

Gotland's Picture Stones

Bearers of an Enigmatic Legacy

GOTLAND'S PICTURE STONES have long evoked people's fascination, whether this has been prompted by an interest in life in Scandinavia in the first millennium or an appreciation of the beauty of the stones. The Gotlandic picture stones offer glimpses into an enigmatic world, plentifully endowed with imagery, but they also arouse our curiosity. What was the purpose and significance of the picture stones in the world of their creators, and what underlying messages nestle beneath their imagery and broader context? As a step towards elucidating some of the points at issue and gaining an insight into current research, the Runic Research Group at the Swedish National Heritage Board, in cooperation with Gotland Museum, arranged an international interdisciplinary symposium in 2011, the first symposium ever to focus exclusively on Gotland's picture stones. The articles presented in this publication are based on the lectures delivered at that symposium.

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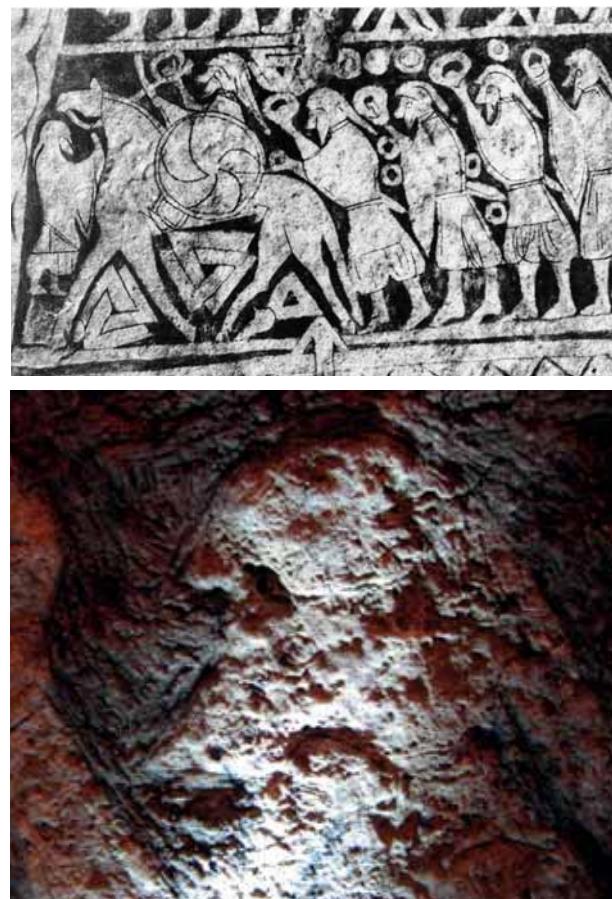
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SIGMUND OEHRL

New Iconographic Interpretations of Gotlandic Picture Stones Based on Surface Re-Analysis

THE DEPICTIONS ON Gotlandic picture stones are often hard to identify. The low and often quite primitive reliefs, as well as the shallow carvings, are degraded by weathering or even footsteps, when they have been reused as part of a church floor. This was the main problem of Sune Lindqvist and his forerunners who prepared the monography of the Gotlandic monuments in 1941/1942 and it still is a major – but regrettably rarely noted – problem of recent picture stone research. While Frederik Nordin, Gabriel Gustafson and Olof Sörling analysed and drew the stone surfaces in daylight, Sune Lindqvist preferred to darken the location in order to use the shine of an electric lamp which was sited in varying positions. In preparation of the photographs for his picture stone edition he then used paint to enhance the grooves he regarded as carved by the artist's hand or as parts belonging to the relief's background plane. As a result, these images of the stones, which still provide the main basis of research, reflect the individual view and estimation of one single person. Even though Lindqvist was a specialist and his work is unquestionably of outstanding importance up to the present day, subsequent research realised that certain parts and details on the stones can be interpreted in several ways, while Lindqvist's illustrations from 1941/1942 represent only one possible perception. In the current article I would like to show that by carefully examining the stone surfaces once again, applying spotlights or by the use of modern equipment and methods such as macro-photography as well as 3D-scan-



LÄRBRO TÄNGLGÅRDA I (Eshleman 2000, Fig. 5; Hauck 1983, Taf. XVI:34). Retouched by Lori Eshleman.
LÄRBRO TÄNGLGÅRDA I. Photo by the author.



Above left: HALLA BROA IV.
Drawing by Olof Sörling, ATA, RAÄ.

Above right: HALLA BROA IV, interpreted and enhanced with paint by Sune Lindqvist. Photo by H. Faith-Ell. ATA, RAÄ.

Below: HALLA BROA IV.
Drawing by Gabriel Gustafson, ATA, RAÄ.

ning, Lindqvist's view can be improved. In addition, completely unknown details can be identified and documented reliably. These re-readings can offer utterly new possibilities for iconographic interpretation.

In her doctoral thesis from 1983, as well as in an article published in 2000, the US historian of art Lori Eshleman presented several results of her re-analysis of Gotlandic picture stones.¹ For her examination of the stone surfaces Eshleman also darkened the location, using the soft light of an electric torch and medium-strength magnifying glasses. By this method she was able to detect many interesting details which are not visible in Lindqvist's documentation. On LÄRBRO TÄNGELGÅRDA 1, for instance, the inner decoration of the relief figures emerged; they would appear to have been scratched in the rock with a kind of knife (see picture on previous page). Lindqvist already mentioned² that similar smooth lines, presumably belonging to a kind of preparatory carving for the stone's final painting, could occasionally be observed, and in certain cases he even enhanced them with paint for his monograph.³ In the case of LÄRBRO TÄNGELGÅRDA 1 he mentioned them briefly in the text⁴ but, oddly enough,

he did not trace them on the stone.⁵ Nevertheless, most of Eshleman's observations can simply be verified using side light.⁶

But even Sune Lindqvist himself had to respond to the challenge of competing readings, by improving and correcting his colleagues' views. This is well exemplified by the picture stone HALLA BROA IV.⁷ While Olof Sörling's drawing of the adventus scene at the top of the stone shows a man with a spear welcoming the horseman, Gabriel Gustafson presents a lady with a swan-like bird sitting on her head. Eventually, however, Lindqvist's examination resulted in a woman proffering a drinking horn. The part of the scene described is indeed very hard to explain but the result of a 3D analysis made by Laila Kitzler Åhfeldt seems to support Lindqvist's view.

