

## The ‘Stranger King’ (bull) and rock art

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*In this paper we will argue that Bronze Age rock art could be seen as a fusion of the following social processes: (1) A legacy of the North Scandinavian Rock Art Tradition in terms of the emphasis of animistic feature and the general need to aggregate or interact on a seasonal basis; (2) southern Scandinavia’s entanglement in metals during the Bronze Age which, in fact, triggered the entire process of creating rock art during this epoch; and as an outcome of this process (3) the formation of new maritime institutions and a general need to (4) enter and maintain ‘international’ networks and alliances that inspired the rock art tradition with a pan-European code of warriorhood and cosmology. Of particular interest for us here is the ritual and transformative depictions of bulls and ships in the former ‘seascape’ of Bohuslän.*

KEYWORDS: animistic transformations, cosmopolitical codes, entanglement in metals, ‘Stranger King’, maritime institutions

### Introduction

Visiting the rock art in Bohuslän, western Sweden (Fig. 8.1), often leaves you with more questions than answers and every occasion leads to new perspectives or ideas. This has to do with the nature of the rock art itself, fixed figuratives in the rocks performed in a varied, innovative way constantly inviting new interpretations and ideas (e.g. Raphael 1945). At present, there are about 1500 sites with figuratives in Bohuslän, and new sites are found every year (Toreld this volume). Even if new sites and images are found, there are lots of discoveries, or rather interpretations, to be explored with regard to the known sites. Many interesting ideas and suggestions are proposed by visiting researchers, often with no direct experience or previous familiarity with rock art, as was the case when I brought Mike Rowlands to visit some sites in northern Bohuslän.

The region of Bohuslän is home to one of Europe’s largest concentrations of Bronze Age rock art and no other area in Scandinavia presents such a rich figurative repertoire and complex compositions of images from the Bronze Age. There are plenty of figuratives and among the repertoire we find representations of bulls (Fig. 8.2). They occur mostly

on panels with ships from Early Bronze Age period 1, 1700–1500 BC (cf Vandkilde 1996), and *were depicted in close association* with the ships.

However, not much attention has been paid to these representations and the most common interpretation is that they convey the pastoral livelihood in Tanum during the Bronze Age (Bertilsson 1987; Vogt 2012). In fact, this idea fits with the pollen record which indicates that cattle breeding was of importance in Tanum during the Bronze Age (Ling 2008: 6). However, in terms of the location, combination and display we argue that these particular images convey a more delicate ritual narrative and more specifically a transformative narrative rooted in the North Scandinavian Rock Art Tradition (NT) (cf. Sognnes 2001). In the NT tradition we find many examples of animistic transformation of forms of the wild into ‘human’ forms (Sognnes 2001; Gjerde 2010). Thus it ‘is the idea of taking the outside in’ that links the wild to the cultural which includes both animal and non-animal transformations. The idea of taking the outside in could also be seen as a feature in the Bronze Age associated with rock art, ships, metals and notions of violence.

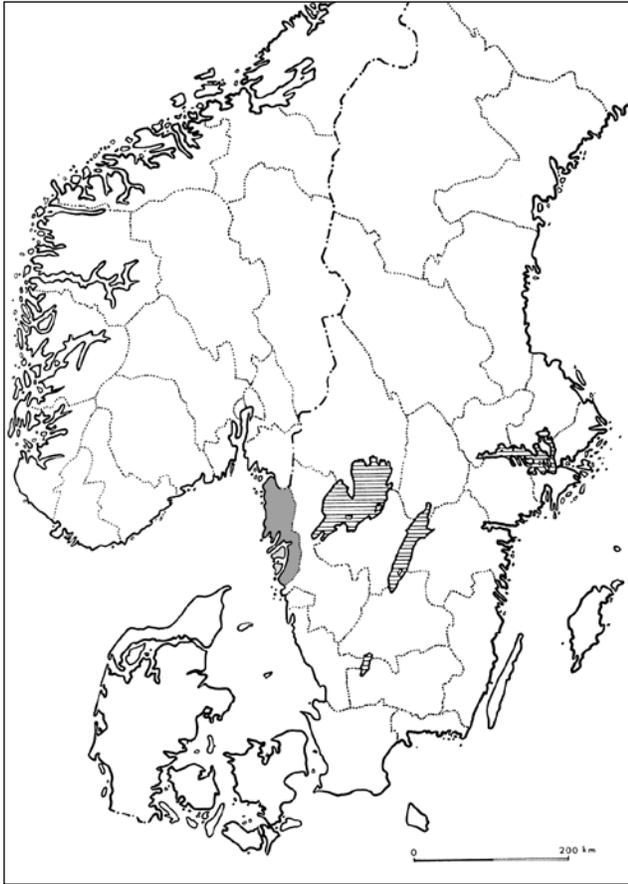


Fig. 8.1. Parts of Scandinavia with the rock art region of Bohuslän marked in grey.

There are many forms that the wild did take in the Bronze Age depending on the nature of the origin. For instance, the animate-/non-animate transition, stone in many forms, metals and amber, all derive from natural sources, and their movement or transformation is essentially a change from a raw state into a domesticated ‘cultural’ form. It is in this latter sense that we are particularly interested in using Sahlins’ argument about the *Stranger King*, which in this case is limited to the warrior figure on the rocks, to discuss the potency of the wild as a means of empowering local cultural forms. Furthermore, we will also argue that the rock art phenomenon in Southern Scandinavia should be seen in the light of Scandinavia’s ‘entanglement’ in metals during the Bronze Age.

### Bulls, ships and seascapes in northern Bohuslän

In the areas of Tanum, Kville, Svenneby and Bottna, bull depictions often occur on rock art panels with ship depictions from the Early Bronze Age (Fredsjö 1981;

Ling 2008) (Fig. 8.2). However, there is not enough room to describe all these sites in detail and we have therefore confined our study to a couple of sites in the Tanum area.

According to the most recent shore displacement study in the area, the altitude of the shoreline at the beginning of the Bronze Age should be approximately 16–17 m a.s.l, with a descent to 10–11 m a.s.l towards the end of the Bronze Age (Ling 2008). This implies that most of the panels mentioned above faced a seascape during the Bronze Age (Fig. 8.3). Thus, the maritime realm seems to have attracted groups to make ships, bulls and other images on the shore during the Bronze Age.

Our brief case study starts at the site Tanum 12 located at Aspeberget. This hill has 20 rock art panels, most of them on the eastern slope close to the Tanum River. The current site is located about 19 m a.s.l and it faced the seascape during the entire Bronze Age. The site is much cited in the literature not least for the warriors depicted on the lower part, the vertical row of ships in the middle and the famous sun symbol at the very top of the panel (Fig. 8.4) (cf. Montelius 1876; Almgren 1927; Bertilsson 1987; Fredell 2003). However, what caught our attention here are the representations of bulls in the higher portion of the panel. There is a very pragmatic interpretation of this scene at hand, claiming that it shows a cattle theft (Montelius 1876). However, we think the message is more subtle than this suggestion. There is a scene, or rather a succession of a human and bulls in different sizes; the closer to the ship the larger becomes the bull, as if the bull grows to its full size and then transforms into a ship (Fig. 8.4). The ship has features that are characteristic of the Early Bronze Age, such as in-turned prows and a slightly raised keel extension, and the appearance of all the images indicates a dating to the Early Bronze Age. In fact, the in-turned prows could be seen as yet another device that connects the ship with the bulls, i.e. in terms of the shape of the horns. Beneath the ship there is an additional bull, and beneath this a ship and a bull. The entire composition made up of ships and bulls, and the sequence with growing and moving bulls that seemingly enter or transform into ships, is indeed interesting.

The transformative features between ships and bulls here seem to elaborate on the theme ‘taking the outside in’.

