

# Gotland's Picture Stones

Bearers of an Enigmatic Legacy

**G**OTLAND'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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Gotlands  
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## Archaeological Excavations of Picture Stone Sites

OVER THE PAST FEW DECADES, an awareness of the importance of archaeological excavations of sites with images and inscriptions as rock carvings, cup marks,<sup>1</sup> runestones<sup>2</sup> and picture stones<sup>3</sup> has emerged. Archaeological excavations can provide clues as to what has actually happened and what different activities people have engaged in at the sites throughout the centuries, and in some cases, even the millennia. These studies may even help to date when the images and inscriptions were created and increase knowledge of their function in their contemporaneous societies.

The iconography has been the main focus of these studies, not least within picture stone research. Interpretations have been made, whereby figures and scenes have been linked to known myths, mainly drawn from the Icelandic sagas. These interpretations arouse criticism on two accounts. Firstly, it should be emphasized that extant literature is mainly medieval, and narratives, which in most cases are several centuries later than picture stones, have thus been influenced and transformed by Christian beliefs. My other viewpoint is that figures and motifs can almost never be unequivocally related to any one specific myth, but rather lend themselves to numerous differing interpretations. In fact, the very essence of symbolic representations lies in their ambiguity. The symbols have no predetermined meaning, on the contrary their significance is polysemic. I presume to claim that iconographic interpretations invariably lead to dead ends. Without supplementary archaeological studies and landscape analyses, we will not reach a deeper understanding of picture stones.<sup>4</sup>

In previous research, the picture stone tradition has often been regarded as a continuous practice, where one type has gradually transformed into another. I am critical to this perception. My studies reveal that the different types vary in shape and content, even if there would seem to be a cursory similarity. The picture stones from different periods have been found in disparate find contexts and can be associated with varying activities. There are distinct interruptions in time between the different types, when the erection of picture stones has been replaced by the reuse of picture stones from earlier periods in different ways.<sup>5</sup>

At first sight, picture stones would seem to be monolithic, large and heavy, but we must remember that they are moveable objects, which have been manipulated in various ways throughout the centuries. They have been reused in pre-Christian graves (see p. 148)<sup>6</sup> and from the 12th to the 14th centuries, they were incorporated in the walls or floors of the stone churches.<sup>7</sup> They were taken up in legends written down in the folklore of the 18th and 19th centuries.<sup>8</sup> This shows that the picture stones have influenced and been influenced by people ever since they were erected.

My discussion in this article is confined to the Group C and D picture stones in Sune Lindqvist's typology,<sup>9</sup> dated to the late Vendel Period and early Viking Period, 700–1000 A.D.<sup>10</sup> (see pp. 14–15). The picture stones should not be regarded as singularities in the landscape; on the contrary they form an integrated part of the ancient cultural landscape on Gotland. These stones were erected alongside communication routes, such

as roads, and often seem to have denoted boundaries between farms and communities.<sup>11</sup> According to Karl Gustaf Måhl, only 15 picture stones of this later type remain still standing in their original location to this day and they are distributed among 12 localities in the landscape.<sup>12</sup> Måhl only accounts for those picture stones which are still standing *in situ* in the landscape to the present time. My own studies have revealed that the number of erected picture stones and sites was originally higher (see table 1, p. 143).<sup>13</sup>

Within the framework of my doctorate thesis on the late Gotlandic picture stones from the Vendel Period and Viking Period, I have conducted two archaeological excavations at the picture stone sites at FRÖJEL STENSTUGU and BUTTLE ÄNGE.<sup>14</sup> Within my doctorate project, I have studied the communicative and social role of the picture stones in the Gotlandic society of those periods. In these discussions, a contextual discussion of the picture stone sites is central.<sup>15</sup> An archaeological excavation can confirm or dispute former concepts of ritual or social activities around the picture stones. Before presenting the results of these excavations, however, I would like to give a brief account of some previous excavations of picture stone sites.

### Earlier Archaeological Excavations of Picture Stone Sites

There will now follow an account of earlier archaeological excavations of sites where late picture stones still remain in the landscape at what is presumed to be their original sites. These picture stones are recognized by their characteristic shape, known as phallic- or mushroom-shaped, and often bear an abundance of images, whenever the image surface has been preserved. The most common motif is the ship sailing across rolling waves, warriors in procession, a female figure holding a drinking horn and a horse rider, often presented in this order, reading from the bottom of the picture stone upwards (see p. 94).