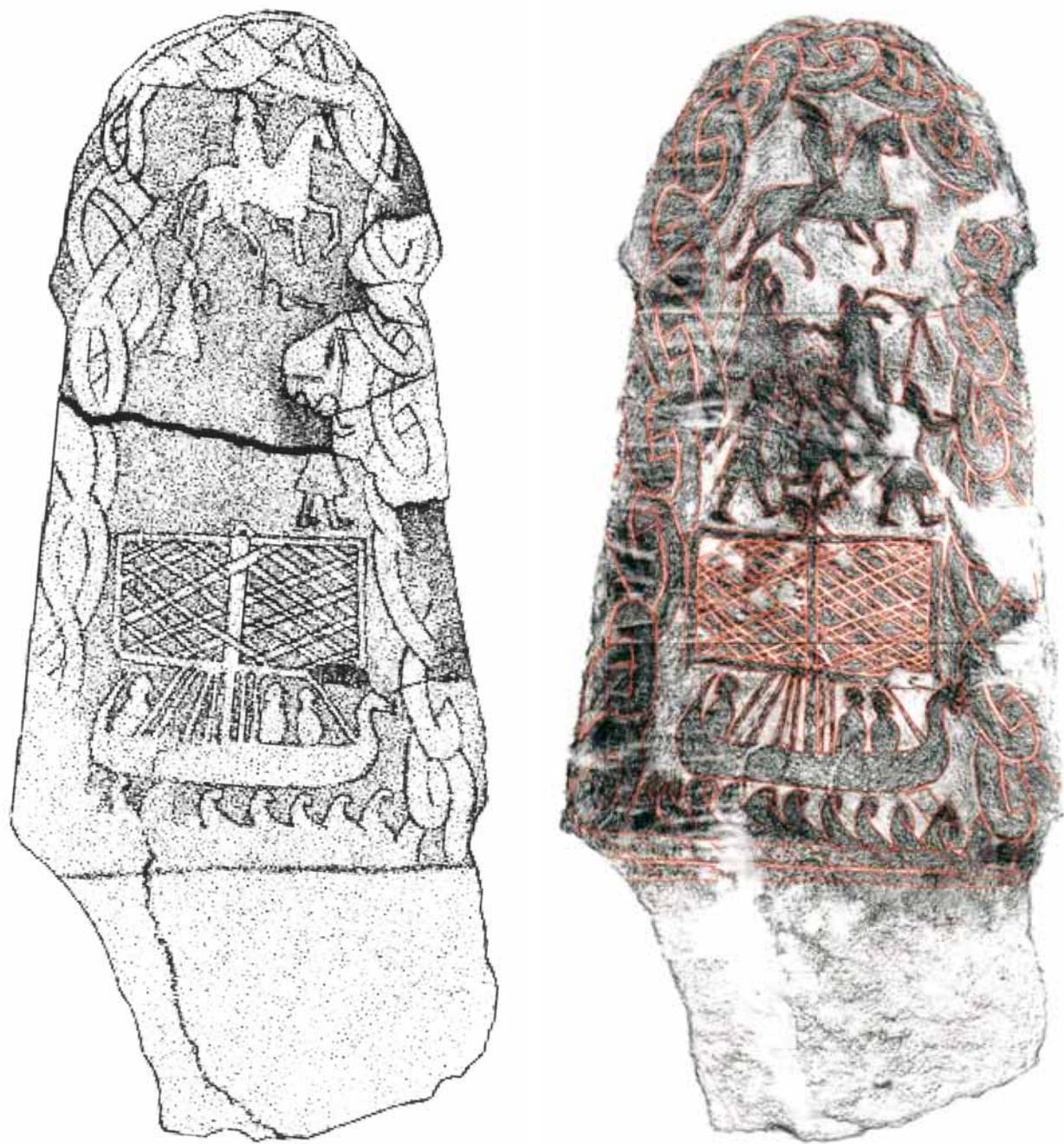
The Valkyries and Water Birds

Even concerning recent finds, which nowadays can be analysed using a greater variety of methods and with the aid of more advanced equipment, the problem of different views persists. In 1999 two halves of a Group C picture stone – FRÖJEL BOTRARVE – were found in a grave at the Viking Period trade center of Fröjel.⁸ The depictions on the monument were recorded and published as a drawing (see p. 94). This drawing shows a ship in the lower part of the stone face, a horseman at the top of the stone, a lady with a drinking horn just below and a single male figure apparently standing on the ship's sail. In his post-graduate thesis from 2001, however, Alexander Andreeff, presents an astonishing, much more detailed view of the images (see p. 94).⁹ By using lamps, magnifying glasses, digital photography and in particular by preparing a rubbing, Andreeff detected the man who is being welcomed by the lady with the drinking horn, as well as a long-necked and long-legged bird, which touches the guest on his back/shoulder with its beak, seemingly nudging him forward. This composition, revealed by a re-analysis, is nothing less than a key for the understanding of the eschatological program of the Gotlandic picture stones

and a unique source concerning Germanic history of religion in general.¹⁰

The Valkyrie is supported by a bird which accompanies and leads the fallen warrior. Actually, the prose text to the Edda poem *Völundarkviða*¹¹ added by the Edda compiler in the 13th century and the 17th century Hrómundar saga Grípssonar¹², which is based on older sources, tell about Valkyrjar in the shape of a swan. Further hints are given by the 13th century Edda poem *Helreið Brynhildar*¹³ and the female name "Svanhild" (= "battle swan"). Based on these rare records, most scholars believe, that the relationship between Valkyrie and swan is a rather late motif.¹⁴ The Gotlandic picture stones, however, indicate that a connection between Valkyries and swan-, goose- or crane-like birds occurred in Norse mythology at least as from the 8th/9th century. A long-necked water bird following a Valkyrie can be seen on a picture stone from Grötlingbo (see p. 95)¹⁵ and a Viking hogback tombstone from Sockburn in Durham¹⁶.

On the Group E stone SANDA KYRKA I a similar long-necked bird is touching a man from behind with its beak, similar to the FRÖJEL BOTRARVE scene (see p. 95). The man is standing inside a house, flanked by an enthroned couple. The standing and the enthroned men are clasping a lance. As Hugo Jungner suggested, the clasping of the lance has to be interpreted as part of an admission ceremony recorded by many early medieval written sources.¹⁷ According to these records, a warrior who is admitted to a fealty has to swear an oath of allegiance by touching a certain weapon. In the *Gesta Danorum* written by Saxo Grammaticus, for instance, Wiggo – the last survivor of Hrolf Kraki's fighters – pledges loyalty to King Hiarthwar by touching his new lord's sword (*Olim namque se regum clientelæ daturi tacto gladii capulo obsequium polliceri solebant*)¹⁸. Similar rituals among the Merovingians have also been recorded.¹⁹ According to Cassiodor (Variae 4,2), King Theoderich adopts the King of the Heruli "through weapons" (*Per arma fieri posse filium grande inter gentes constat esse*



Left: Recent find from FRÖJEL BOTTARVE. Drawing by Mikke Brännström.