The second panel, Tanum 25, is located on the same hill, about 300 m south of the previously mentioned one, and also includes some interesting features with ships and bulls (Figs 8.2 and 8.5). This panel also faced the seascape during the Bronze Age. Nevertheless, the lower part of the panel displays a cluster of ships, humans and bulls of particular interest. The most striking feature here is the bull on the lowest position with a ship-shaped body, indeed similar to the shape of the ship depicted to the right. Above the bull is a human scene showing ‘males’ with erect penises in a moving sequence. Thus a ‘herd’ of ships and bulls seem to surround the human scene as if they were a slightly

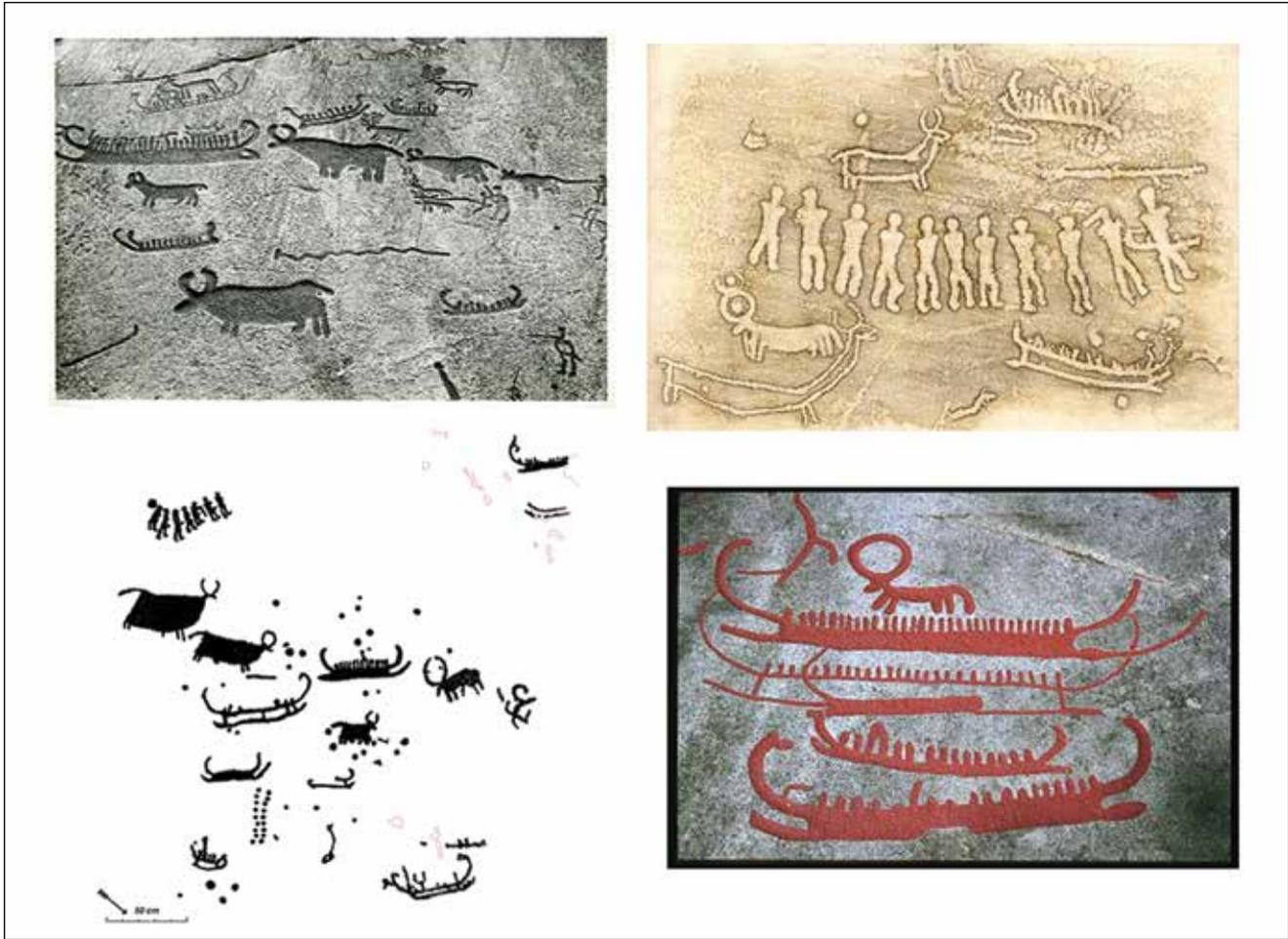


Fig. 8.2. Bulls and ship depictions from the Tanum and Kville areas in western Sweden. Top left: Tanum 12 after Claesson Claes (source: SHFA); Top right: Tanum 25 after Evers Dietrich (source: SHFA); Bottom left: Tanum 351; and Bottom right: Kville 159 (documentation by TanumshällristnismuseumUnderslös (THU); source: SHFA).

different species, yet from the same herd and with the same intent, which may have been to protect or ensure the social initiation rite (Fig. 8.2). Finally, at the panel above this, there are some magnificent ships, also from the Early Bronze Age, surrounding or supporting a large ship with in-turned prows. There is a small bull with large horn hanging at the very end of the keel extension of the large ship (Fig. 8.5). Thus, once again we see the close connection between the bull and the ships on the rocks, or rather the narrative of the transformation of these particular features.

Our last 'empirical' example is taken from the so-called Gerum panel. It is located about 1 km south-east of Aspeberget, and is one of the most outstanding rock art panels in the Tanum area. The low 'maritime' position of this panel, 14.5–16.5 m a.s.l, is unusual, and it presents a perfect case for shoreline dating (Ling 2008).

It includes some remarkable figures and combinations, such as the scene with horned warriors attached to a pole, which they are hanging onto or entering, and several

interconnected animals as well as an extremely large bull-like figure (Fig. 8.6). The former scene is the most cited one and has traditionally been regarded as a maypole (Almgren 1927; cf. Fredell 2003; Skoglund 2012). However, the maritime setting and the fact that the panel is dominated by ship depictions suggest rather that this scene represents a maritime initiation rite (Ling 2008: 139). The most striking feature on this panel is the large bull found in the top right. It is accompanied by another bull and surrounded by a fleet of ships. The bodies of both bulls follows the shape of a ship hull. This fact is most obvious on the large bull with vertical representations of possible rows of cleats for fastening lashings to stabilise the hull of the 'bullboat'. In fact, the whole scene with ships with in-turned prows/horns and bulls could be seen as a herd/fleet on the move, staged for a special maritime event (Fig. 8.6).

What we shall keep in mind is that the ship may have been regarded as a fragile feature during the Bronze Age, and fixing it into the firm and permanent rock and depicting it