I have relied on Måhl's earlier mentioned studies from 1990<sup>16</sup> where he lists the remaining earlier and late picture stones still standing at their original site in the Gotlandic landscape. I have also crosschecked his data against Lindqvist's monograph.<sup>17</sup> I make no claims to report every investigation and excavation that has been conducted to this day, regarding late Iron Age picture stones. New discoveries of picture stones are made every now and then, and are often followed up by minor excavations at the site.<sup>18</sup>

### *Fredrik Nordin's Investigations*

Nordin investigated a number of picture stone sites around the late 19th and early 20th century. His compiled results were first published by Lindqvist in German in the volumes *Gotlands Bildsteine* I och II.<sup>19</sup> Nordin found artefacts and bone material at five of the investigated late picture stone sites (see map, p. 13): BRO ERIKS in 1882, VÄSKINDE VIS in 1883, BUTTLE ÄNGE in 1911, VÄSTERHEJDE SUDERBYS and LÄRBRO STORA HAMMARS in 1911.<sup>20</sup> He also excavated at HEJNUM NYGÅRDS in 1886 but found no trace of grave goods. The following year (1887) he excavated at HEJNUM RIDDARE, with the same paltry results.<sup>21</sup>

At BRO ERIKS, probable remains of a cremation grave were found at the base of the smaller of the two picture stones at the site. Among the artefacts was a belt mount, whose zoomorphic ornamentation was judged to be a late version of the Salin style II (600–800 A.D.) according to Lindqvist.<sup>22</sup>

Nordin found charcoal, unburned animal bones and pottery at a depth of 0.65 metres at the base of the picture stone at VÄSTERHEJDE SUDERBYS.<sup>23</sup>

Nordin excavated a mound adjacent to the picture stone site VÄSKINDE VIS, which he judged to be a Viking Period grave. The soil was mixed with ash, and the finds included a strap mount of bronze, iron rivets and fragments of a bone comb.<sup>24</sup>

Nordin opened up a trench around the base of two stones standing parallel at BUTTLE ÄNGE, where he found charcoal, animal bones and pottery.<sup>25</sup> Behind these two stones Nordin found five smaller picture stones, four of which, according to Lindqvist, formed a smaller stone cist.<sup>26</sup> This stone cist has now been restored and is on display in the picture stone hall at Gotland Museum (see p. 9).

#### *Monica Wennersten's Investigation*

In 1973, Wennersten investigated a picture stone site at ALSKOG VISNAR ÄNGAR, where she excavated an area surrounding three picture stones, two of which had only their 'roots' remaining. No pictorial motif can be traced on the complete stone today. Abutting the picture stones, a two-metre wide stone paving was unearthed; this might have been a prehistoric road. Wennerström's aim was to examine the connection between the picture stones and the surrounding ancient remains. The three picture stones are aligned and situated between three early Iron Age house foundations. She also found two cremation graves, rich in finds, close to the picture stones. One of the graves contained two gold foils with gripping beast ornamentation. The other grave contained a harness-bow crest<sup>27</sup> of bronze. Wennersten dated most finds to the late Vendel Period and early Viking Period, around 800 A.D. The material has never been published, and the information mentioned is from a short article in Gotland Museum's annual book *Gotländskt Arkiv*.<sup>28</sup>

#### *Karl Gustaf Mähl's Investigation*

In 1989, Mähl excavated a picture stone site at FOLE VATLINGS, but he did not find any artefacts. He also excavated the stone-paved road, beside which the picture stone was standing, and discovered that the road and picture stone were coexistent.<sup>29</sup>

The uncovering of these occupation layers, artefacts and graves were often referred to in literature in ensuing years, but not until quite recently have further excavations been conducted to find out whether the same find conditions can be found at other picture stone sites.

#### Archaeological Excavations in 2007 and 2009

The archaeological excavations at the picture stone sites FRÖJEL STENSTUGU in 2007 and BUTTLE ÄNGE in 2009 were conducted as part of my doctoral project: *Stones and People: Merovingian and Viking Age Picture Stones from the Island of Gotland* at the University of Gothenburg.<sup>30</sup>

The main aim was to investigate which activities had taken place around the picture stones at different points in time. My questions at issue were as follows:

How did the people at that time prepare the ground before erecting picture stones and building roads? Is it possible to determine the time connection between the picture stones and the road embankment, as well as examine how each road respectively was constructed? Are the occupation layers and finds and the erecting of the picture stones concurrent? Were there any ritual customs performed beside the picture stones, by way of sacrifice or other types of deposition? Were earlier finds of occupation layers at picture stone sites, as in Nordin's investigations, unique or can they be found in connection with other picture stones? If further finds and undisturbed layers are unearthed, will they contribute to increased chronological and contextual understanding of the relation of the picture stones to other picture stone sites, other archaeological material and constructions both in this location and generally in comparison studies? Finally, is it of methodical interest to study what knowledge a modern excavation can add to a site which was excavated one hundred years ago, such as BUTTLE ÄNGE.

#### *Fröjel Stenstugu*<sup>31</sup>

The picture stone site FRÖJEL STENSTUGU comprises a remaining, still standing picture stone<sup>32</sup> on the farm Stenstugu<sup>33</sup> in Fröjel parish (see p. 132). The picture stone is 1.97 metres above ground and 1.06 metres wide at its base. It is badly weathered, which means that no carved images can be discerned. That the picture stone can be classified as the late type is due to its shape. The picture stone was described, measured and drawn as early as in



The picture stone FRÖJEL STENSTUGU has been laid bare. Note how small a portion of the stone base has been lying beneath the surface. Photo by Archaeological Excavation at FRÖJEL STENSTUGU, 2007.

