been placed against one of the kerb stones (Fig. 7). The petroglyphs had been carved into one side of the slab and depicted a hammered-out footprint with toes indicated and four cup marks (Fig. 8). The depicted footprint was that of a right foot. The slab had been broken off at one end and had been placed with the motif panel facing outwards, towards the nearby hillside to the west. The slab was found resting on its fragmented edge, the footprint toes pointing upwards.

Two of the cup marks next to the footprint were deep and regular, while

Fig. 8. Stone A (T27964:2), the fractured slab with foot-print and cup-marks. Photo: Åge Hojem, NTNU University Museum.

Fig. 9. Stone B (T27964:3) with cup marks at Sandbrauta. Photo: Åge Hojem, NTNU University Museum.

Fig. 10. Stone C (T27964:4) with cup marks at Sandbrauta. Photo: Åge Hojem, NTNU University Museum.

the other two were shallow and slightly irregular. As a result of the fracturing of the slab, one of the deeper cup marks had been cut in two, and the heel of the footprint was missing. The shallow cup marks were carved into the same surface as the footprint and had been superimposed over it. One of the shallow cup marks close to the fractured edge was cut by the same fracture, suggesting that it was superimposed over the footprint prior to the breakage of the slab. It was not possible to determine from the traces left on the slab whether it had been broken deliberately.

Although the petroglyphs on the slab were clearly defined, especially in the case of the two deeper cup marks, they did not appear as 'fresh' as the petroglyphs on the stones found close to the cairn (stones B and C). Stone B and C are described in more detail in the following two sections.

Stone B

Stone B (T27964:3) measured 0.25 × 0.33 m. It was found just beyond the cairn, among a small cluster of stones c.1.5 m southeast of the kerb stones and 0.5 m east of the rectangular extension to the cairn. Petroglyphs depicting five cup marks had been carved into one side of the stone. A number of peck marks existed on the surface of the stone (Fig. 9). Stone B was found partially buried in the cultural layer, with its motive panel facing downwards.

Three of the five cup marks appeared deeper than the other two; one of the latter shallow cup marks was barely outlined by peck marks. The cup marks appeared lighter in colour compared with the darker grey surface of the stone. Similarly, the peck marks outside the cup marks appeared lighter. Thus, the images appeared 'fresh', and no signs of weathering were visible, which suggests that the stone with the carved images had not been left exposed to weathering for any significant length of time prior to its deposition.

Stone C

Stone C (T27964:4) was similar to stone B and measured 0.28 × 0.38 m. It was found together with two other stones of similar

size c.1.5 m southeast of the kerb stones in the cairn and 0.5 m east of stone B. Stone C had a rougher surface than stone B and the images were less pronounced. Petroglyphs depicting two cup marks, as well as scattered and irregular peck marks, were found on one side of the stone. One cup mark had a completely pecked surface, while the other had a partially pecked surface (Fig. 10). Stone C was found partially embedded in the cultural layer, with its motive panel facing downwards.

The peck marks had a lighter colour than the surface of the stone, and the edges of the peck marks were still sharp. Similar to Stone B, the lighter colour and the lack of any signs of weathering suggest that the carved images were not exposed for any length of time prior to the stone's deposition.

Rock art and mortuary rituals at Sandbrauta

The clay that covered the Sandbrauta site bears witness to a dramatic landslide event towards the end of the Bronze Age, one that occurred while the excavated part of the site was still in use or had recently been abandoned. The cairn was probably constructed in the Late Bronze Age. Thus, the very close time gap between the landslide event and the activity at the site allows for a rare insight into the contexts in which the portable stones with rock art were included. While rock art on the exterior of burial constructions may be hard to date and contextualize (Kaul 2004:156–159; Goldhahn 2012:223), the sealed context at Sandbrauta allows for a study of the items found both inside and outside the cairn as part of related practices, thus providing a context also for the rock art on the exterior. In the following sections, the structure of the deposition in the cairn is presented in order to facilitate an understanding of how the stones with rock art related to the overall pattern of deposition.