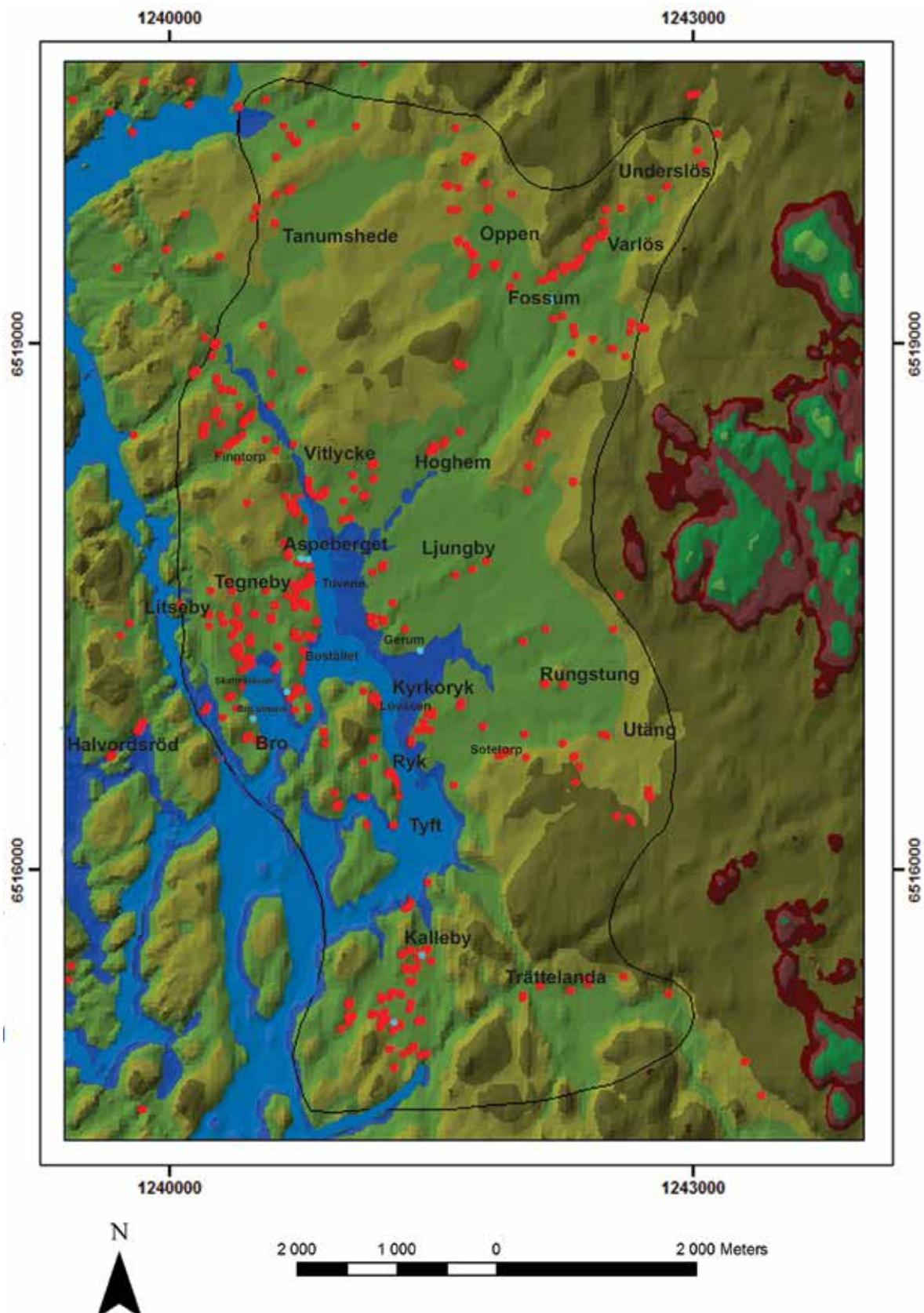


Fig. 8.3. The distribution of rock art in the landscape of Tanum during the Bronze Age, with a sea level about 15 m a.s.l.

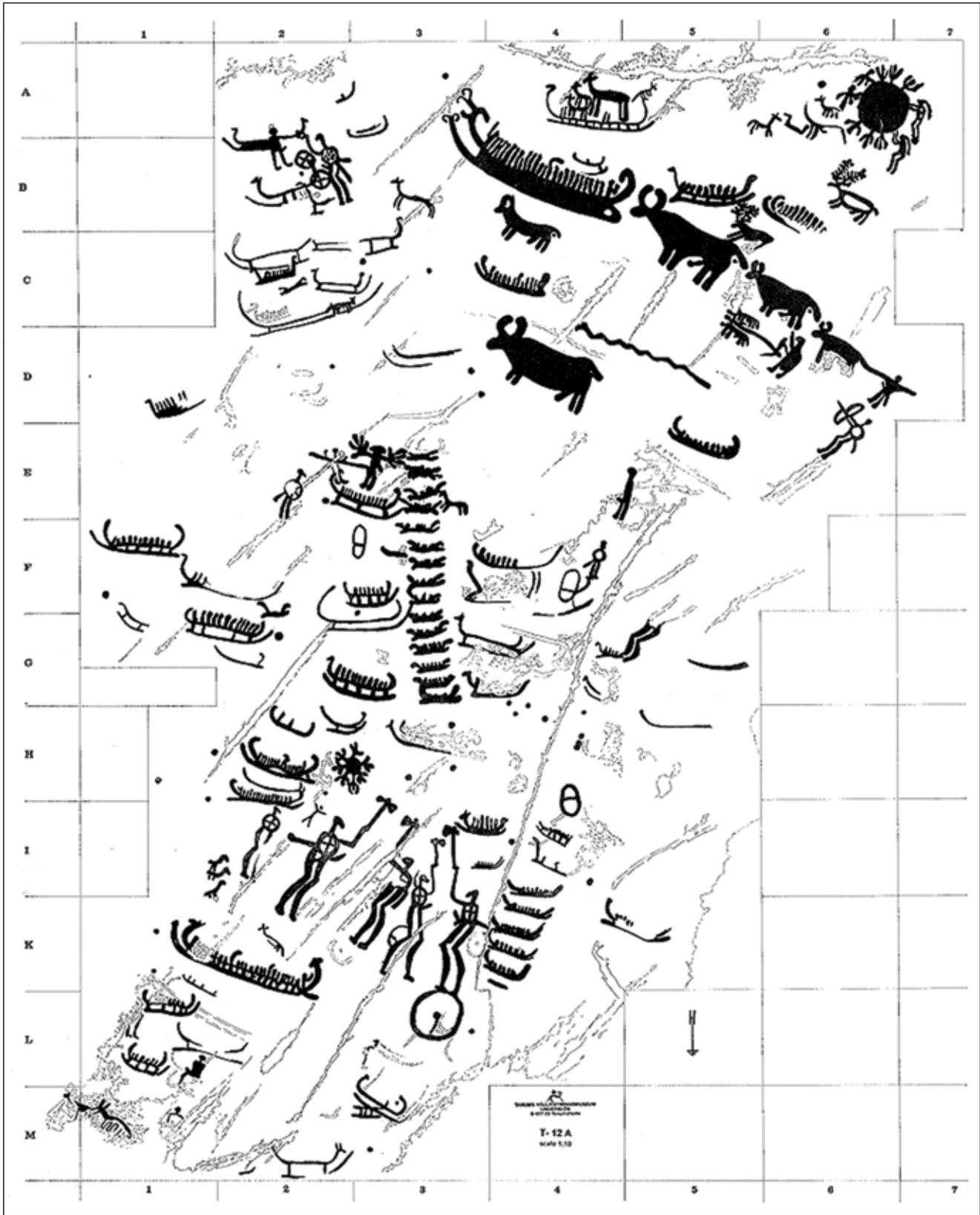


Fig. 8.4. The magnificent panel Tanum 12, displaying transformative features between ships and bulls (documentation by TanumshällristnigsmuseumUnderslös (THU); source: SHFA).



Fig. 8.5. The upper part of the panel Tanum 25, displaying a large ship from the Early Bronze Age with a bull attached to the keel extension (photo: Otnes Wilhelm, TanumshällristnigsmuseumUnderslös (THU); source: SHFA).

alongside strong features or symbols such as the bull, could have ensured the durability and safety of the journey of the ship. In the opposite part of the panel there is a ship from the Early Bronze Age with a bull just beneath, as if the bull lifts or carries the ship over dangerous waters (Fig. 8.6).

Finally, another important observation for our argument is the fact that some panels with typical Early Bronze Age features include depictions of bulls that seem to emanate from the cracks in the rocks. These bulls are never completely depicted, only half of the animal is ever displayed (Tanum 304; 262), and it is as if the rock deliberately holds the other part of the beast. This feature could be seen as yet another example of the potency of the rock, and as an extension of the transformation between stone/animal and ship.

### Structure from the north, content from the south

In this section we will argue that the transformative depictions of bulls and ships should be seen as a legacy (structure) of the northern rock art tradition while the bull image itself (content) may have been an inflow from southern Europe.