1799 by the drawer of antiquities C.G.G. Hilfeling on one of his trips to Gotland.<sup>34</sup>

Prior to the excavation, the picture stone was at a 30 degree backward slant in relation to the former road, which runs directly north of the picture stone. This road was marked out on the 18th century map, and runs between Klinte and Fröjel parish church. The road has been built on the Litorina Bank, a shingle beach ridge formed during the stage in the development of the Baltic Sea, which has given it its name.

Today the boundary between Klinte and Fröjel parishes is situated not far from the picture stone. Its location would allow the supposition that the later parish boundary reflects a former border between the areas when the picture stone was erected. Fröjel parish can

be divided into three parts: Upper Fröjel towards the inland, Lower Fröjel on the coast around Fröjel parish church and Mulde in the north. These three probably represented separate prehistoric units prior to the medieval parish division. The immediate surroundings of the picture stone today comprise the farms: Stenstugu, Robbjäns, Mölner, Hägur, Mulde, Prästgården and Däpps. Together, these form an extremely interesting area rich in ancient monuments, with the collective name of Mulde, and can boast of a hill fort, house foundations, Celtic fields, grave mounds and cairns.

#### *Excavation*

The excavation of the picture stone site was conducted in July 2009 with the help of archaeologists and students from the Universities of Gothenburg and Gotland. The immediate surroundings of the picture stone and the former road were excavated – about 27 square metres in all. Following the field work, the picture stone was straightened up, so as to minimize the risk of further weathering of the carved surface.

The removal of the turf layer around the picture stone revealed a round stack of small limestone and granite stones, about 3 metres in diameter and 15 centimetres deep (see top picture on facing page). Cremated bones were found mixed with stones, and these increased in number immediately in front of the picture stone. Artefacts of iron, bronze and glass were found.

An small oval pit filled with earth and stone, which was not as tightly packed as in the surrounding area, was unearthed in front of the picture stone (see middle picture on facing page). In the pit, a concentration of cremated bones was found. This might have been the original spot for the deposition of the bones and artefacts that were found around the picture stone. At a later stage, possibly due to plundering, it has been disturbed and the finds were shifted around in the construction.

When the stacked stones, other stones and earth, were removed from around the picture stone, we could

see that the bedrock had been worked and that a rectangular cavity had been hollowed out to prepare the ground for the placing of the picture stone, which had also been supported by two larger rocks in front and one larger rock behind, as well as with earth and stone back-fill (see bottom picture on this page). These measures had apparently not been sufficient to keep the picture stone upright in the long run.

### *Road*

A trench, about 3 metres wide, 6 metres long and about 25 cm deep, was taken up at a right angle across the former road. The road construction comprised a compact stone filling, whose limestones were mainly flat, the larger one placed at the top of the road paving. Beneath the stone paving was a clay and gravel layer, then came the bedrock. The road trench was connected in the south to the trench around the picture stone. Here, between the stone filling of the road and the picture stone, the layer above the bedrock comprised dark-coloured soil with no finds. This layer might be remains of a former sunken lane between the road embankment and picture stone.<sup>35</sup>

At the top of the stone paving of the road were traces of a cart wheel, which had worn down the top limestones in parallel ruts, seven horseshoe nails and small remains of bones. Based on these finds alone, it is not possible to determine whether the road was already in use when the picture stone was erected. The placing of the picture stone

When the turf was removed, a small cairn emerged, about 3 metres in diameter and with a depth of about 15 centimetres around the picture stone foot.

This may be the original location of the deposition of the bones and objects unearthed around the picture stone.

The picture stone was supported by two larger rocks in front of it and one larger behind it, as well as with earth and stone filling. This had obviously not sufficed to keep the picture stone upright in the long run.

Photo by Archaeological Excavation at FRÖJEL STENSTUGU, 2007.







Finds from FRÖJEL STENSTUGU.  
 Above left: Arrowhead of iron.  
 Above right: Belt buckle of bronze.  
 Below left: Button-shaped bronze mount  
 with gripping beast ornamentation.  
 Below right: Part of twisted bracelet  
 of silver.  
 Not to scale. Photo by Sara Lyttkens.

beside the road is, however, an indication of concurrence, since many of the other remaining picture stones in the landscape have been standing alongside former roads.

#### *Finds*

Most of the finds were unearthed at different depths in the stone filling, concentrated in front of and on the west side of the picture stone. They have probably been jumbled and spread out from an original deposition in front of the picture stone, as mentioned above. Modern objects were also unearthed, mainly glass and a coin from 1821.