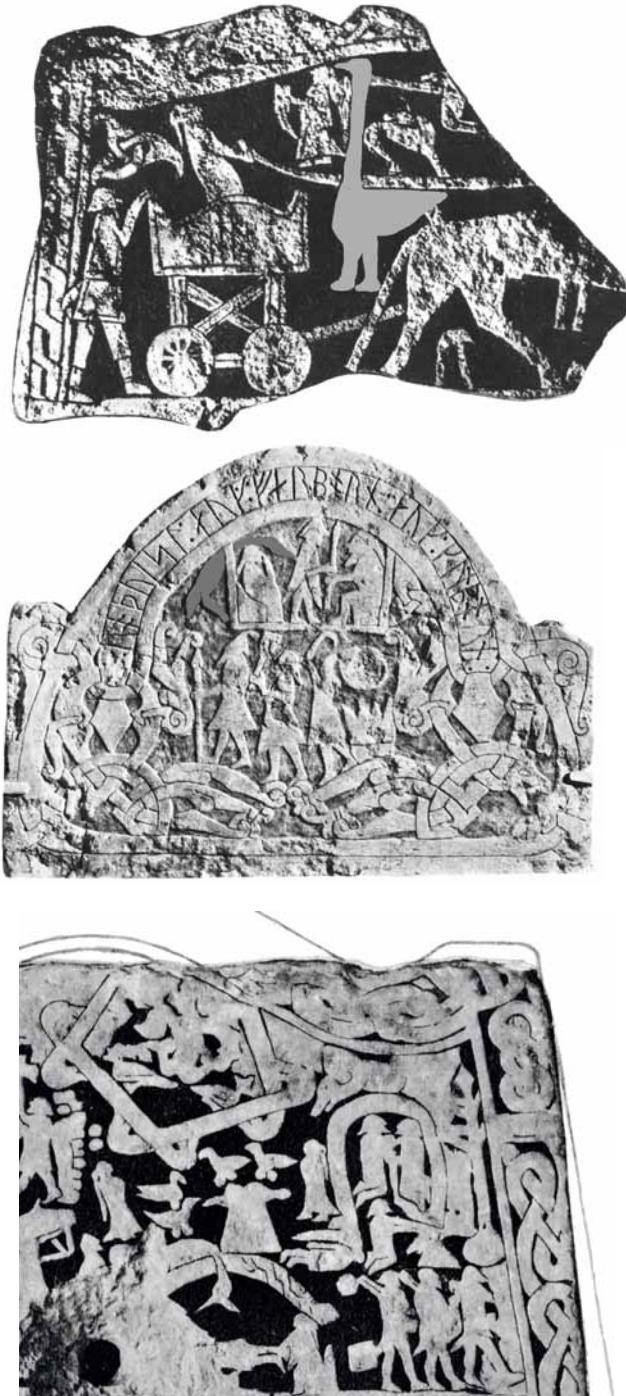
Right: Recent find from FRÖJEL BOTTARVE. Frottage by Helena Andreeff and Alexander Andreeff.

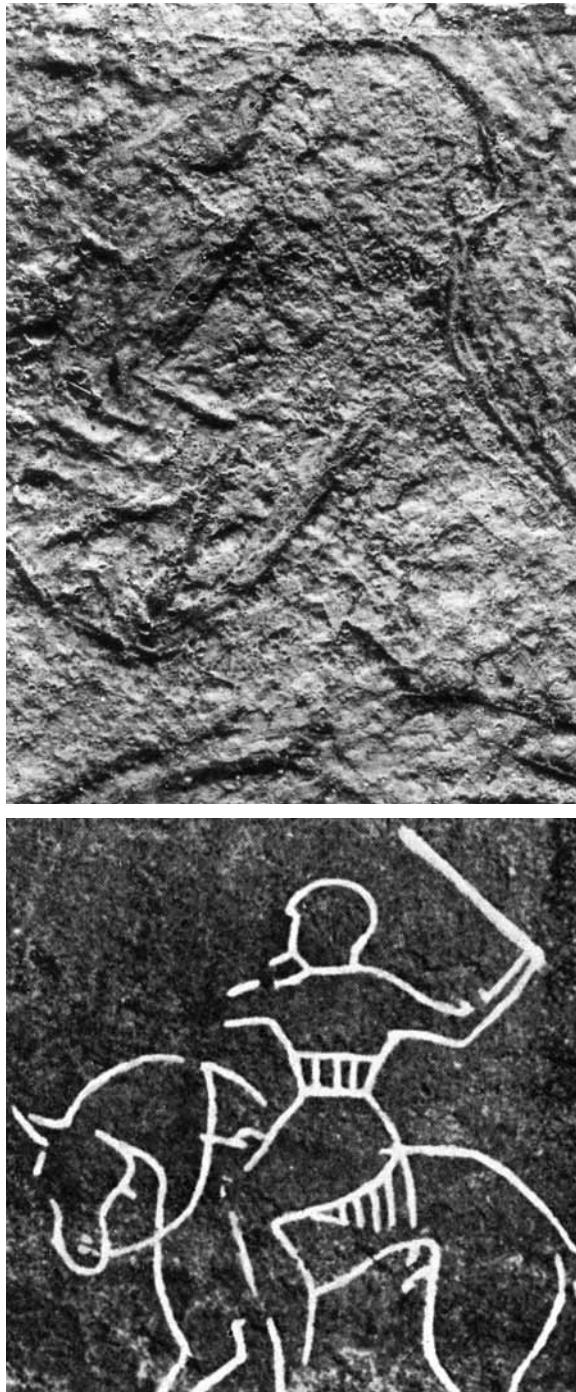
praeconium)²⁰ and also the Gothic commander Gesimund is admitted to the Amals by such an adoption (*Variae* 8,9: *solum armis filius factus*)²¹. Theoderich himself was once adopted by Emperor Zeno in the same way (according to Jordanes, *Getica* 57, 289)²². Actually, according to Snorri's *Gylfaginning*²³ the fallen warriors, who are gathered in the house of Odin (Óðinn), are called "óskasonr" (= "wish-son"), which is a term used for "adopted son", while the god of the dead himself is named "Valfǫðr" (= "father of the fallen"). Therefore, the scene on the SANDA KYRKA I stone can be interpreted as the arrival of a fallen warrior in Valhalla who pledges fealty to his new lord, the god of death and war, by holding his divine weapon. The long-necked bird, which is putting its head into the god's house, is the same creature depicted on the FRÖJEL BOTRARVE stone. It is the assistant of the Valkyrie or even the Valkyrie herself, appearing in the shape of a bird, nudging the deceased to the throne of Odin. The bird and the Valkyrie occur in the role of a Psychopomp – the deceased's escort to the afterlife. A third stone has to be evaluated in this connection: The ALSKOG KYRKA picture stone depicts (to the right of the hole) remains of a building in which a woman is sitting on a throne. In front of her lies a dead man. A long necked bird puts its head through the roof and opens its beak open wide. It is the same scene as on the SANDA KYRKA I stone. The enthroned god of the dead is lost, but his wife who sits facing him, remains. The bird seems to disgorge the corpse, transporting it into the divine home.²⁴ Such transport may also be depicted on a Viking cross shaft from Dearham in Cumberland,

Long-necked water bird on GRÖTLINGBO BARSHALDERSHED NORRKVIE 1:16. After Nylén & Lamm 2003, p. 103.

SANDA KYRKA I, interpreted and enhanced with paint by Sune Lindqvist, *Gotlands Bildsteine* I. Photo by H. Faith-Ell, ATA, RAÄ.

ALSKOG KYRKA, interpreted and enhanced with paint by Sune Lindqvist, *Gotlands Bildsteine* I. Photo by H. Faith-Ell, ATA, RAÄ.





where a long-necked and long-legged bird is carrying a dead person in its claws.²⁵ The bird confronts a man who seems to hold a ring in his hand. A horseman can be seen above the bird.