Transformations between animals (elk, reindeer and seals) and ships are a common theme for the NT tradition (Fig. 8.7). It is therefore logical to assume that this animistic theme was a legacy of the NT tradition (cf. Westerdahl 2005) and today, most scholars agree that the structure of making rock art ‘as format’ was transmitted from the north to the south (Helskog 1999; Sognnes 2001; Bradley 2006; Goldhahn 2010; Cornell and Ling 2010; Gjerde 2010). This format seems to have been transmitted to southern Scandinavia during the Early Bronze Age where it evidently developed in a quite different way (Helskog 1999; Goldhahn and Ling 2013). Other impacts from the north to south have also been stressed, for instance Bradley argues that the vertical cosmological conception of the world during the Bronze Age was transmitted from the NT tradition (Bradley 2000; see also this volume). Another important feature that needs to be stressed regarding the NT rock art is that it is thought to have been produced in accordance with seasonal socio-ritual gatherings. These meetings took place when there was a seasonal abundance of prey animals at these specific locations in the landscape such as at Nämforsen or Alta (Helskog 1999; Goldhahn 2002; Gjerde 2010).

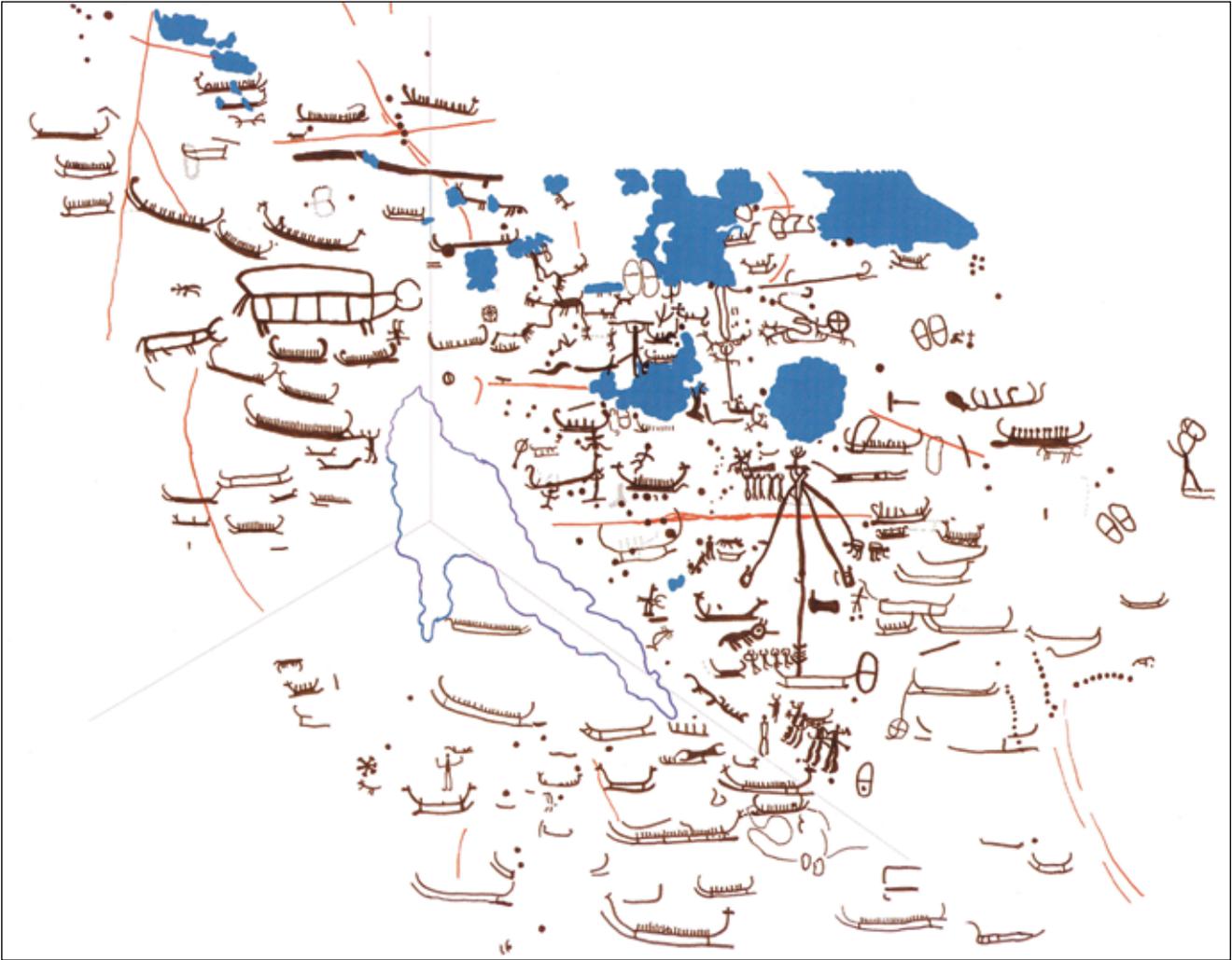


Fig. 8.6. One of the most outstanding rock art panels in the Tanum area, Tanum 311. Note the spectacular combinations of bulls and ships (documentation by TanumshällristnigsmuseumUnderslös (THU); Remade by Fredell 2003: source: SHFA).

In the following we will argue that the entanglement with metal in the Bronze Age created or triggered similar, social needs to interact on a seasonal basis at maritime communicative places in the landscape. However, it is important to stress that the societal and environmental conditions for the interactions during the Bronze Age differed considerably from those that took place earlier in the NT areas. Even if there were great differences between the interactions that took place in these remote rock art areas, they seem nevertheless to have been governed by some similar features, namely, the flows of certain commodities (prey animals/metals, people and things), as well as durability (the rock, rock art), temporality, velocity and most importantly the social reproduction of power, social relations and ideology (Hodder 2012: 5, 31).

An important cognitive feature in the process of creating images in these remote areas was to depict different kinds

of transformations or, so to speak, 'taking the outside in'. In this context we could also imagine for instance a metonymic connection between rock images of animal ship transformations and the social reality of a ship with animal features, being sent into the ocean to hunt. As seems to have been the case, there would have been a ritual connecting stone to image to the physical entity of the ship, thus ensuring its safe return. In fact, we have to envisage the possibility of a wider semiotic category of the wild into which ideas of prey, the hunted, raw violence and their potency for domesticated life, can be envisaged. In this sense the metal can be interpreted as a 'prey animal' that is sought in wild places and brought back to be domesticated into discrete cultural forms. Like hunted animals, metals, amber, etc. are characterised by instability and unpredictable flows in appearance and availability.

Taking the outside in has many different connotations



Fig. 8.7. Transformations between elk & ships at Nämforsen, a common theme for the North Scandinavian rock art tradition. ÅdalsLiden 193 Nämforsen (photo: Almgren; source: SHFA).

of the wild emanating from several diverse origins in the Early Bronze Age and becoming increasingly condensed and embodied in human–non-human forms of violence in the Late Bronze Age, e.g. in forms of the warrior bull figure that appears in the rock art. The bull image itself (content) may have been an inflow from southern Europe since the South Scandinavian Rock Art Tradition (ST) starts to flourish at the same time that Scandinavia became deeply involved and interlinked with the European metal networks, 1700–1500 BC. It is now proven that Scandinavia obtained copper from the Aegean World 1700–1500 BC (Ling *et al.* 2013), where the bull image was an established feature of ritual. In western Sweden the bull image became incorporated into the new custom of making rock art where it ensured the durability of the War canoes. In a sense the introduction of the bull image in rock art is an introduction of the ‘Stranger King’ (cf. below, on the ‘Stranger King’).

It appears as if the transformative ‘animistic’ features of the ship were articulated differently in the various regions in Scandinavia during the Early Bronze Age, but this ‘regional’ feature could have served a similar ‘animistic’ function, namely to ensure the strength and durability of the ship and maritime ventures (cf. Westerdahl 2005). Thus the bull and ship combination seems to have been a special feature for northern Bohuslän during period 1 and the early phase of period 2. In other regions the bull is instead substituted by other animals such as wild boars (Nordén 1925; Coles 2000).