Metal mainly comprised iron and bronze. Iron objects included nails, rivets and an arrowhead, bronze objects, including various mounts – a belt mount, a strap end mount and a button-shaped mount. These bronze objects may have been part of a belt, or parts of horse trappings. A semi-circular shaped and twisted fragment of silver has probably been part of a bracelet. A total of 16 glass beads were found, three of which had been damaged by fire. Among other prehistoric finds was a spindle whorl of stone, possibly of red quartz (see facing page).

#### *Cremated Human Bones*

A total of 1,5 kilos of cremated skeletal material was unearthed at the excavation. The bone material has been sent to the University of Lund for analysis. According to the osteologist, Caroline Arcini<sup>36</sup> they emanate from human bones, probably from two individuals. Two C<sup>14</sup> analyses of cremated bones have been carried out. The samples cover a time span of 660 to 885 A.D. The analysis results will be discussed in more detail in my dissertation.<sup>37</sup>



Above: Monochrome glass and ceramic beads. FRÖJEL STENSTUGU. Not to scale.

Left: Spindle whorl of stone. FRÖJEL STENSTUGU. Not to scale.

Photo by Sara Lyttkens.

### *Conclusions*

A time connection between the picture stone and the former road cannot be clearly determined, based on the finds or construction details. The placing of the picture stone, however, would indicate that the road had been in use at least from the 8th or 9th century. We could maintain that there were traces of cartwheels (see sitemap, p. 136) in the road paving. The Gotlanders often chose to build their roads along old shingle beach ridges, since they were stable, well-drained and are found at elevations in the landscape that ran parallel with the coast.<sup>38</sup>

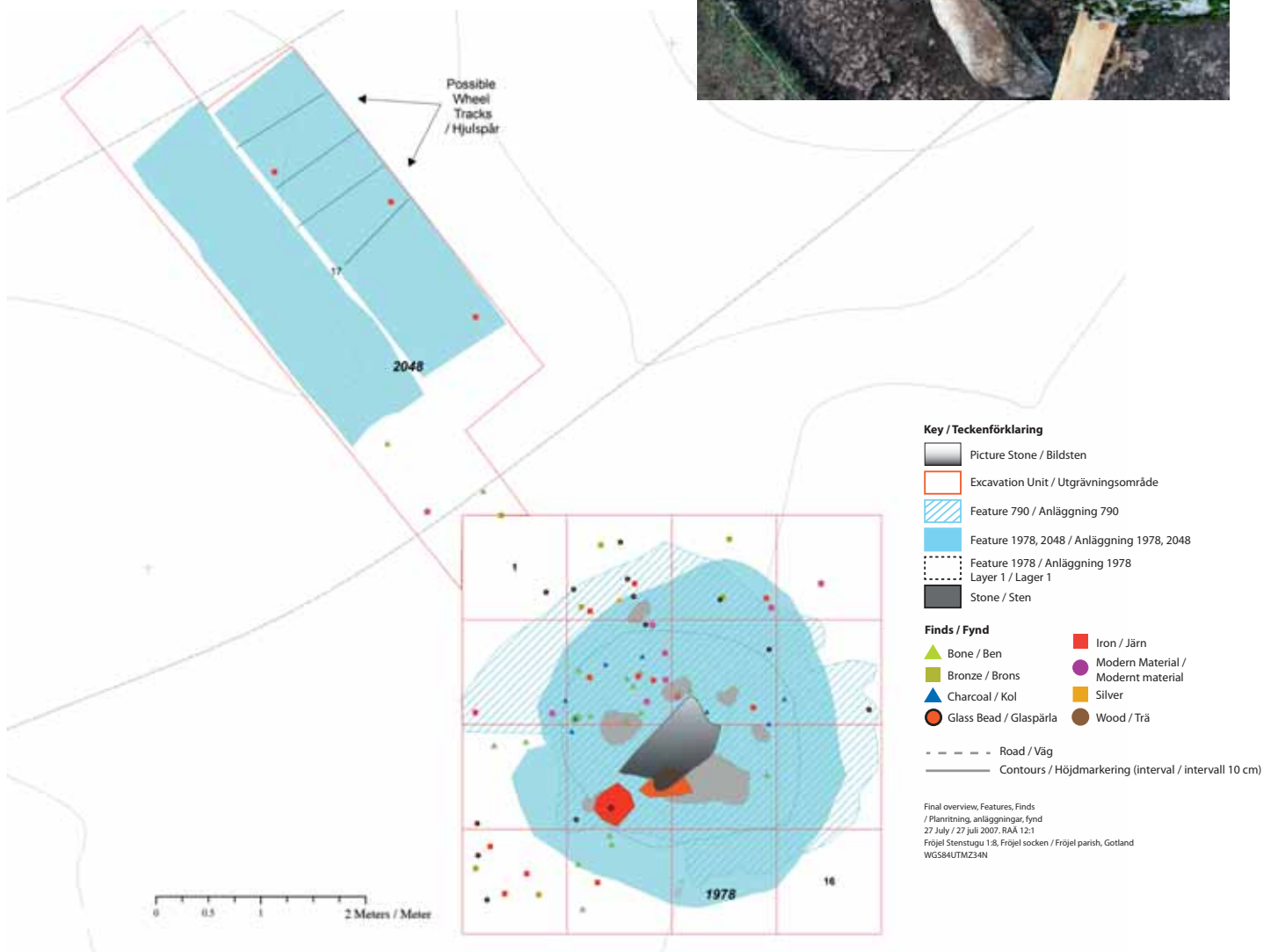
Locating the picture stone to this particular place must have been significant, judging from the fact that those who erected the stone took the trouble to prepare the bedrock by hewing a rectangular cavity for the foot of the picture stone (see picture p. 136). The picture stone was also supported by larger rocks in front and behind. Once the pit had been refilled with stones and gravel, a smaller circular-shaped stone pile was stacked into the shape of a low cairn, around the base of the picture stone.