The structure of the deposition

When examining the spatial distribution of the finds associated with the cairn, it was possible to discern a pattern in their deposition.

The few bone fragments recovered from the cairn were restricted to the inner part of the stone constructions and were found inside the main part of the cairn enclosed by the kerb stones, as well as in the extension. Although the central part of the cairn had been disturbed, bone fragments were not recovered from other parts of the cairn within the stone kerb, which suggests that the central part was the preferred location for the deposition of bones. The large boulder that had been dug down in recent times would originally have been placed at the centre of the cairn, in the same part as the deposited bone fragments. A possible connection between deposited bones and an arrangement of stones was seen also in the rectangular extension, where the bone fragments were found close to the four-stone construction.

Apart from the fragmented bones, the only item recovered from the main part of the cairn was the bronze fibula. From the way it was positioned, lying in the mound beneath the stone cover, and in the absence of any visible cuts in the overlying layers, the fibula must have been deposited during the earliest phase of use. As the fibula was found in the southwestern part of the cairn, it could not have formed part of a deposition in the centre. Thus, the deposition of the fibula and the fragmented bones seem to represent two discrete events. While the fibula was found in a fragmented state, enough fragments were recovered for it to be reconstructed after the excavation was finished (Fig. 6). This strongly suggests that it was considered important to deposit all parts of the fibula, whether complete or in fragments.

The remaining items, comprising the pottery shards, the quern stone, and the rock art, were all found on the exterior surface of the cairn, close to the extension and the kerb. More items had been deposited in that part of the cairn than inside it.

However, the latter find should be interpreted with some degree of caution due to the disturbance in the central part of the cairn. The items found on the exterior surface had been deposited either intact or in fragments. The pottery shards were probably deposited in a fragmented state. Although a complete ceramic vessel might have deteriorated over time, the clay cover would have protected it from severe decay. Thus, the 10 shards recovered makes it hard to argue for the presence of a complete vessel. Significantly, the indications of parts of objects being deposited were observed in the case of the fragmented slab with rock art. None of the marks on the stone confirmed that the slab had been broken deliberately. Nevertheless, the fracture that cut through the pecked image of a foot and the cup marks would have been clearly visible, particularly as one can assume that the slab was deliberately placed in the cairn with the decorated panel facing outwards. This clearly suggests there was intention behind the choice to deposit the slab in its fragmented state.

When the items deposited in the interior of the cairn were compared with those deposited on the exterior, a distinctive pattern emerged. Among the deposited artefacts, the bronze fibula stood out for several reasons. It was the only object of metal found in relation to the cairn, and it was one of only two metal artefacts from the whole site, the other being a fragment of a socketed axe found in association with bronze casting in an area farther east on the site. Moreover, the fibula proved distinctive in that it was the only object from the cairn, as well as from the site as a whole, that was associated with personal dress and the body. By contrast, the items deposited on the exterior appeared somewhat different in character. First and foremost, those items seemed to be associated with various tasks or actions performed by and for the group, representing non-personal items.

Thus, the examination of the various items and their distribution in the cairn revealed a structured pattern of deposition, with depositions undertaken in relation to selected parts of the cairn only. Furthermore, there seems to have been a preference for keeping items linked to the body – the bones and the fibula – within an enclosed space in the cairn, while the other items – the pottery, the quern stone, and the rock art – were kept on the outside of the cairn.

With regard to the character and condition of the various deposited items, parts of persons, as well as objects, were deposited both in the interior and on the exterior of the cairn. The limited amount of bones recovered suggests that only parts of cremated bodies were interred. Both the fragmentation of the one rock art slab, as well as the way the stones with rock art related to the overall pattern of items found inside and outside the cairn, strongly suggests that the portable rock art was part of the same practice as the other items deposited in the cairn. Thus, the cairn at Sandbrauta appears to have served as a focal point for the deposition of bone fragments, artefacts, *and* rock art at the site.