In the late phase of period 2 the horse replaces the transformative role of the bull in southern Scandinavian and became an integral part of the prows of the ships (Kaul 2013; Ling 2013). Even if the bull-ship combination and transformation seems to have vanished later in the Bronze Age, some elements of this survived, such as the bull horns and lurs in the ships. Moreover, in the Late Bronze Age the

elements of the bull became integrated into the warriors depicted on the rocks in the form of bi-horned helmets (Fig. 8.8). Other fascinating images found in Late Bronze Age rock art that recall the bull-ship connection include the acrobats who somersault over the ships holding bi-horned warriors. The somersaulting figures have extended calves, a characteristic of the bull warrior transformations, which suggest that the power embodied in the bull warrior figure is still attached in some way to the images of the ship (Fig. 8.8).

### The entanglement with metal

At this point the argument about rock art needs to be seen in the broader context of the spread of metals. It cannot be coincidental that such an enormous increase in the density of rock art should occur at the same time as the increased dependency of the Nordic Zone on access to metals. As Ling (*et al.*) have shown, even if metal sources were available in Scandinavia there was an apparently deliberate avoidance of their exploitation and a rapid deployment of human social resources to bring the Nordic Zone in contact with external sources of metals (Fig. 8.9). During the Bronze Age the Scandinavian sphere was dependent on foreign metal sources, and this dependency – or, rather, entanglement (Hodder 2012) – was highly complex and involved human and thing relations on many levels (societies, communities, small groups, etc.). Hodder explained the notion of entanglement as follows:

‘... entrapment occurs because we have invested labour, resources, time, in things; it occurs because we have come to depend on the positive benefits deriving from the greater flows of resources and information through the network; entrapment occurs because various forms of ownership of things may lead to rights and obligations towards each other. Thus the



Fig. 8.8. In the Late Bronze Age the elements of the bull become integrated into the warriors depicted on the rocks in the form of bi-horned helmets. Anthropomorphic bull-figures, warriors holding weapons from the Tanum and Kville area. Top left; documentation after Högberg 1998, top right; photo by Högberg 1982 (source: SHFA). Bottom left; photo by Milstrue & Prøhl, THU 2009; bottom right; photo by Almgren 1955 (source: SHFA).

notion of entanglement as I define it is not just a return to notions of materialism and environmental constraint. It is not the materials themselves that cause entanglement, but the interlacing of materials with the whole suite of ways in which humans and things depend on each other. So it may be better to think of the entangled web as made not of strings but of multi-stranded cables. It is precisely the interactions between the multiple strands – the material, biological, social, cultural, psychological, cognitive strands of the individual cables – that make the entanglement so strong'. (Hodder 2011: 164)

The engagement in metal should be seen as a highly complex process between humans and things dependent on aspects such as flow and temporality, velocity and durability (Hodder 2012: 254). The entanglement in metals during the Bronze Age involved minerals, miners, traders and transport systems in distant regions, foreign and local maritime networks and alliances, local settlements sites where the bronze became casted after functional and ritual needs. It involved the regional hoarding praxis, mortuary praxis and not least the regional casting of weapons and

tools. Scandinavia and other regions in Europe could of course survive without metals, but as Hodder has stressed regarding the Neolithisation, or today's dependence on cars, the entanglement, or entrapment, in such complex material processes cannot be reversed but is replaced by similar complex material engagement. The entanglement with metal generated a complex mesh of communicative, spatial, temporal aspects of human and thing relations and social relations and of power, dominance and alienation.

Thus, coping with this entanglement or system demanded corporate strategies between regions with different advantages, and to make this system work it had to involve almost all economic and social sectors of society. In this context different regions seem to have had different relationships to this interactive mesh. Coastal regions of Denmark, Sweden and Norway were deeply involved in the maritime matters, i.e. building, crewing ships and creating and maintaining maritime institutions. The inland 'agricultural accumulation areas' were deeply involved in agricultural matters such as feeding livestock and crops.

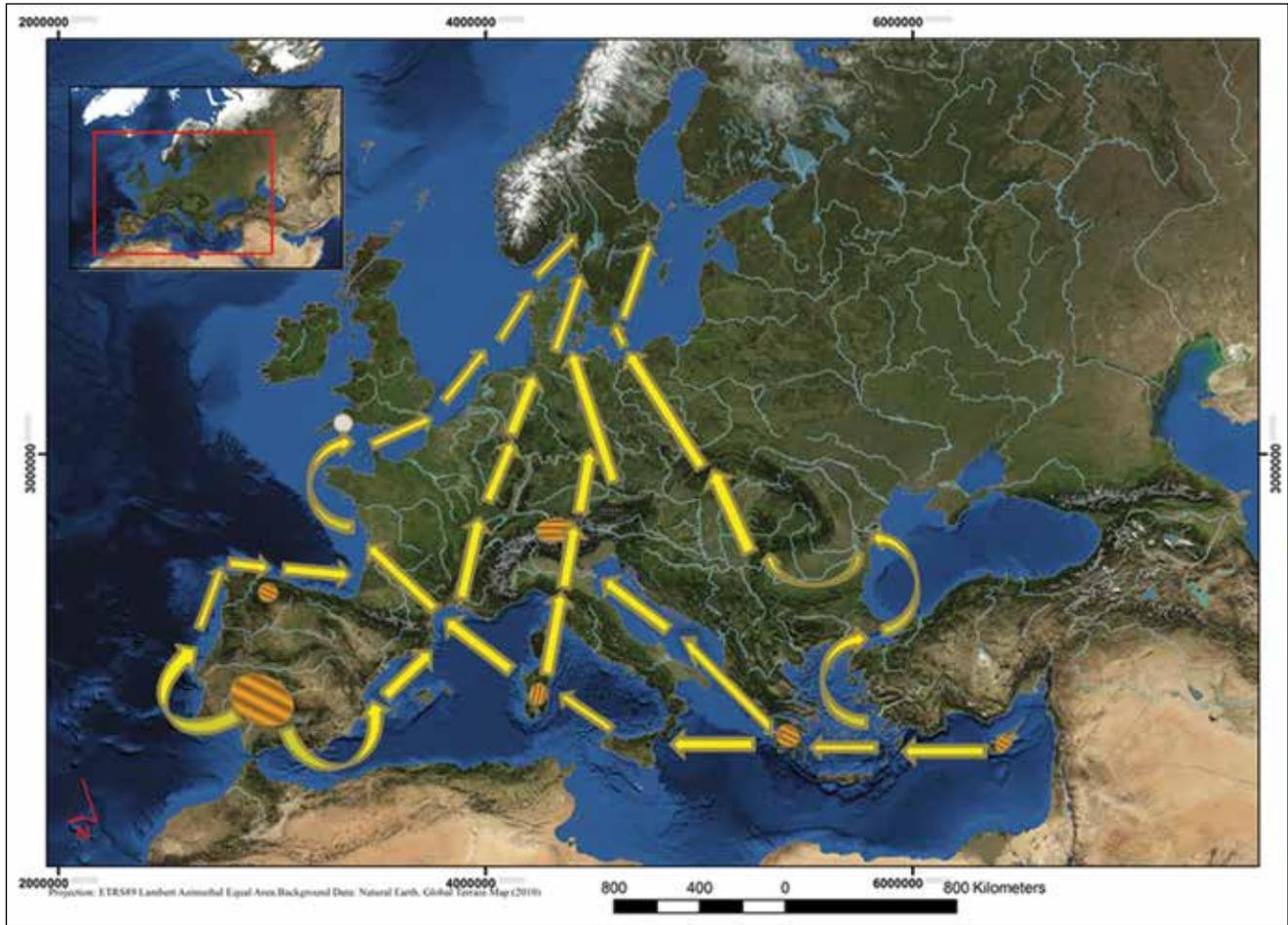


Fig. 8.9. Scandinavia's entanglement with metal in the Bronze Age. Possible flows and routes of metal from the mining district in Europe to Scandinavia in the Bronze Age. It is partly based on existing theories of interaction between the north and south in the Bronze Age (after Ling et al. 2013).