The distribution of the prehistoric finds and cremated bones at different depths in the stacked stones around the picture stone indicates that they may have been shifted away from their original deposition spot in front of the picture stone. The deposition probably took place at the time of the erection of the picture stone, and I thus claim that the picture stone can be dated, based on the finds and bone material.<sup>39</sup> Since the find-yielding layer around the picture stone is relatively shallow, and the bedrock is close to the surface, the finds which can be linked to the picture stone are mixed up with modern finds. This may be partly due to intensive land management throughout history, partly due to plundering.

A survey of the finds showed that those from the investigation area at Fröjel differed somewhat from those excavated by Nordin at BUTTLE ÄNGE in 1911. He found charcoal, unburned animal bones and pottery, while Fröjel yielded cremated bones and above all metal. Although

A rectangular cavity has been hewn out of the bedrock to prepare the ground for the placing of the picture stone. Photo by Archaeological excavation at FRÖJEL STENSTUGU, 2007.

Sitemap of excavation trench at FRÖJEL STENSTUGU. Digital plan drawing by Christopher Sevara.



the material differs, we can see that activities have taken place at both picture stone sites, and that Nordin's investigation is not entirely unique. The material at Fröjel, for example, shows similarities with the material found by Wennersten at the picture stone site ALSKOG VISNAR ÄNGAR. The FRÖJEL STENSTUGU finds indicate that the material can be interpreted as grave objects; the cremated human bones are probably remains of a funeral pyre. The objects can traditionally be interpreted as both male and female. Both grave material and image portrayals on Gotland indicate that it has probably been important to mark the differences between men and women in the late Iron Age (see pictures pp. 84–85).<sup>40</sup>

To sum up, the find material at the excavation site can be typologically dated to the late 8th and early 9th century.<sup>41</sup> Apart from what is mentioned above, the excavation contributes to an on-going method discussion on archaeological field work at sites with prehistoric pictorial representations such as rock carvings, cup marks, runestones and picture stones.

#### *Buttle Änge*<sup>42</sup>

The picture stone site BUTTLE ÄNGE on the farm Änge<sup>43</sup> in Buttle parish, comprises two picture stones<sup>44</sup> of the later type.<sup>45</sup> Adjacent to the picture stones there is a road embankment,<sup>46</sup> which was once one of the main roads from Buttle to Etelhem through the forestland called Lojsta Hajd. The picture stones may have constituted the marking of a boundary towards this forestland, which today is southern Sweden's third largest uninterrupted tract of forest. Lojsta Hajd represents a natural divider between the central district in the midlands of Gotland and the community in the south. The picture stones are standing with the carved surfaces facing north towards the road. Beside the picture stones, there is a building, known as 'the old smithy', which belongs to the present day farmstead. The area surrounding BUTTLE ÄNGE comprises meadowlands and enclosed pastures, which have an abundance of ancient remains, including several early