Transforming bodies and rock art

The practice of depositing bone fragments, artefacts, and rock art at Sandbrauta as outlined in the preceding section, does not fit well with an understanding of the cairn as a final resting place for the dead. Rather, the limited amount of bone fragments from the cairn, as well as the bronze fibula found unaccompanied by bones, suggests the cairn might have served different functions. This suggestion is in line with findings from several recently published studies, in which the authors emphasize the potentially multifunctional character of such monuments (e.g. Kaliff 1998; Thedéen 2004; Wangen 2009; Röst 2016; Meling 2020). The small amount of bones present, a characteristic also observed in the small cists north of the cairn, implies that those depositions represented just one of several stages in the handling of the dead following their cremation (cf. Kaliff & Oestigaard

2004; Oestigaard 2013; Röst 2016). However, such a view of the cairn has implications for how the stones with rock art and their use and significance in the mortuary rituals at the site are perceived.

The character of the cairn at Sandbrauta and the way the rock art related to the overall pattern of deposition in the cairn suggest that the stones with rock art were not made and deposited for a single burial or individual, as found in many of the burial monuments from the Early Bronze Age. Rather, as part of a group of items deposited on the exterior of the cairn, the inclusion of the rock art seems to have been linked to a set of activities referencing earlier stages in the sequence of events surrounding the mortuary rituals. The quern stone would have been used either for grinding cereal grains or possibly for the ritual crushing of bones (Kaliff 2007:142–146), while the meaning behind the deposition of the pottery shards, interred as parts rather than as a complete vessel, should reflect the former use of the vessel. However, the link to previous events is most clearly evident from the fragmented slab with superimposed carvings (Stone A), which might have been used for ritual purposes on several occasions prior to its deposition. The superimposition of the cup marks onto the existing foot image, as well as the way the superimposed cup marks were placed, mimicking the deeper and older cup marks adjacent to the foot image (Fig. 8), clearly relate the rock art on the slab to acts of remembrance (Jones 2007).

Although the use of treasured slabs in burial monuments from the Bronze Age in Scandinavia has been considered a possibility, especially regarding the slabs and stones found on the exterior of the monuments, such an interpretation has proved difficult to substantiate, given the problem of dating the slabs and their time of inclusion in the monument (Goldhahn 2012:223). At Sandbrauta, the clay cover made it possible to relate the slab with superimpositions to other practices inside and outside the cairn, thus confirming that the use and deposition of treasured slabs formed part of mortuary rituals at the time. The fragmentation of one slab, presumably caused by an intentional breakage, means the rock art is of central importance for understanding the practices carried out in relation to the cairn. The breakage would have altered the motive on the slab, removing the heel section of the footprint, thereby transforming a motive often associated with movement and walking (e.g. Sognnes 2011; Skoglund & Bradley 2017), into an image that represented the opposite – the loss of movement. Thus, the deposition of a fragmented, as well as altered rock art motive, reinforces the impression of the cairn as a focal point for the transformation of bodies, as well as rock art, at the site.

'Burials' and the temporality of rock art

The recognition that the items on the exterior of the cairn related to previous events, and that the deposition of the fragmented rock art was about altering and transforming the rock art itself, allows for new perspectives on the two other stones with rock art and the temporality reflected in all three deposited stones.