That the three depictions on the stones from FRÖJEL BOTRARVE, SANDA KYRKA I and ALSKOG KYRKA belong together is proved by the fact, that they are all combined with an enigmatic group of three marching men with shafted tools or weapons in their hands. Their meaning and their connection to the Valhalla scene is uncertain but they are presumed to represent a funeral ceremony.²⁶ As a side note: In this connection, it becomes quite plausible that the water birds, which are one of the most frequent motifs of the Group B stones,²⁷ often combined with the ship of the dead, are also connected to the Valkyries, representing an ancient Germanic Psychopomp conception.²⁸ This conception might be much older, in view of the fact that the Roman-Germanic military god Mars Thingsus is frequently accompanied by a water bird.²⁹

The Breath of the God

The most astonishing and also most irritating re-analyses of Gotlandic picture stones were made by the German researcher Karl Hauck.³⁰ As early as in the 1950s and 1960s Hauck tried to prepare a new documentation by analysing latex casts of picture stones. According to Hauck, the reversed image of the stone surface is more appropriate for analysis with an electric torch because the negative pattern provides a different formation of shades and the entire casts can be moved and examined under laboratory conditions. Using this method, Hauck believed he was able to reconstruct

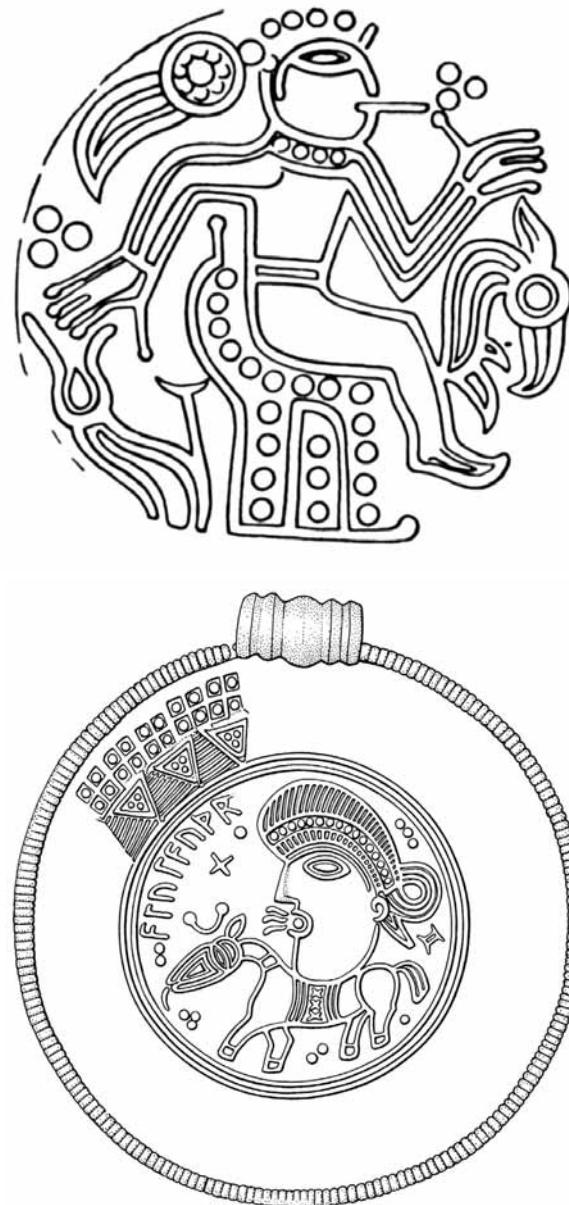
LOKRUME KYRKA, latex impression by Karl Hauck. Courtesy of Alexandra Pesck, Nachlaß Hauck, Zentrum für Baltische und Skandinavische Archäologie in Schleswig.

The MÖJBRO Runestone in Uppland, enhanced with paint by Otto von Friesen. After von Friesen 1933, fig. 24.

amazing details and entire groups of figures. Most of his results are unpublished since Hauck suddenly gave up his picture stone research and dedicated himself to gold bracteates. Drawings based on the latex examination, as well as photos of the casts and other conclusive material, are kept in Hauck's academic estate in Schleswig.³¹ As a matter of fact, at least some of Hauck's re-readings can be verified by checking the original surfaces with side light or with the aid of 3D-models.

On the LOKRUME KYRKA³² stone Hauck identified a row of irregular lines in front of a horseman's mouth. The analysis of a digital 3D-Model confirmed the presence of these lines, which indeed could (!) be intentional. By rotating the model on the screen, the grooves become visible, in particular the rather long and quite deep lower-most groove, which – almost cigarette-like – touches the horseman's mouth. A rider with such a cigarette- or tongue-like stream issuing from his mouth can definitely be observed on the famous MÖJBRO³³ runestone dating from the 5th or 6th century. Otto von Friesen detected this line during his examinations of the monument in 1900–1902 and also considered it in his painting published in 1933.³⁴ This image is also used by Wolfgang Krause in his book from 1937.³⁵ Subsequent publications chose to ignore the "cigarette"³⁶ – it appeared to be out of place – although it is rather deep, obviously connected to the horseman's face and can be easily identified.³⁷ Two interpretations would be imaginable:

The lines coming out of the man's mouth might have the same meaning as on the Migration Period gold bracteates.³⁸ On these amulets they are presumed to represent divine breath or speech.³⁹ On the gold bracteate from Värpalota⁴⁰ in Hungary the enthroned Germanic god, who succeeds the deified emperor, seems to be lighting a cigarette – it is the same kind of depiction as on the MÖJBRO STONE. The amulet Ulvsunda-B⁴¹, Uppland shows a slightly serpentine line coming out of the god's mouth. It is turned upwards, where two birds are placed, seemingly focused on the god's face.



B-bracteate from Värpalota (IK 206).
Illustration Herbert Lange.

C-bracteate from unknown find spot (IK 600).
Illustration Poul Wöhliche.



Illustration from Rosengarten zu Worms, Codices Palatini germanici 359, 49r. Courtesy of Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg.

In this case the tongue-like line presumably represents a communication between Wodan/Odin and his bird-shaped assistants. The C-bracteates IK 600 from an unknown find spot, to name one further example, show three short serpentine lines in front of the god's mouth, which are quite similar to the series of irregular lines on the LOKRUME KYRKA stone. In the iconography of the C-bracteates, the horse's ear on – or even in – the god's mouth and the line-shaped breath or word of Wodan/Odin directed towards the ear, as depicted on IK 600, represent the magic horse cure, which is recorded by the *Second Merseburg Charm*.⁴² According to the Old High German charm the god heals the animal by conjuring it, by reciting spells on his patient. The crucial Old High German verb "bigalan" is represented iconographically by speaking or whispering directly into the horse's ear.⁴³