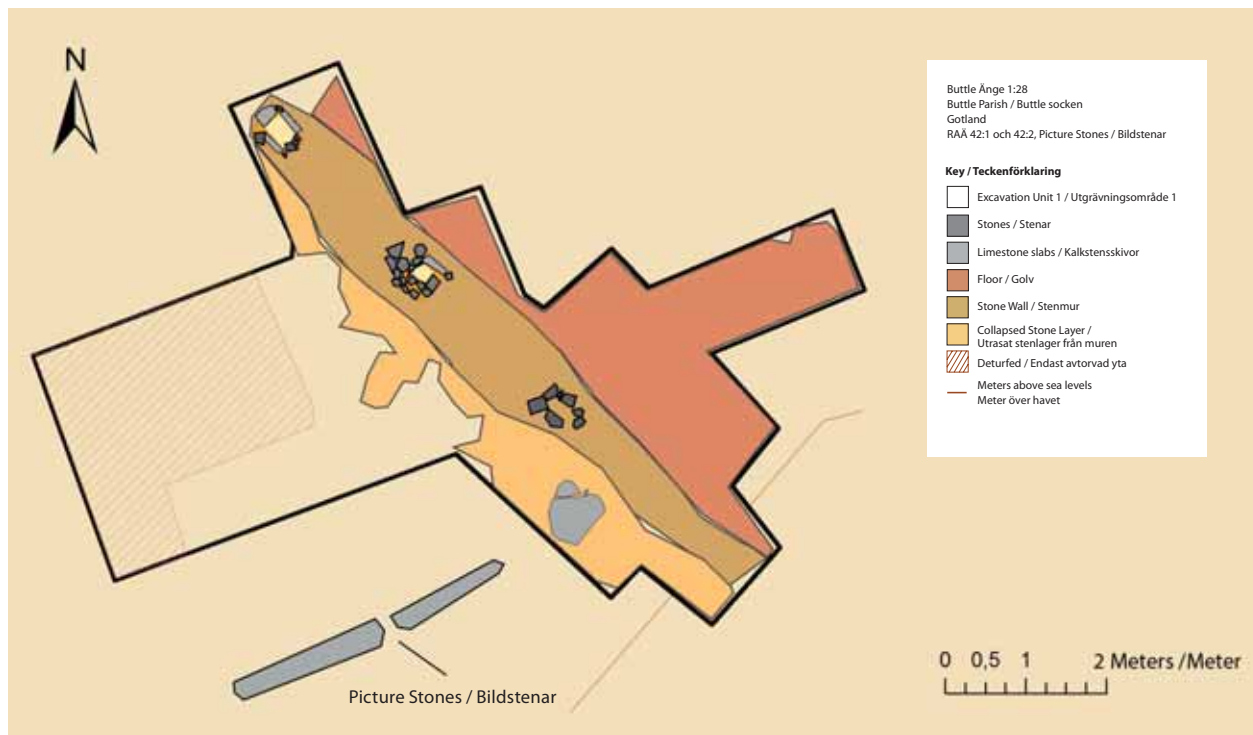


The excavation trench at BUTTLE ÄNGE ran between the remaining two upright picture stones to the left and the old smithy to the right. Photo by Archaeological excavation at BUTTLE ÄNGE, 2009.

Iron Age house foundations, Celtic fields, cemeteries and the above-mentioned road embankment.

The larger picture stone rises 3.85 metres above the ground surface, making it Gotland's tallest picture stone of the later type, and is 1.85 metres wide at the foot. The north side has a distinct image surface with numerous interesting motifs and figures, including a ship with sail at the bottom (see picture p. 45). The adjacent picture stone is 2 metres tall and 1.67 metres wide at the foot. No pictorial motif can be discerned today, nor is it possible to determine whether it has ever been carved at all.

In the 1911 excavations, Nordin uncovered five smaller picture stones in the foundation behind the two picture stones,<sup>47</sup> one of which was lost in transport to Visby.<sup>48</sup> The four remaining stones can still be seen today, as mentioned earlier, by way of a stone cist on display at Gotland Museum (see picture p. 9).



The preserved section of the road embankment is about 200 metres long and 3–3.5 metres wide. It is partly stone-clad and damaged by gravel quarrying, and joins up with early Iron Age stone house foundations both to the north and south.<sup>49</sup>

#### *House Foundations and Post-Holes*

The excavation at BUTTLE ÄNGE was conducted in September 2009, with the help of students from the University of Gotland. An excavation trench was opened in the area north of the picture stones, between the stones and the ‘old smithy’. A right angled trench was also dug across half the road embankment. Nordin’s trench from 1911 at the foundation of the two picture stones was not re-opened. The excavation comprised a total area of about 30 square metres.

Sitemap of excavation trench at BUTTLE ÄNGE. Digital plan drawing by Linnea Lövgren and Maria Lönnegren.