The cup marks on Stones B and C were preserved in a condition that suggested they had been protected from weathering prior to their deposition. As such, they would have conformed to the picture of newly made rock art for the burial, as often seen on the interior cists and kerbs from the Early Bronze Age and in constructions interpreted as burials from the Late Bronze Age (e.g. Glob 1969:159; Simonsen & Vogt 2005:478; Goldhahn 2016). However, the deposition of the treasured slab, along with the character of the other objects found on the exterior, call such a view into question. The fact that the rock art appeared 'fresh' merely means that it was kept in a protected environment after the images were carved. The many finds of 'newly' made rock art in closed contexts in burials clearly illustrates how the images can stay in such a 'fresh' condition for a considerable amount of time if they were

not exposed to weathering. Being applied to portable stones would have allowed the stones to be protected either by keeping them indoors, possibly in cultic buildings, or by keeping them outdoors, by placing them with the carved side downwards, thus shielding them from exposure and weathering. Moreover, re-carving the images, allowing them to be 'switched on and off' (Wahlgren 2004), might potentially conceal a longer history of use.

Thus, although the rock art on the stones at Sandbrauta appears 'newly made', it does not necessarily imply that the images were carved in relation to an act of internment. This way of viewing the rock art is mainly influenced by the rock art encountered in inhumation burials from the Early Bronze Age, where the rock art formed part of permanent constructions that were hidden from view as soon as the burial rituals were completed. Rather, the context in which the rock art at Sandbrauta was deposited suggests that the stones with carved images could equally have been linked to events prior to their deposition. This in turn implies a shift from seeing the rock art as made *in order* to be deposited, to viewing the rock art as deposited *because* of their images and history of use. Such an interpretation of the cairn and the associated rock art may shed light upon the way the three stones with rock art were deposited in the cairn, each with their motive panel facing either downwards or outwards.

Visible rock art confined to Bronze age burial monuments, which often is found on kerb stones such as those seen at Sandbrauta, has been associated with prolonged death rituals for the living, as opposed to the images that were applied to cist slabs and interior kerbs and that were mainly reserved for the dead (Kaul 2004:141–142, 156–160). However, a shift away from seeing the cairn as a final resting place for the dead makes concepts such as 'hidden rock art for the dead' and 'visible rock art for the living' less relevant for understanding the rock art and its positioning in relation to the cairn. Although one should not underestimate the visual impact of the one slab with the images facing outwards (Stone A), it seems it was not the communicative aspect of the rock art, directed towards either the dead or the living, that created the seemingly opposing ways of depositing the rock art. This implies that we should look for other mechanisms behind the choice to keep some of the images visible and others hidden.

When looking at the character of the carved images on the three stones, the fact that one stone faced outwards and two faced downwards seems to reflect different temporalities respectively. Whereas the slab with superimpositions had been placed with the images facing outwards, the stones with images that appeared 'fresh' were found with the decorated panels facing downwards. Not only did the latter two appear fresh, but they also had an unfinished character, with some of the images barely being outlined in peck marks. Thus, the rather course and unfinished character stands in contrast to the slab with superimpositions carved into the foot image. If it is accepted that also the fresh images were not necessarily made when the stones were deposited, it would seem to imply that the stones with rock art were taken out of use and deposited at different stages in their use-life. Moreover, the positioning on each side of the rectangular extension, with the slab with superimpositions on the one side and the slabs with 'fresh' rock art on the other, suggests a desire to keep the two different temporalities separate.

Thus, the rock art deposited in association to the cairn at Sandbrauta is characterized by variation in the stones with short and long histories of use, and with complete and fragmented rock art. Trying to make sense of these variations takes us back to the meaning ascribed to the act of deposition and the character of cairns such as the one at Sandbrauta. In her seminal study of depositions at two 'burial' sites from the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age in Södermanland, Anna Röst (2016) addresses these complicated issues through a detailed examination of

the placement of the various depositions, along with an osteological analysis of the various bone deposits. Röst uncovered a pattern that appeared to be the result of different stages in the handling of cremated remains, as well as objects, where the various items deposited and their placement within the stone constructions was seen as a result of time and process. The latter result was also reflected in the variations in the type of stone constructions themselves, exemplified by the deposition of fragments belonging to one and the same object in two different constructions. According to Röst, this had the important implication that not all depositions were meant to be permanent but were most likely deposited in some of the stone constructions for shorter periods only (Röst 2016:158–167, 302–307).