The latter regions were also the ones that obtained the most metal due to the stability, predictability and long-term use of these products, while the maritime world was more fragile due in part to the instability of finances and the metal flows. Scandinavia succeeded in this process, much due to the corporative strategies between the agrarian and maritime social spheres of production and relations. In short: the corporative strategies between the agrarian and maritime spheres, the overall demand for metal, the creation of a maritime institution and the access and control of amber, gave rise to southern Scandinavia's cosmopolitical entanglement with metals in the Bronze Age.

The different regional engagements in this system, also created two major ritual expressions: a maritime-based one with figurative rock art, coastal cairns, ship-shaped graves or ship-shaped bronzes; and a terrestrial one, including earthly barrows, major bronze hoards, figurines and cupmarks. However, some strong ritual, religious/

cosmological features were evident in both of these spheres and bridged these ritual dichotomies (Kaul 1998).

The agrarian sphere was deeply dependent on the maritime for the metal and vice versa, i.e. the maritime sphere was dependent on the consumption of the metal by the stable agrarian spheres. However, this dependency or relationship was not to be overt; rather, it was suppressed or obscured. Here it is relevant to stress the absence of house imagery in the rock art. Rather than being just a coincidence, this could possibly reflect the different social actions and concepts of the two spheres. In a sense, rock art could have had certain political aims and dimensions and the large number of ship depictions in the coastal areas may, in itself, have served to enhance the importance of the maritime sphere and even, to some extent, make it more dominant. It seems reasonable to assume that groups and individuals may have alternated between the maritime and terrestrial spheres. In general, however, heavy maritime

labour, such as overseas expeditions, trade, transport, boat-building, burials, ceremonies, warfare and other encounters would have represented a major investment in people and materials. For these purposes or occasions, some groups and individuals may have suspended their terrestrial livelihood to take up a seasonal or occasional maritime livelihood, while others may have had more permanent positions in this sphere. It may have been important to mark or manifest such transitions in some way and it is tempting to picture the rock art in this light.

As a result, the entanglement with metal created new needs to aggregate and interact, preferably on a seasonal basis and at communicative maritime locations along the coast. Many of the coastal rock art regions could have worked primarily as ports for metal distribution in southern Scandinavia, and thereby functioned as 'aggregations sites' for groups with a mobile occupation, such as travellers/warriors/traders and for groups with a more domestic occupation than that of inland areas (Ling 2013). Bearing this in mind, we may assume that people from a larger area may have visited the rock art areas in order to maintain, reproduce or initiate socio-ritual structures of power, identity, ideology and cosmology. So in a sense, this process triggered needs to interact and aggregate that were similar to the ones that occurred in Nämforsen or at Alta and Trondheim during the Neolithic, whilst the Bronze Age 'prey' was made of metal rather than flesh and blood.

### The power of alterity

Turning to the rock art, the earliest images from Bohuslän concentrate our attention on animal forms, boats and quite abstract if ephemeral human figures. If our observations are empirically verified, we would also argue that the dominant animal and ship forms are transformations of each other. Specifically, that the shape of the bull, as a principle animal form, transforms into a ship form, and both are joined together in groups that suggest a herd/fleet in movement. These scenes have been dated to the Early Bronze Age in the Nordic zone but we can also trace rock pecked figures of animals and boats back to the Neolithic and potentially they may even be of Mesolithic date (Fig. 8.7; cf. Helskog 1999; Westerdahl 2005; Gjerde 2010). The important difference as far as their Bronze Age appearance is concerned is first their density and complex appearance in apparently narrative forms. In the later Bronze Age, human figures with bull figure characteristics become prominent features of the rock art. A significant transformation in the appearance of humans, ships and bulls occurs during this period, continuing through the PRIA and later.

The rock art is not only prevalent but located deliberately in coastal settings. In some cases quite literally one would have had to be in a boat to have applied the art on a rock surface. As we have argued, the location of rock art is linked

to maritime access and the fact that coastal western Sweden had to be the location for materials and ship building skills. Hence access to trade in metals and amber from the Danish islands was dependent on a reciprocal exchange with the supply of ship and maritime skills of people in western Sweden. Such pragmatism in comparative advantage may well be a matter of the political economy of the earlier Bronze Age in the Nordic Zone but it does not answer the more interesting questions concerning the content of the art nor the reasons for its concentration.

One of these is the nature of the divide of domestic/wild, human/non-human in the distinction between the different regions in the Nordic Bronze Age. In the context of a rock art composed of animals and ships, the common feature is the body. In the Early Bronze Age, the human figure is simply not prominent and it takes some imagination to say that the pairs of figures in the ship images are definitely human. Instead it is the transformation of animal into ship and the fact that features of the animal (horns, body shape) are translated into the ship form that suggest the two forms are found in each other. Following Viveiros de Castro's argument on perspectivism, we could surmise that whilst they may share aspects of their separate bodies to create a ship/bull image, the hybrid form will show what they have in common. In more animistic terms, what bull and ship would share in common is a soul (given there is no Judeo-Christian body/soul dichotomy) which in turn is also shared by the ephemeral presence of human figures.

Whilst different forms can move back forth across the same/alterity divide, this is precisely because they share a spirit essence although it is the form of their bodies that gives them a different perspective and potency in its actualisation. But the classic statement on the relation of body forms to the idea they share a common substance or soul is the much neglected work of Levy Bruhl. In *L'Ame Primitive* published in 1927, he provided the much cited words (usually for negative reasons) 'He (the primitive) therefore sees no difficulty in metamorphoses which to us appear utterly incredible: beings can change their size and form in the blink of an eye' (Levy Bruhl 1996 (1927): 8). Not long after, in a work dedicated to Levy Bruhl, the Melanesianist Maurice Leenhardt made the following observation on the Canaque concept of humanity:

'Animals, plants, mythic beings have the same claim men have to be considered "kamo" if circumstances cause them to assume a certain humanity'... He [*kamo*] undergoes metamorphoses; he is like a character endowed with sumptuous wardrobe who perpetually changes costume ... With our own concept of man such a view is impossible, but it is possible with a broader representation of what is human. For the Melanesian, a glance, in fact, is enough to give the form of humanity to an animal'. (1979 [1947]: 24–25)

But in the Early Bronze Age rock art of Bohuslän, to be human is not emphasised. Rather it is the capacity of boats,

animals and celestial features and things to transform into each other through the possession of a common 'soul' or spirit, but these movements across the alterity divide are not complete.

Willerslev has recently extended the argument in a Frazerian comparison that includes Palaeolithic cave art that bears analogues to our situation on rock art in Bohuslän (Willerslev 2011). Following Willerslev on the *Not Not-Animal* theme (Willerslev 2004), transformations are about keeping original identity whilst possessing key elements of the form being metamorphosed into.

The transformation of a ship-bull allows the ship to be like a bull but not exactly the same, i.e. still to be recognisably a ship. This is emphasised by the occasional presence of bull figures alongside that of the ship-bull image although the latter is dominant. This is the same point that Willerslev makes regarding the Yukagir hunter, who both mimics the prey to empathise and lure it in, but remains a hunter and is able to kill it. The ability to be the same and different remains possible because of the animist feature of a common essence or soul that is what actually constitutes the passage from one side of the alterity divide to the other. It would be consistent for our argument that the ship is also identified with being human, hence the ephemeral human figures inside the body of the ship. But it is in the passage from the Danish Islands across to western Sweden that the human aspect of the ship fuses with the potency of the bull and the wilderness of the alterity divide.