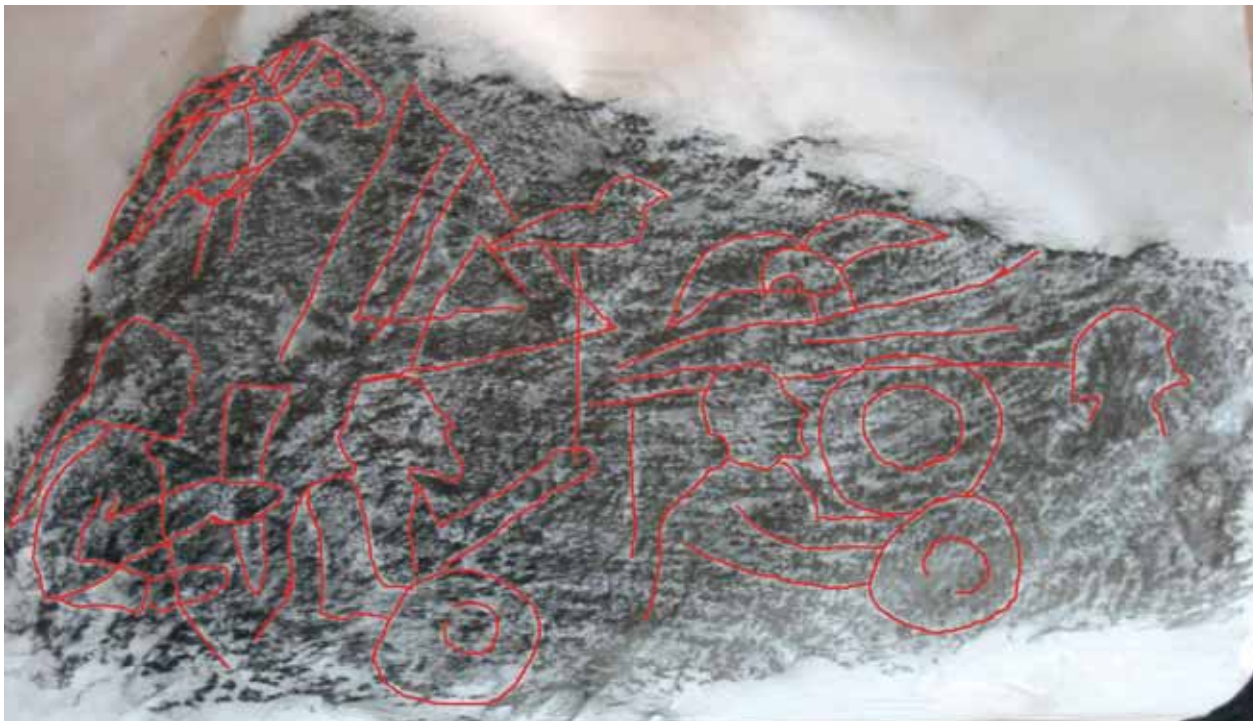
Above the undisturbed sterile layer at the bottom, the trench turned out to comprise a badly churned up, dark-coloured layer with numerous modern objects. At the northeast end of the trench, remains of a stone house foundation were unearthed. This has not yet been dated, but is probably medieval or from an early modern period. The foundation wall of the house runs from southeast to northwest, and the distance from the smaller of the two picture stones is about 1.5–2.0 metres. Abutting the house foundation in the north east, a flat stone-covered area emerged, which can be interpreted as a stone covering for a floor. Unfortunately, the entire house foundation could not be excavated, due to lack of time.



Post-hole 1 was centrally placed in the house foundation wall. Constructed with a limestone slab and stone gravel. Photo: Archaeological excavation at BUTTLE ÄNGE, 2009.



Post-hole 2 was constructed with three limestone slabs, which turned out to be parts of picture stones. Photo by Archaeological excavation at BUTTLE ÄNGE, 2009.



Rubbing of one of the limestone slabs which was unearthed in the post-holes at BUTTLE ÄNGE. The stone fragment bears images of a woman with a drinking horn, three men with shields, a triquetra (valknut) and three bird-like figures. Rubbing and photo by Helena Andreeff and Alexander Andreeff.



Two distinct post-holes, similar in shape and construction, were discovered in the stone house foundation. One of the post-holes was centrally placed in the excavated foundation wall, and comprised a smaller supporting rectangular limestone slab, otherwise it was filled with stone gravel (see picture p. 139). The other post-hole was in the extension to the north. It was also rectangular in shape and comprised three limestone slabs and gravel, this one also centrally placed in the foundation wall of the house (see picture p. 139).

#### *Recent Picture Stone Finds*

When the four limestone slabs from the post-holes were examined using the rubbing (*frottage*) technique, figures and motifs emerged, which could not be discerned with

Newly found picture stone, which was in a horizontal position with the carved face downwards between the remaining upright picture stones and the foundation wall with post-holes. Photo by Archaeological excavation at BUTTLE ÄNGE, 2009.

the naked eye. The method involves placing a piece of paper on the carved surface, and then rubbing the paper with a piece of graphite. Figures and other depressions emerge by way of light patches on a dark background.<sup>50</sup> The limestone slabs may have been parts of smaller cist stones or larger picture stones. Images include ship details, birds, warriors and a female figure (see picture p. 139). At the time of writing I am in the process of interpreting these pictures and the results will be reported in my dissertation.<sup>51</sup>



### *The Limestone Slab: A New Picture Stone*

A larger limestone slab was unearthed in the southwest part of the trench between the foundation wall and the lower remaining picture stone. The slab was in a horizontal position with the carved face downwards, directly beneath the turf and rather close to the surface above the stones of the collapsed foundation wall towards the south west (see picture p. 140). It turned out to be yet another picture stone. The motif is undergoing analysis, but it can be disclosed that one of the motifs is not unexpectedly a ship with a sail.<sup>52</sup> This stone had probably been erected alongside the two stones which are still upright.

Excavation of the old road embankment which led past the picture stones. Photo by Archaeological excavations at BUTTLE ÅNGE, 2009.