Although the pattern of deposition found in the cairn at Sandbrauta diverges somewhat from the patterns identified by Röst, the minor discrepancies do not lessen the value of her main observations. Rather, her conclusions with an emphasis on time and process find support in the way the items in the cairn were deposited. The small amount of bone fragments both from the main part of the cairn, as well as in the extension, might have resulted from the repeated burial and subsequent removal of bones. Such burial and retrieval of bones would have been made easier with the boulder in the centre and the four stones in the extension serving as markers for the bone depositions and could explain the almost empty stone cists north of the cairn.

If the cairn at Sandbrauta is viewed as a place for transforming bodies and rock art, while allowing for impermanence when explaining some of the depositions, the variations observed in the deposited rock art may represent different stages in that transformation. The 'fresh' and unfinished rock art placed with the decorated panel facing downwards could be interpreted as active and in transformation, meant to be reused, while the treasured slab with the broken-off heel seems to represent the final deposition of a slab that had been made inactive. Seen in this way, the visible versus hidden aspect of the rock art can be tied to the various phases in the ritual activity at the site, with the visual aspect linked to the last phase, which probably was the time of abandonment. The slab with the broken-off heel that faced outwards signalled both the end of relations and the end of the monument as a place for transformation, whereas some of the active rock art was left behind, still in its untransformed state.

Conclusions

This article set out to explore how the practice of including rock art in burials in the Bronze Age was influenced by the new practices and rituals brought about by the introduction of cremation, which became the preferred burial practice in Scandinavia in the Late Bronze Age. By focusing on the well-preserved cairn and associated rock art at Sandbrauta, it was possible to relate the rock art deposited on the exterior to the overall pattern of deposition in the cairn. Analysis of the structure of deposition revealed that the cairn probably functioned as a place for transforming bodies, as well as rock art, as exemplified by the fragmented slab with rock art deposited in an altered state. This way of viewing the cairn and the portable rock art has consequences for how to make sense of the diversity observed in the rock art. In this article, it has been argued that not only the treasured slab but also the rock art that appeared 'fresh' might have been related to previous events, and that the deposition of the stones with rock art was linked to their history of use. Moreover, it has been suggested that the appearance of the motives as fresh versus 'old' and altered, as well as their placement in the cairn facing either downwards or outwards was linked to time and process, thus questioning the validity of concepts such as hidden rock art for the dead and visible rock art for the living.

The cairn at Sandbrauta constitutes just one of many 'burial' contexts with rock art

from the Late Bronze Age in Scandinavia. While undoubtedly there would have been variations in how stones with rock art were applied in those contexts, the Sandbrauta case offers an opportunity to understand some of these variations and in the process add to our knowledge of how rock art was included as part of mortuary rituals in the Bronze Age.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the field supervisor at Sandbrauta, Hanne Bryn, for discussions and for contributing information during an early stage of writing this article. Thanks are owed also to Joakim Goldhahn for commenting on an earlier draft of this article, and to the referee for valuable comments that led to improvements in the article.

Merete Moe Henriksen
(NTNU University Museum, Department of Archaeology and Cultural History)
merete.henriksen@ntnu.no

References

Brevik, K. 2018. 'On the beaten track': Considerations on the rock art at Foss in the Gauldal Valley, Trøndelag County, Norway. In: J. Dodd & E. Meijer (Eds.) *Giving the Past a Future: Essays in Archaeology and Rock Art Studies in Honour of D. Phil. h.c. Gerhard Milstreu* (pp. 197–214). Archaeopress. Oxford.

Brevik, K. & Stebergløkken, H. 2018. Nyfunn av bergkunst – det rituelle landskapet i Gaulfossen. *Spor* 2, 2018, pp. 10–15.

Broholm, H.C. 1944. *Danmarks bronzealder. Bd 2. Kultur og folk i den ældre bronzealder*. Nyt nordisk forlag. København.