On the other hand, the rider from LOKRUME KYRKA might be interpreted as Dietrich from Bern⁴⁴ (Theoderic

the Great).⁴⁵ The hero's breath of fire, caused by his anger, is recorded by several Middle High German Dietrich epics as well as the Norwegian *Piðreks saga*.⁴⁶ A good example can be found in the *Rosengarten*, version A, stanza 363: *Her Dietrich von Berne wart gar ein zornec man. / man sach im eine vlammen úz sime munde gân*.⁴⁷ The Norwegian version is similar: *Oc nu verðr piðrecr konungr sua reiðr at elldr flygr af hans munne*.⁴⁸ Also a few iconographic sources from the Medieval Period can be mentioned.⁴⁹ In a few of these medieval texts Dietrich's breath of fire is explained as a sign of his relationship with the devil (for instance in the "Jüngere Sigenot", stanza 83).⁵⁰ Following his death (†526), King Theoderich was demonized and associated with the devil because as an Arian king he was regarded as an enemy of the Catholic Church.⁵¹ For at least three reasons the fire breath motif, however, seems to be rather old and could well have been known to Scandinavian artists during the Vendel and Viking Periods – without necessarily being connected with the Gothic king's demonization: 1) Extraordinary physical reactions as a result of anger, often connected with great heat, are a well-known and relatively widespread Germanic and Celtic heroic tradition (*furor heroicus*).⁵² 2) The fire breath is not only connected to Dietrich but occasionally also to other Germanic characters.⁵³ 3) The idea of a king whose body generates miraculous heat has been connected to Theoderic's family since the 6th century AD. The Greek philosopher Damaskios⁵⁴ related how the body of Theoderich's father Valamer was throwing sparks.⁵⁵ During the Middle Ages Valamer, who in reality was the uncle of Theoderich, was mixed up with Theoderich himself.⁵⁶ Beda⁵⁷, for instance, regarded "Valamer" as an epithet of Theoderich (*Chronica maiora: Theodorico cognomento Valamer*)⁵⁸ and in the Eastern Roman Empire the Goths under the reign of Theoderich were called "Valameriaci".⁵⁹ Thus, Hauck's re-analysis of the LOKRUME KYRKA picture stone could be evidence for the ancient character of the fire breath motif.

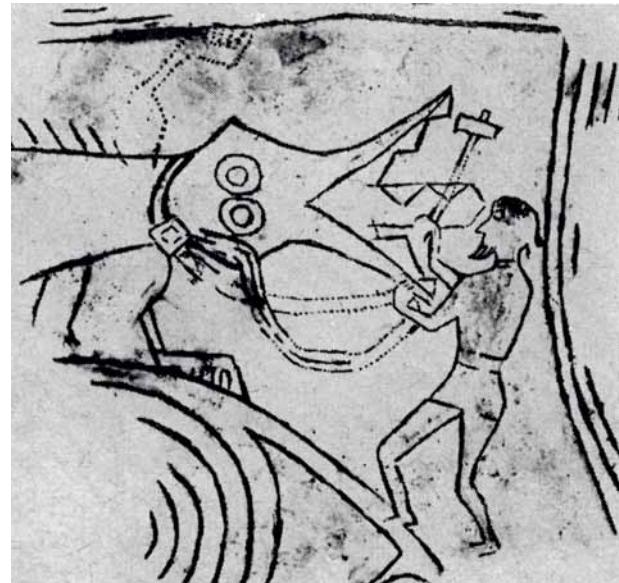
"Millipede Monsters" and Water Demons

In the case of the "millipede monster" and the apparently naked man confronting it on the stone HANGVAR AUSTERS I,⁶⁰ Hauck added the beast's teeth, tongue and forelegs as well as the fighter's battle axe.⁶¹ The warrior is fettering his demonic enemy with a kind of leash. At first glance, this result would seem untrustworthy. However, Hauck was not the only one who offered readings of HANGVAR AUSTERS I differing from Lindqvist's view. Olof Sörling's drawing shows two vertical lines apparently coming out of the human figure's hand. These two lines correspond to the shaft of the axe and a tooth in the monster's lower jaw on Hauck's sketch. On a rubbing published by Søren Nancke-Krogh, a horizontal line rising from the human figure's uplifted hand is taking aim at the demon's throat. Nancke-Krogh suggests, that this line could be a sword.⁶² Whatever the case, the horizontal line visible on the rubbing corresponds to the animal's tongue on Karl Hauck's sketch.

Most of these features can indeed be comprehended by comparing Hauck's sketch with photos of the latex mould in question, which is kept in his academic estate, and by analysing the stone surface with side light. By repeatedly changing the angle of the light ray and using a magnifying glass, the structures become visible but it is very hard to document them by photography. At least the axe or hammer in the human figure's hand can be well photographed (below right). The outline of the weaponhead is rather deeply carved, even deeper than other parts of the depiction as, for instance, the "millipede's" small legs. Also the shaft of the weapon, appearing as an extension of the uplifted arm and with a little gap in its middle section, can be observed in the photo. The axe

HANGVAR AUSTERS I, interpreted and enhanced with paint by Sune Lindqvist, Gotlands Bildsteine I, ATA, RAÄ.

HANGVAR AUSTERS I. Sketch by Karl Hauck, based on latex impression. In Gauert 1958a, p. 116.





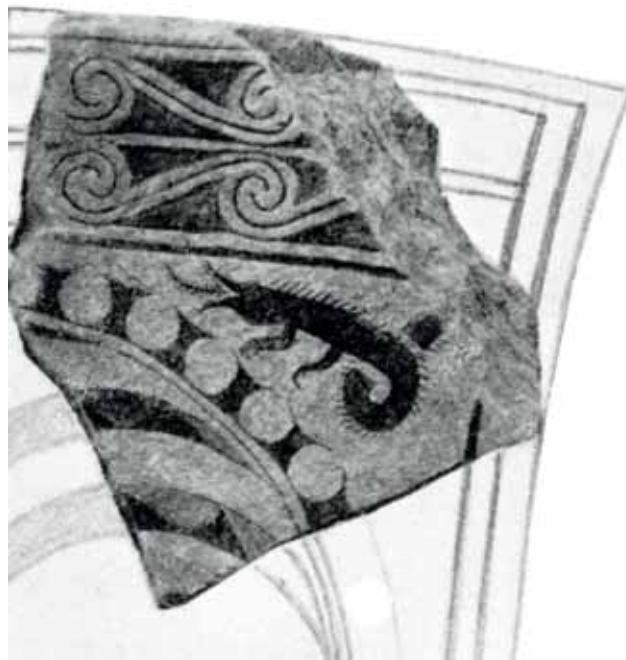
is also very clear in the photos of the latex casts made by Hauck in various light conditions. In addition, some zigzag lines in the monster's mouth appear. Even the leash, almost invisible on the stone surface itself, softly emerges.