Even today, taking the ferry across from Jutland to western Sweden, the shock is palpable as the flat landscape of the peninsula is left and instead the steep granite cliffs of the islands and coast of western Sweden are met with for the first time. The rock art that becomes so prevalent in the Early Bronze Age in western Sweden is basically the legacy of hunter-gatherer animism that can probably, in part, be traced back to much earlier origins (Goldhan *et al.* 2010). From *c.* 1700 BC the demand for ships and maritime technologies and skills from the developing Bronze Age in the Danish Isles complemented by the demand for amber in international exchanges, began to transform this legacy by first intensifying it. Ships are depicted literally as bulls or having bull-like characteristics. No doubt the need for bull-like potency would imply that the spirit of the ship would have equal powers to survive long distance voyaging and natural disasters such as trading expeditions in the North Sea. Rock art as ritual depictions of the idealized sending out and ensuring the return of sea-going expeditions is not unusual in later periods and elsewhere precisely because of the endurance of the images cut into stone. However, this ship-bull potency was to be transformed through the Bronze Age by the addition of an anthropomorphised warrior-bull element.

### The 'Stranger King' or Sahlins in the Bronze Age

'The king is an outsider, often an immigrant warrior prince whose father is a god or a king of his native land. But, exiled by his own love of power or banished for a murder, the hero is unable to succeed there. Instead he takes power in another place, and *through a woman*: princess of the native people whom he gains by a miraculous exploit involving feats of strength, ruse, rape, athletic prowess, and/or the murder of his predecessor.' (Sahlins 1981: 115)

In the Later Bronze Age, the rock art changes and a second (warrior) insider/outside dichotomy is revealed (Fig. 8.8). These differences may be related to changing perceptions of society and personhood in the Bronze Age. During the transition from the Early Bronze Age to the Late Bronze Age, southern Scandinavia underwent some major geopolitical changes due to new exchange networks, new amber routes and over-exploitation of soil in the west (Kristiansen and Rowlands 1998: 96–97). This process may have triggered hostile and antagonistic situations, making factors such as war and conflict a more central theme. The depiction of anthropomorphs changes dramatically during the Bronze Age, from being an anonymous, ephemeral and collective feature during the Early Bronze Age, more or less adjusted after the ship, into a large central feature during the Late Bronze Age often displayed in a hostile or antagonistic way.

As is well known the warrior ethos is prevalent in the wider European Bronze Age context and as an image of a power of foreign origin it does not replace the bull-ship power of alterity from the Early Bronze Age, but rather fuses with it. The Bull-Anthropomorph figure holding weapons dominates, in some cases quite literally holding a carved ship in its hands. Described as some of the most well-known examples of the Late Bronze Age warrior figures in the rock art, bodies are bull-like with massive calves, thighs and shoulders as well as the distinctive bi-horned head (Fig. 8.8). In contrast with the Early Bronze Age where human figures are scarcely present and appear ephemeral and incorporated into the bull-ship image, from the Late Bronze Age onwards, it is the violence of the massive bull-warrior figure that dominates.

Sahlins, as shown in the above quote, argues that in practically all human societies there is a tendency to locate power as originating from the outside. Whilst this got him into some difficulties with Obeyesekere's accusation that his 'culturalist' thesis disguised the elitist justification of the potency of the foreign in a colonialist context, nevertheless the idea that 'society creators' are often fashioned as outsider heroes (within society!) has gained widespread ethnographic support (cf. Henley and Caldwell 2009). Sahlins drew on the work of Hocart (1927) on kingship in Fiji and especially on that of the French philologist Georges Dumézil who showed that the foundation myths of ancient polities throughout the Indo-European language area, from Italy to India, feature

a complementarity of opposites which the Romans called *gravitas* and *celeritas*. *Gravitas* is the venerable, peaceful and productive disposition of an established community, personified in a female priest and an earth/land based ritual elite. *Celiritas* is youthful, disorderly, magical, creative violence and its personification is the *Stranger King* (Sahlins 2009).

As a binary category we can use these insights to recognize differences in perceptions of power within the Nordic Bronze Age. Sahlins' argument depends on the relationship of an identity to assimilating the potency of alterity and the spaces lying outside the political community viz:

'all power is foreign in origin, in the sense that the spaces beyond the political community are the loci of other-than-human subjects — ranging from beasts to gods'. (Sahlins 2009: 184)

In Oceania certain affines are Gods and the potency of alterity lies precisely in the capacity to bring in from the outside the conditions supporting and maintaining fertility and 'bare life'. This is the basis for Sahlins' claim that 'Stranger Kings' are inseparable from elementary forms of kinship and the domestication of alterity. Some years ago, one of us proposed an Omaha system for the Bronze Age that equates mobility with the expansion of affinal relations (Rowlands 1980).

Kristiansen and Larsson's summary of the movement of foreign women and octagonal swords in Tumulus Culture groups and the Nordic region exemplifies this pattern of absorption and domestication of 'Stranger Kings' (Kristiansen and Larsen 2005: 232, ff. 107; Rowlands 1980). Note the retention of signs of foreign origin or the taking of foreign forms such as the solid hilted swords and the mimetic power gained by absorbing them into a Nordic style and symbolism. The domestication of signs of power that lie outside or even against moral order is also a sign of the power that underlies that order. Domestication is often preceded by exploits of violence and power, including murder, incest or other crimes against kinship and morality (Sahlins 2009: 182). But once out of the wild and in power, the 'Stranger King' provides the means to life giving and life taking; the dark side of kingship, what would otherwise lie beyond human knowledge or control, is harnessed as a kind of creative violence.

We can imagine that this is an endemic feature of European societies from the Bronze Age through to PRIA and beyond. Why the idea of 'warlike' barbarian hordes from the East is nothing of the sort but part of the structure of European social reproduction. Faced with intransigence, the scale of violence imposed is increased as is the attempt to control and domesticate it but the important point is that there is inevitability to the process of incorporating what appear to be contradictory signs of power.

The important point is that the 'Stranger King' creates new value. In the Hawaiian islands, as described by Sahlins, Captain Cook and later Europeans brought iron and European goods and fertility for women (Sahlins 1985). But they did not remain 'European' but were Hawaiianised (cf. Thomas) as was Cook's body such that, after his death, those who killed him came to the crew to inquire when he would be returning (i.e. reincarnated as a God). The domestication of foreign value into local forms becomes, therefore, the basis for establishing comparative advantage and the capacity to enter into alliance and exchange (cf. Ling and Rowlands 2012). The construction of value is, therefore, the cultural product of the process of transfer and domestication which in turn is embedded within a wider shared cosmology of east to west, north to south transfers of the conditions of fertility and reproduction; in very broad terms the well-established themes in Indo-European cosmologies (where incidentally kinship denies the role of ancestors and alliance/affines rather than descent is a significant principle).

Whilst Kristiansen's emphasis on warrior elite ideologies and their spread in the European Bronze Age is quite consistent with our argument for the application of the 'Stranger King' thesis, it must also have been accompanied by what it reproduces through the input of new forms of value. If 'Stranger Kings' have monumental burials, personalised weapons and heroic narratives, the alternative suggests a principle of land and autochthony where burial would be naturalised (implications of water, ritual burning to produce a sacrificial form of burial and exarnation come to mind).

Thus the coastal zones with rock art may have worked as concrete arenas for the fusion of wild and domestic forces (*Celiritas*) and (*Gravitas*). Even if the rock art mostly seem to depict the 'wild' and violent side of the world there are scenes with clear domestic features such as the plough scenes, ards and domestic animals. It is therefore tempting to interpret the wedding scenes or the scene with warriors copulating with animals or the use of ards or ploughs as a fusion of these forces

The fusion of the warrior 'king' with the potency of the bull-ship image is a distinctive feature therefore of Bohuslän. The bull warriors depicted in the rock art are not accompanied by evidence of actual bronze metalwork or burials which suggests that the rock is not simply a surface for images to be inscribed upon but is an active material of some sort. By emphasising a difference in the materialities of stone and bronze, we can make more sense of the way fine detailed images of weapons and armour would appear on stone reliefs in south-west Iberia and elsewhere as part of the spread of the bull-warrior-ship cult.