Glob, P.V. 1969. *Helleristinger i Danmark*. Jysk Arkæologisk Selskabs Skrifter Bd. VII. Odense.

Goldhahn, J. 2011. *Törnsfall 107. Hällbilder vid ett röse och ett röse med hällbilder.* Kalmar Studies in Archaeology VIII. Linnéuniversitetet. Kalmar, Växjö.

Goldhahn, J. 2012. In the wake of a voyanger: Feet, boats, and death rituals in the North European Bronze Age. In A.M. Jones, J. Pollard, M.J. Allen & J. Gardiner (Eds.) *Image, Memory and Monumentality. Archaeological Engagements with the Material Word: A Celebration of the Academic Achievements of Professor Richard Bradley* (pp. 218–232). Prehistoric Society`s research paper 5. London.

Goldhahn, J. 2013. *Bredarör på Kivik – en arkeologisk odyssé.* Kalmar Studies in Archaeology IX, Linnéuniversitetet. Artes Liberales AB. Kalmar/Simrishamn.

Goldhahn, J. 2016. *Sagaholm: North European Bronze Age Rock Art and Burial Ritual.* Oxbow Books. Oxford.

Goldhahn, J. & Ling, J. 2013. Scandinavian Bronze Age rock art: Contexts and interpretations. In H. Fokkens & A. Harding (Eds.) *Handbook of European Bronze Age* (pp. 270–290). Oxford University Press. Oxford.

Haug, A. 2011. 'Kinderegget'. Gravhaug skjulte bergkunst. *Spor* 1, 2011, pp. 8–11.

Jones, A. 2007. *Memory and Material Culture*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge.

Kaliff, A. 1997. *Grav och kultplats: Eskatologiska föreställningar under yngre bronseålder och äldre järnålder i Östergötland*. Aun 24. Uppsala universitet. Uppsala.

Kaliff, A. 1998. Grave structures and altars: Archaeological traces of Bronze Age eschatological conceptions. *European Journal of Archaeology* 1(2), pp. 177–198.

Kaliff, A. 2005. The grave as concept and phenomenon: The relation between archaeological interpretation and terminology. In T. Artelius & F. Svanberg (Eds.) *Dealing with the Dead: Archaeological Perspectives on Prehistoric Scandinavian Burial Ritual* (pp. 125–142). Riksantikvarieämbetet arkeologiska undersökninger skrifter 65. National Heritage Board. Stockholm.

Kaliff, A. 2007. *Fire, Water, Heaven and Earth. Ritual Practice and Cosmology in Ancient Scandinavia: an Indo-European Perspective*. Riksantikvarieämbetet. Stockholm.

Kaliff, A. & Oestigaard, T. 2004. Cultivating corpses. A comparative approach to disembodied mortuary remains. *Current Swedish Archaeology* 12, pp. 83–104.

Karlenby, L. 2011. *Stenbärarna: Kult och rituell praktik i skandinavisk bronsålder.* Uppsala universitet. Uppsala.

Kaul, F. 1987. Sandagergård: A Late Bronze Age cult building with rock engravings and menhirs from Northern Zealand, Denmark. *Acta Archaeologica* 56, pp. 31–54.

Kaul, F. 2004. *Bronzealderens religion*. Nordiske Fortidsminder Serie B 22. København.

Kaul, F. 2006. Kulthuset ved Sandagergård og andre kulthuse – betydning og tolkning. In M. Anglert, M. Artursson & F. Svanberg (Eds.) *Kulthus & dödshus: Det ritualiserade rummets teori och praktik* (pp. 99–112). Riksantikvarieämbetet. Stockholm.

Linge, T. 2005. Kammeranlegget i Mjeltehaugen – eit rekonstruksjonsforslag. In J. Goldhahn (Ed.) *Mellan sten och järn. Rapport från det 9:e nordiska bronsålderssymposiet, Göteborg 2003-10-09/12* (pp. 537–559). Gotarc Serie C. Arkeologiska Skrifter 59. Göteborg.