The big question is: Do all of these features actually belong to the intentional depiction or could they also be part of the natural surface structure or caused by other secondary influences? In my opinion, at least the man's weapon is reliable. Thus, new interesting interpretations of the depiction can be achieved,⁶³ since an axe warrior fettering a beast is also presented on a 7th century bronze die from Torslunda. Egon Wamers recently tried to trace him back to depictions of animal fighters ("bestiarii" or "venatores") in the arenas of Late Antiquity.⁶⁴ Whether a mythological or legendary meaning was ascribed to the motif or if it represents an authentic trial of courage is uncertain and disputed.⁶⁵ A warrior with an axe, flanked by fettered quadrupeds can also be seen on a Viking hogback tombstone from Sockburn in Durham. The animals resemble beasts of prey and the legs of many of them are entwined by ribbons and fixed by ring-like fitters. The man in the middle is putting his hand into one of the quadruped's mouth, suggesting that the image could be associated with the myth of Týr and the Fenriswolf.⁶⁶ An axe warrior fighting a beast of prey is depicted on the Late Viking runestone from Ytterenhörna (Sö 190). The Hunnestad monument in Scania also features a man with an axe, as well as two beasts of prey (DR 282, 285, 286).⁶⁷

It wouldn't come as any great surprise if Karl Hauck's alleged monster's forelegs on the stone **HANGVAR AUSTERS I** actually prove to exist. As a matter of fact a very

HANGVAR AUSTERS I. Photo by the author.

HANGVAR AUSTERS I, latex impression made by Karl Hauck.
Courtesy of Alexandra Pesck, Nachlaß Hauck, Zentrum für
Baltische und Skandinavische Archäologie in Schleswig.



Above left: Torslunda bronze die B. In Wamers 2009, fig. 19:2.

Below left: Hogback tombstone from Sockburn in Durham.
In Bailey 1980, fig. 26.

Above right: HELLVI IRE IV, interpreted and enhanced by
Sune Lindqvist 1956.

Below right: MARTEBO KYRKA 2. Drawing by Herbert Lange.



Illustration from the Stuttgart Psalter, Psalm 129, Württembergische Landesbibliothek Stuttgart Bibl. Fol. 23, 147v.

similar creature appears on one of the fragments from HELLVI IRE IV⁶⁸. It has the same crocodile-like head and a snake-like body covered with small stripes or spikes. A foreleg and a hind leg prove that these spikes or hairs definitely do not represent the legs of a millipede-like beast.⁶⁹ The picture stone MARTEBO KYRKA 2⁷⁰ depicts the HANGVAR monster⁷¹ once again. Forelegs or hind legs have not yet been identified, but remains of further carvings can actually be observed between the monster's neck and the large whirl in the centre of the stone. However, the most interesting information given by the Martebo artist is that the creature has a fishtail. As a result, the anatomical features of the beast recor-

ded by the HANGVAR AUSTERS I, HELLVI IRE IV and MARTEBO KYRKA 2 stones point to the fact that the depiction conforms to iconographical conventions of Antiquity. The so-called Ketos monster consists of a wolf's head and forelegs and a snake-like body.⁷² This body can end in a point or a fishtail. The latter version appears as a water demon, swallowing Jonah since earliest Christian times. The motif was also adopted in Carolingian art, as in the Stuttgart and Corbie Psalters.⁷³ In the latter case the demon has wings and has been restrained with reins – reminiscent of the possible leash on HANGVAR AUSTERS I. Interestingly, Germanic artists of the Migration Period also adopted the Ketos image⁷⁴ in order to represent indigenous demons. The gold bracteate from Hohenmemmingen in Baden-Württemberg (IK 278-B) shows a snake-like monster swallowing a human figure.

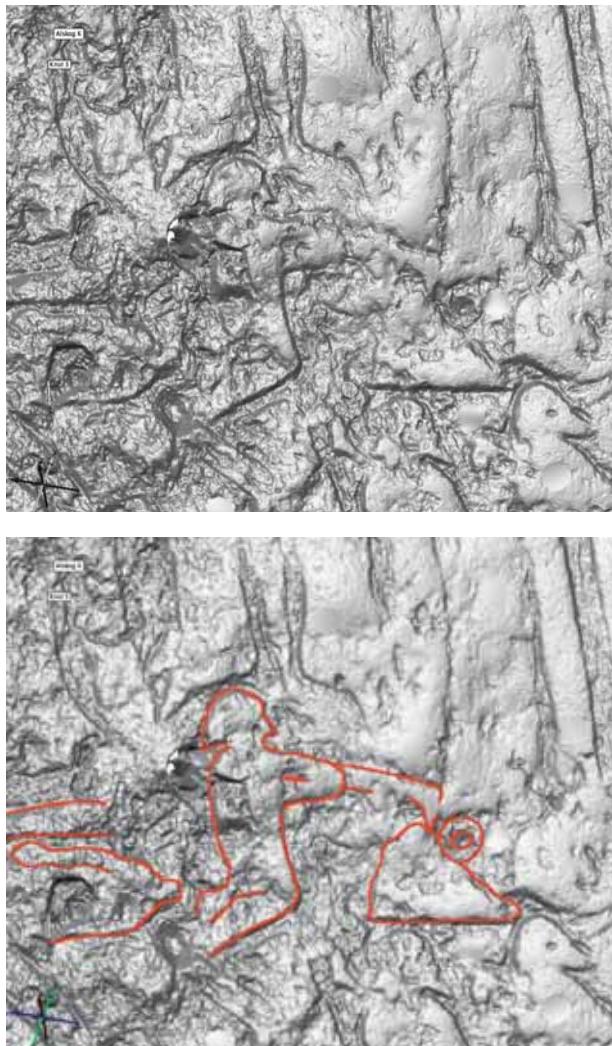
Only the head of the animal's victim, carved in Salin's Style I, peers out of its mouth. The creature has a large mouth with long teeth, a snake-like body and a short foreleg. This beast can be interpreted as an extremely simplified Ketos monster. The scene offers a Migration Period version of the Norse demon Fenrir (Fenrisúlfr) swallowing the god Wodan/Odin.⁷⁵ On some bracteates, as in the Old Norse literary tradition, Fenrir appears in the shape of a wolf. Nevertheless, the demon's name reveals that this monster could once also be regarded as some kind of water demon: The Old Norse term "fen" means both "bog" and "sea".⁷⁶ The fact that the ancient water demon has the head and the forelegs of a wolf, certainly encouraged the adoption of the iconographic motif and the correlation between Ketos and Fenrir.⁷⁷ In addition, the myth of Jonah, who is swallowed by the sea monster and saved by God after three days (correlating with the death and resurrection of Christ), might have influenced the Wodan/Odin religion.⁷⁸

Beheaded Human Figures

On another group of Gotlandic picture stones not investigated by Hauck, it is possible to detect new details. On the ALSKOG KYRKA stone (see p. 95),⁷⁹ to name only one example, two men are kneeling inside a hoof-shaped building, facing each other. Beneath them, another man is kneeling in front of a shapeless object, touching it with outstretched hands. Behind this person outside the building but with his head close to the wall, a fourth man is lying prone on the ground. My re-analysis of the stone revealed that the lying man has been beheaded.⁸⁰ Smooth outlines of a neck stump can be identified. The stump is clearly raised, but nevertheless Lindqvist did not paint the background plane around it. Apparently, he tried to reconstruct an entire human head and/or to extend the base of the building wall. Beheaded human figures lying behind a building and touching the outer wall with their neck stump can be seen in the Wayland scene on ARDRE KYRKA VIII.⁸¹ Actually, iconographic

connections between ARDRE KYRKA VIII and ALSKOG KYRKA are likely, because both belong to Lindqvist's relatively small Tjängvide group representing one single workshop.⁸² Possibly, both monuments were made by the same man. According to *Piðreks saga* Wayland took revenge on his prisoner King Nidung (Nidud) by cutting off the heads of the King's two sons. Afterwards he threw the corpses into a pit behind the smithy bellows in order to hide them (*vndir smiðbelgi sina igrof eina divpa*)⁸³. In *Vqlundarqviða* (stanza 24, 34)⁸⁴ this pit is called *fen fioturs*, an enigmatic term meaning a kind of muddy pit belonging to the smithy.⁸⁵ The princes' corpses being hidden in a kind of pit is depicted by the Ardre carver by placing the princes behind the building, lying above a scale- or slide-shaped structure.