In fact, several Scandinavian features from the Bronze Age have been inspired by the Mediterranean (Thrane 1990; Kristiansen and Larsson 2005) and there are some striking similarities between the horned warriors in Extremaduran

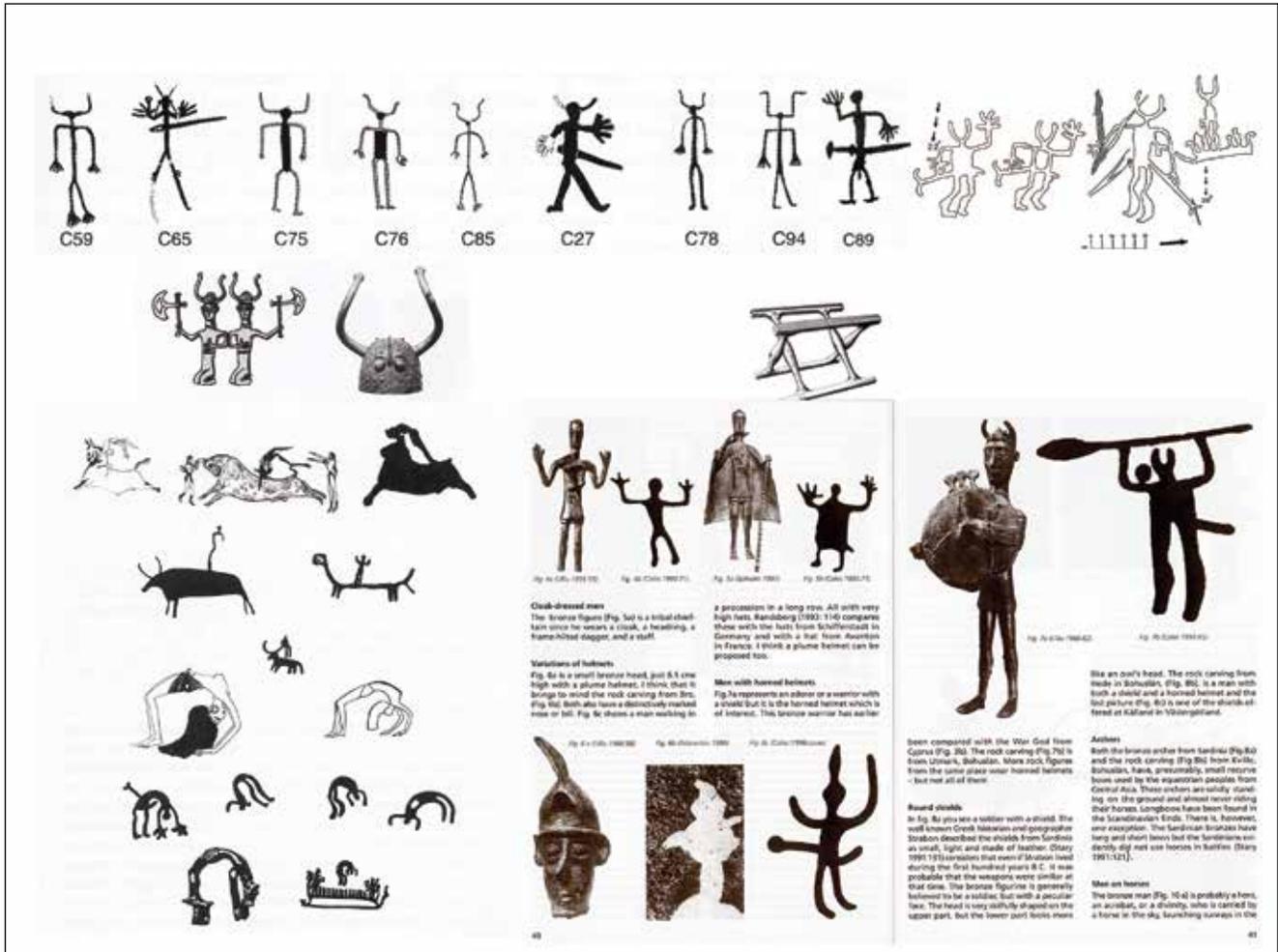


Fig. 8.10. Cosmopolitical codes and features from different parts of Bronze Age Europe. Top: warriors in Spanish rock art marked with 'C'; Swedish rock art to the left with no marks. Mid-section: horned figurines from Grevesvænge, the horned helmet from Viskø, and the camp stool from Guldhøj, Denmark. Bottom left: Acrobats and bulls from the Mycenaean world and from Scandinavian rock art (after Winter 2002). Bottom right: Warriors on Nuragic figurines compared with Scandinavian rock art (after Sjöholm 2003).

rock art, Nuragic figurines from Sardinia, depictions of 'sea peoples' with horned helmets in the tomb of Ramesses II and the horned warriors depicted on the rock art in western Sweden and the horned bronze figurines from Grevesvænge in Denmark (Fig. 8.10, see also Harrison 2004; Kristiansen and Larsson 2005). In this context it is important to stress that Scandinavia also 'imported' copper from these regions during the Bronze Age (Ling *et al.* 2012). Even if these horned anthropomorphs were produced in remote regions during the Bronze Age, they co-exist within, more or less, the same epoch, 1200–800 BC (Harrison 2004).

So we could therefore argue that the bodily incorporation of the bull feature in the warriors depicted in Bohuslän during the Late Bronze Age was triple layered: a legacy of the NT rock art tradition in terms of the emphasis of animistic feature; a strong ritual feature for the Early

Bronze Age that ensured the durability of the War canoes with connotations to the Mediterranean World; and a strong ritualised feature combining the bull image with the head of the warrior, resulting in acquired strength and powers transmitted from the bull to the warrior, and related to the Pan-European warrior code, or theme, during the Bronze Age.

We may also contrast the images of violence of the bull-ship-warrior imagery with that of the warrior elites buried with swords and other weapons. The 'dark side' of the violence of the 'Stranger King', emphasised by Sahllins existing in the context of affinal relations and exchange, appears quite literally on the rock art and for all we know (given our modern perceptions of sexual violence) would be within the logic of social reproduction.

## Conclusion

As noted at the beginning of this paper, fresh visits to the rock art always seem to generate new thoughts and ideas. Taking the 'rock art' seriously does mean more and more careful 'looking'. But the trend at present is to relate the rock art as sites to wider considerations of settlement, metalwork distributions and other forms of contextualisation. Homogenisation is therefore a danger. Our emphasis instead has been to differentiate. First, to recognise the unique settings of significant clusters of rock art; second, to show that stone seems opposed to bronze and the maritime social context of rock art differs from standard generalisations based on the agrarian sphere about the nature of Bronze Age settlement, burial rites and the articulation of social inequality. Differentiation suggests that the distinct legacies of earlier periods still pertain in different regions – for example, the role of amber found in burials in the Neolithic in Jutland and only as object of exchange outside the Danish Islands in the Bronze Age – is an example of how the legacy of continuity in the significance of amber can be transformed and a new 'exchange value' created. 'Taking the rock art' seriously, i.e. on its own – has also raised the issue of a separate hunter-gatherer legacy in the rock art. What may have been earlier animal–human–thing transformations – we argue – became transformed into the ship-bull image of a container with the Early Bronze Age need for ships and voyaging to acquire metals and distribute amber that was both ritually and physically efficacious in ways never needed before. But the important point to stress is how the changes were dependent on the political and economic impact of the metal trade, etc., combining with continuities in cosmology that shaped the ontological conditions of a basic life. To understand the distinctive nature of the Nordic Bronze Age, it seems we have to deal with the complexities of the broad interpolation of long term continuities and legacies of a pre Bronze Age boreal world with the impact of dependency on trade in metals and prestige goods from the wider European and Mediterranean settings. It is the fusion of these principles that distinguishes the Nordic Bronze Age from the rest of Europe, set in the complexities of regional differentiations within Scandinavia.

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