Marstrander, S. 1951. Det første helleristningsfunn fra Gauldal. *Det Kongelige Norske Videnskabers Selskab Forhandlinger* Vol. XXIII, 18, pp. 66–71.

Marstrander, S. & Sognnes, K. 1999. *Trøndelags jordbruksristninger*. Vitark 1. Trondheim.

Melheim, L. 2015. *Recycling Ideas: Bronze Age Metal Production in Southern Norway*. BAR International Series 2715. Oxford.

Meling, T. 2020. Hverken grav eller rydning – rituelle røyser fra yngre bronsealder-førromersk jernalder på Sømme i Rogaland. *AmS-Varia 61*, pp. 87–97.

Myhre, L.N. 2004. *Trialectic Archaeology. Monuments and Space in Southwest Norway 1700–500 BC.* AmS-Skrifter 18. Arkeologisk museum i Stavanger. Stavanger.

Oestigaard, T. 2013. Cremations in culture and cosmology. In S. Tarlow & L.N. Stutz (Eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of Death and Burial* (pp. 497–509). Oxford University Press. Oxford.

Oldeberg, A.1933. *Det nordiska bronsåldersspännets historia med särskild hänsyn till dess gjuttekniska utforming i Sverige*. Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien, Handlingar 38:3. Stockholm.

Prøsch-Danielsen, L. & Soltvedt, E.C. 2011. From saddle to rotary hand querns in south-western Norway and the corresponding crop plant assemblages. *Acta Archaeologica* Vol. 82(1), pp. 129–162.

Randsborg, K. 1993. *Kivik. Archaeology & Iconography*. Acta Archaeologicla 64 (1). Munksgaard.

Reimer, P. J., Austin, W. E. N., Bard, E., Bayliss, A., Blackwell, P. G., Bronk Ramsey, C., Butzin M., Cheng, H., Edwards, R. L., Friedrich, M., Grootes, P. M., Guilderson, T. P., Hajdas, I., Heaton, T. J., Hogg, A. G., Hughen, K. A., Kromer, B., Manning, S.W., Muscheler, R., Palmer, J. G., Pearson, C., van der Plicht, J., Reimer, R. W., Richards, D. A., Scott, E. M., Southon, J. R., Turney, C. S. M., Wacker, L., Adolphi, F., Büntgen, U., Capano, M., Fahrni, S. M., Fogtmann-Schulz, A., Friedrich, R., Köhler, P., Kudsk, S., Miyake, F., Olsen, J., Reinig, F., Sakamoto, M., Sookdeo A. & Talamo, S.

2020 The IntCal20 Northern Hemisphere Radiocarbon Age Calibration Curve (0–55 cal kBP). *Radiocarbon* 62, pp. 725 – 757. Cambridge University Press. doi: 10.1017.

Röst, A. 2016. *Fragmenterade platser, ting och människor. Stenkonstruktioner och depositioner på två gravfältslokaler i Södermanland, ca. 1000–300 f.Kr*. Doktorsavhandling i arkeologi vid Stockholms universitet 2016. Stockholm Studies in Archaeology 71. Stockholms universitet. Stockholm.

Sand-Eriksen, A. 2017. Mjeltehaugen: Europe`s northernmost Bell beaker expression? In S. Bergerbrant & A. Wessmann (Eds.): *New perspectives on the Bronze Age. Proceedings of the 13th Nordic Bronze Age symposium held in Gothenburg 9th to 13th June 2015* (pp. 7–18). Archaeopress. Oxford.

Simonsen, M.F. & Vogt, D. 2005. Fotsåleristninger i gravkontekst: Jong – et nytt funn fra Øst-Norge. n: J. Goldhahn (Ed.) *Mellan sten och järn* (pp. 473–487). Gotarc Serie C, Arkeologiska Skrifter No 59. Göteborg.