In the case of ALSKOG KYRKA the beheaded corpse is also lying behind the building, touching the outer wall with its neck stump and placed under a somewhat similar scale-like object. This corpse also seems to be hidden somewhere. As a matter of fact, the man kneeling inside the building is holding a hammer or rather an adze-like tool in his outstretched hands. He seems to be working on a triangular kind of anvil. A ring-shaped object is lying on the anvil. If this is not a fossil inclusion, the ring could be interpreted as the result of the kneeling smith's work. My interpretation, based on the surface re-analysis, reads as follows: The kneeling man inside the building is Wayland, forging inside a smithy and producing jewellery for the King.⁸⁶ The kneeling position might be a hint at the fact that the smith was crippled by his prisoners in order to prevent him from escaping.⁸⁷ The beheaded corpse represents the slain princes, hidden in a pit behind the smithy. In this setting, a group of water birds and women beside the scene could be connected to the swan maidens mentioned at the beginning of the Edda poem.⁸⁸ The two men kneeling above the smith might represent the two princes who visit Wayland in his smithy before they are killed.⁸⁹



ALSKOG KYRKA. Digital 3D-model by Laila Kitzler Åhfeldt.

ALSKOG KYRKA. Digital 3D-model by Laila Kitzler Åhfeldt, retouched by the author.

The crucial features which I was able to identify by using electric torches and magnifying glasses can well be verified and documented with the aid of a 3D model made by Laila Kitzler Åhfeldt.

Future Research

The advantages of using 3D-scans for iconography are numerous: the surface model can be moved and rotated at will, it can be analysed as a positive or negative pattern, natural as well as secondary colouring is deleted, different kinds of illumination can be simulated, details can be zoomed in and observed from different angles and measurements can be taken. I am convinced it would be worthwhile to scan certain details with a higher resolution. Thereby it would become possible to zoom in more closely, in order to analyse single grooves and questionable parts in more detail. The inner structure of possible grooves, for instance, could be examined and compared with those which definitely belong to the intentional depiction. This approach should be combined with the indispensable awareness of the original stone surfaces – including the well-proven lighting method and photography – and in certain cases lithological experts might help to distinguish between intentional carvings and natural stone structures. This could be one step forward in achieving an objective evaluation of possible re-readings and their reliable documentation.

Summary

Hopefully, the examples given in the current article managed to demonstrate that a careful re-evaluation and documentation of certain picture stones, based on up-to-date techniques – as is planned by the author on a larger scale project – can lead to new important iconographic interpretations, widening our knowledge of Germanic religion and heroic legend.

Notes

1. Eshleman 1983, p. 9, footnote 21, 22; Eshleman 2000, fig. 5–7. Unfortunately, the pictures in Eshleman's book (available as reproduction made from a microfilm copy of the original dissertation) are of very inferior quality.
2. Lindqvist 1942, p. 122.
3. Lindqvist 1941–42, fig. 104, 112, cf. fig. 114, 115, 512.
4. Lindqvist 1942, p. 92.
5. Lindqvist 1941/1942, fig. 86, cf. fig. 87, 88.
6. Some of these details, however, can already be seen in Olof Sörling's drawing (Lindqvist 1941–1942, fig. 448).
7. Lindqvist 1942, 61, fig. 116, 117, pp. 381–384.
8. Concerning the excavations at Fröjel in general: Carlsson 1998, Carlsson 1999a, Carlsson 1999b, Thunmark-Nylén 2006, 497–500. Further information on the project, as well as papers and reports, are published on the internet. For the discovered stone FRÖJEL BOTTRAVE see: www.hgo.se/frojel/frojreport99.pdf and www.hgo.se/frojel/Frojel99.pdf as well as the reports 1999: 4–5 under www.hgo.se/frojel/excavation.html.
9. Published in: Norderäng & Widerström 2004, p. 86, fig. 3.
10. This topic, summarised in the following passages, is elaborately discussed in: Oehrl 2010a, including more source material and literature.
11. Kuhn & Neckel 1983, p. 116.
12. Guðni Jónsson 1950, p. 416 f.
13. Kuhn & Neckel 1983, p. 220.
14. Von See et al. 2004, p. 299.
15. Nylén & Lamm 2003, p. 103; for a differing interpretation see: Dobat 2006, p. 186.
16. Sockburn 15 after Cramp 1984; Lang 1972, 241, fig. 1; Bailey 1980, p. 136.
17. Jungner 1930; for a differing interpretation see: Staeker 2004, pp. 44–60.
18. Liber II, 67, Olrik / Ræder 1931, p. 61.
19. Zeumer 1886, p. 55.
20. Mommsen 1894, p. 114 f.
21. Mommsen 1894, p. 239.
22. Mommsen 1882, p. 132.
23. Chapter 20, Lorenz 1984, p. 285 f.
24. Instead, Lindqvist assumed a depiction of Loki's punishment: Lindqvist 1941/1942, vol. II, p. 14.
25. cf. Collingwood 1907, p. 125, fig. 17; Bailey / Cramp 1988, p. 95; the scene has been thought to illustrate the legend of St. Kenneth/Cainnech, who was carried away by birds when he was a baby.
26. First by Jungner 1930, pp. 67–75.
27. Lindqvist 1941/1942, fig. 35, 55, 56, 59, 60, 310, 354, 400, 466, 467, 468, 479; Nylén & Lamm 2003, p. 210 f.
28. See Hauck 1982, p. 259 f.
29. Werner 1941, pp. 35–43, Taf. 3, pp. 16–19; Böhner 1968, p. 190; Hauck 1980, p. 231 ff., fig. 1, 2, 4, Taf. 2–6.
30. Hauck 1957; Gauert 1958a; Hauck 1970, pp. 277–279, Abb. 66.
31. This material will be published and discussed elsewhere.
32. Lindqvist 1941/1942, vol. I, fig. 93 f.
33. U 877, KJ 99.
34. von Friesen 1949, fig. 1.
35. Krause 1937, Abb. 82.
36. Jansson 1977, fig. 6.
37. Possibly, even a second line is coming out of the man's mouth (Hauck 1969, 41 f., fig. 1; Hauck 1970, p. 302 f., Abb. 76, 1–2).
38. Concerning the gold bracteates I follow Karl Hauck's interpretation. Hauck's results are reflected in more than 60 studies (www.fruhmittelalter.uni-muenster.de/goldbrakteaten). Recently, in the so-called "Auswertungsband" two very important articles were published posthumously (Hauck 2011a; Hauck 2011b). Wilhelm Heizmann demonstrates Hauck's method and summarises his main results in terms of the C-bracteates (Heizmann 2007a, see also Heizmann & Düwel 2009, 349–355) and the „Drei-Götter-Brakteaten“ (Heizmann 2007b). Basically, the strength of Hauck's approach consists of two major components: 1) Hauck included all types of bracteates and almost all kinds of motifs depicted on them, as opposed to other scholars who just pick out single depictions or base their interpretation on selected groups of bracteates. 2) Supported by an interdisciplinary team of scholars, encompassing philology, toponymy, runology, archaeology and history of religion, Hauck included the entire material and mental context of the gold bracteates (the main results provided by this team are published in the "Auswertungsband", Heizmann & Axboe 2011). As a result, Hauck's interpretation is – in spite of justified criticism concerning details and a "deterrent" presentation – still the most conclusive one, providing a reliable insight into the main mythological topics of the Migration Period gold bracteates.
39. Recently: Oehrl 2010b, pp. 423–441; cf. Heizmann 2001, p. 333 f., p. 337 as well as, for instance, Hauck 1998, p. 48; Hauck 1969, p. 41; Hauck 1970, p. 403.
40. IK 206-B.
41. IK 195-B.
42. The Merseburg Incantations (Die Merseburger Zaubersprüche) are two unique medieval texts written in Old High German.
43. Recently: Oehrl 2010b, pp. 424–426.
44. Bern is the Middle High German name for Verona.
45. According to Ingemar Nordgren (Nordgren 2009) Theoderic and his mausoleum in Ravenna are depicted on the rune stone from Sparlösa (Vg 119). As a matter of fact, Theoderic (*piaurikr*) is mentioned in the runic inscription of the Rök stone (Ög 136). For an overview of the discussion see Düwel 2008, 114–118.
46. The sources have been collected by Höfler 1963, p. 57 f.; cf. Grimm 1999, 506, Register "sein Feueratem" and Lienert 2008, p. 313, Register "Feuratem".
47. Holz 1893, 63. Translation: "Dietrich of Bern became an angry man, one saw a flame coming out of his mouth."
48. Bertelsen 1905–1911, vol. 5, 324 f., cf. 247 f. Translation: „And now King Piðrek became so angry that fire flew out of his mouth.“
49. Painting on the ceiling of Floda church, Södermanland: Liestol 1931, Pl. II.