Simonsen, M.F. & Vogt, D. 2007. Fotsåler i en grav fra Jong – perspektiver på ristningssymboler og gravritualer. *Viking* LXX, pp. 57–70. Oslo.

Skoglund, P. 2006. *Hällristningar i Kronobergs län: Motiv, myter och dokumentation*. Institute of Archaeology, Report Series No 97. University of Lund. Lund.

Skoglund, P. & Bradley, R. 2017. Interpretations of footprints in the Bronze Age rock art of south Scandinavia. *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* 83, pp. 289–303.

Sognnes, K. 2011. These rocks were made for walking: Rock art at Leirfall, Trøndelag, Norway. *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 30(2), pp. 185–205.

Solberg, I.L. & Hansen, L. 2018. Geologi og landskapsutvikling langs Gaula for lokaliteter knyttet til arkeologiske utgravinger. *NGU Rapport* 2018.022.

Sørensen, M.L.S. & Rebay, K. 2008. From substantial bodies to the substance of bodies: Analysis of the transition from inhumation to cremation during the Middle Bronze Age in central Europe. In D. Boric & J. Robb (Eds.) *Past Bodies: Body-centered Research in Archaeology* (pp. 59–68). Oxbow books. Oxford.

Sörman, A. 2018. *Gjutningens arenor. Metallhantverkets rumsliga, sociala och politiska organisation i södra Skandinavien under bronsålderen*. Doktorsavhandling i arkeologi vid Stockholms universitet 2018. Stockholm Studies in Archaeology 75. Stockholms universitet. Stockholm.

Syvertsen, K. 2002. Ristninger i graver – graver med ristninger. In J. Goldhahn (Ed.) *Bilder av bronsålder – ett seminarium om förhistorisk kommunikation* (pp. 151–183). Acta Archaeologica Lundesia. Series in 8o, No.37. Almquist & Wiksell International. Stockholm.

Syvertsen, K. 2005. Rogalands ristninger i graver som transformerende og stabiliserende faktorer i tilværelsen. In: J. Goldhahn (Ed.) *Mellan sten och järn. Del II*. (pp. 503–520). Gotarc Serie C, Arkeologiska Skrifter No 59. Göteborg.

Thedéen, S. 2004. *Gränser i livet – gränser i landskapet. Generationsrelationer och rituella praktiker i södermanländska bronsålderslandskap*. Stockholm Studies in Archaeology 33. Stockholms universitet. Stockholm.

Wahlgren, K. H. 2004. Switching images on and off: Rock-carving practice and meaning in the Bronze Age life-world. In: G. Milstreu & H. Prøhl (Eds) *Prehistoric Pictures as Archaeological Source/Förhistoriska bilder som Arkeologisk källa* (pp. 149–165). Gotarc Serie C. Arkeologiska Skrifter 50. Göteborg.

Wangen, V. 2009. *Gravfeltet på Gunnarstorp i Sarpsborg, Østfold. Et monument over dødsriter og kultutøvelse i yngre bronsealder og eldste jernalder*. Norske Oldfunn XXVII. Kulturhistorisk Museum, Universitetet i Oslo. Oslo.

Wendelbo, H.H. 2020. *Keramikk fra norske bronsealdergraver. En studie av morfologi, kronologi, forbindelser og deponeringspraksiser i tidsrommet 1700–500 f.Kr.* Avhandling for graden philosophiae doctor [PhD thesis]. Universitetet i Bergen.

Wenn, C.C. & Vogt, D. 2017. *Rapport arkeologisk utgravning. Gravrøys med helleristninger*. Lilleberg plassen (Jarlsberg Hovedgård), 51/1, Tønsberg k., Vestfold. Kulturhistorisk museum, Universitetet i Oslo. Arkeologisk seksjon.

Widholm, D. 1998. *Rösen, ristningar och riter.* Acta Archaeologica Lundesia Series Prima in 4O NR 23. Lund.