50. Schoener 1928, 82.
51. Recently: Kragl 2007, 77 and 83 including a collection of sources.
52. Birkhan 2006.
53. Heinzel 1889, 97 f.; cf. Höfler 1963, p. 59; Jiriczek 1898, p. 266.
54. Dead around 529/533 A.D. or later.
55. Höfler 1963, p. 59 f.
56. Wolfram 1979, 333; Marold 1988, 155, footnote 30.
57. Beda *venerabilis*, Anglo-saxon monk (672–735).
58. Mommsen 1898, p. 305.
59. Wolfram 1979, p. 18.
60. Lindqvist 1941/1942, vol. II, 69, fig. 27, 403, 404.
61. Gauert 1958b, 81; cf. Oehrl 2011, pp. 182–187.
62. Nancke-Krogh 1995, p. 17.
63. Oehrl 2011, pp. 187–192.
64. Wamers 2009, pp. 25–42.
65. Oehrl 2011, pp. 172–179.
66. Lang 1972, pp. 238–240; Lang 1984, p. 164; Bailey 1980, p. 135; McKinnell 1987, p. 330; Bailey 2003, p. 17; Oehrl 2011, pp. 159–162.
67. Oehrl 2011, pp. 210–221.
68. Lindqvist 1956, p. 25 f., fig. 3.
69. Similar beasts can be identified on Bro kyrka II. The “serpents” above the larger disc have tiny forelegs as well as hairs on their head and mouth (Lindqvist 1941/1942, fig. 14, 15).
70. Nylén & Lamm 2003, pp. 32–35.
71. Hauck 1983, Taf. XVI:34.
72. Sichtermann 1983.
73. Stuttgart Psalter, Psalm 9,18, Württembergische Landesbibliothek Stuttgart Bibl. Fol. 23, 10v (Stuttgarter Bilderpsalter 1965); Corbie Psalter, Psalm 51, Amiens Bibliothèque municipale Ms 18, 46r (Stiegemann & Wemhoff 1999, Katalog XI.20). In the Corbie Psalter the Ketos appears together with an Uroboros (a snake swallowing its own tail). Beside the Ketos the Uroboros was also adopted by the Germanic bracteate masters (Lyngby-A, IK 297). Concerning the Uroboros motif in Germanic Antiquity and Early Medieval Times see: Oehrl 2011, 205–208, Abb. 327–334. A more extensive article on this topic is in preparation. Concerning the picture in the Corbie Psalter: Kuder 1977, pp. 235–238.
74. Hauck et al. 1985–1989, vol. 3:1, pp. 22–24 with illustrations.
75. Hauck & Axboe 1985; Hauck et al. 1997.
76. Heizmann 1997; Heizmann 1999, pp. 247–249.
77. In this book Anders Andrén also states that the Hangvar monster could represent Fenrir but he does not include Hauck’s analysis.
78. The Christian idea of resurrection had a strong impact on the iconography of the gold bracteates. This aspect was emphasised by Karl Hauck and Wilhelm Heizmann and recently presented by Lutz von Padberg (von Padberg 2011). The Germanic pagan elite had to adopt those aspects into their own mythology in order to remain competitive. Moreover, the revolutionary message of comfort and eternal life undoubtedly affected the Germanic people’s minds. Therefore, Christian motifs and symbols are frequently reflected in the Nordic amulets and the concept of regeneration became the bracteates’ basic subject.
79. Lindqvist 1941–1942, vol. II, 13–15, fig. 135, 136, 303, 304.
80. The following interpretation is dealt with in more depth in Oehrl 2009, 542–550, Abb. 4–7.
81. Concerning this scene and the iconography of Wayland in general see in particular: Buisson 1976, 70–76; Nedoma 1988, pp. 1–39.
82. Lindqvist 1941/1942, vol. I, 49 f.; cf. Kitzler Åhfeldt 2009a, 139–144; see also Kitzler Åhfeldt in this volume.
83. Bertelsen 1905–1911, vol. 1, 117.
84. Kuhn & Neckel 1983, p. 121 f.
85. von See et al. 2000, 214–216; Müller-Wille 1977, p. 130: “Aschengrube”.
86. Already assumed by Lindqvist 1964, 69; Staeker 2004, p. 57 f.
87. Vǫlundarqviða prose after stanza 17, Kuhn & Neckel 1983, 120; Þiðreks saga, Bertelsen 1905–1911, vol. 1, p. 114.
88. Vǫlundarqviða prose introduction and stanza 1–4, Kuhn & Neckel 1983, p. 116 f.; Oehrl 2009, p. 549 f.
89. Vǫlundarqviða stanza 20–24, Kuhn & Neckel 1983, p. 120 f.; Þiðreks saga, Bertelsen 1905–1911, vol. 1, p. 116 f.

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