### *Finds*

The find material from the excavation comprises almost without exception modern material. The only prehistoric find is a Viking Period, polychrome, reddish-brown glass bead with white stripes. Most of the finds can be presumed to have been discarded either in the rubbish layer, which has been badly churned up north of the picture stones, or above the foundation wall when the 'old smithy' was occasionally cleaned out.



### *Conclusions*

Just as at FRÖJEL STENSTUGU, it is not possible to determine a time connection between the picture stones and the road, based on the finds of horseshoe nails or construction. The location of the picture stones beside the road, however, would indicate that it was in use from the 8th or 9th century, if not earlier, since early Iron Age house foundations can be found adjacent to them. The road has been built with edge-set stone slabs, and with filling material of sand and gravel (see picture p. 141).

Finds from the churned up rubbish layer north of the picture stones are all from recent times, apart from the Viking Period glass bead and a 16th century silver coin.<sup>53</sup> Contrary to the find conditions at FRÖJEL STENSTUGU, no find can be related to any ritual activity beside the picture stones.

The most important discovery at the excavation, apart from the new finds of picture stones, is the foundation wall and the floor of a supposed house foundation, which were uncovered. As mentioned above, two post-holes, lined with limestone, were unearthed. Images were discerned on several of these stones, indicating they there were originally pieces of picture stones, which were later reused in the two post-holes.

Apart from the find of the four small picture stones, possibly cist stones, a new find was made of a larger picture stone. It was presumably once erected in line with the other two stones. We can thus imagine the picture stone site at BUTTLE ÄNGE as once having been much more monumental and comprising several erected stones surrounded by stone cists. It has also been methodically interesting to examine what new knowledge a modern excavation can produce of a site which was excavated a century ago.

### *Final Discussion*

My studies and archaeological excavations demonstrate how picture stone sites are far too complicated structures to be regarded merely as memorials or boundary markers.

I have shown that different activities have taken place at FRÖJEL STENSTUGU and BUTTLE ÄNGE through the centuries.

### *Picture Stones in Groups*

In earlier research, picture stones have often been compared with the runestones of the mainland, and similar explanation models have been employed. The most common interpretation has been that picture stones, just like runestones, have stood alone or in pairs in the landscape, beside roads and erected in memory of men who have lost their lives abroad. When I have gone through the find records, I have been able to see that many picture stones have originally stood in groups of at least two, and in some cases several together. It is not seldomly mentioned that unincised, hewn limestone slabs have been found in the proximity of the remaining complete stones.<sup>54</sup> Unfortunately, not many of the former have been registered as picture stones, since they have lacked visible motifs. The images on the picture stones, which remain standing outdoors, have often been obliterated by the elements, and it is only their shape which reveals that they belong to the type from the late Iron Age. Some of them have been labelled as ‘blind’ and scholars have presumed that they have never been cut,<sup>55</sup> but with the aid of new method development within photography and 3D-scanning, this can probably be revised in the course of time.<sup>56</sup> I have demonstrated that even with low-tech methods such as rubbing of e.g. the smaller picture stones from BUTTLE ÄNGE, new knowledge can be acquired.

### *Picture Stones and Cremation Graves*

A phenomenon, which seems to have been overlooked in earlier research, is the connection between cremation graves and picture stones from the late Iron Age. Cremation graves and their objects have often been regarded as not directly related to picture stones. When I have gone through earlier records of picture stone sites, I have noted that it does not seem uncommon for occu-

pation layers with artefacts and cremated bones, such as those unearthed at FRÖJEL STENSTUGU, to be somehow juxtaposed with late picture stones.<sup>57</sup> There is a strong connection between the picture stone tradition and the cremation grave custom, which is to be further examined.<sup>58</sup> Most objects, which have been unearthed, can be described as typical of the grave goods and dress details of the period. I venture to claim that a meticulous typological dating of these finds would contribute to the dating of the erection of the late picture stones. One possibility would be that cremation occurred simultaneously with the erection of the picture stone, whereby the cremated human remains and grave goods have been deposited immediately beside them.<sup>59</sup> In my doctorate work, I have also been able to clarify a later connection between inhumation graves and the reuse of late picture stones at larger Gotlandic cemeteries from the 10th century.<sup>60</sup>

### *Chronology*

What can be clarified from the C<sup>14</sup> analyses of the cremated human bones and typological analyses of the objects from FRÖJEL STENSTUGU is that they can be dated to the late Vendel Period and early Viking Period at the latest. Using her iconographic analyses of stylistic elements, Lori Elaine Eshleman claims that the late picture stones are stylistically influenced by the Carolingian renaissance and thus cannot be dated to earlier than about 800 A.D.<sup>61</sup> On the other hand, Lindqvist's comparative analyses of the border panels of the picture stones and the decoration of objects from grave goods from the Swedish mainland indicate a typological dating to the late Vendel Period, to be precise the 8th century. I would therefore like to propose that the remaining picture stones at original sites in the landscape of the C type be dated to the latter half of the 8th century and the first half of the 9th century.<sup>62</sup> However, reservation should be made for the fact that it is always difficult to draw any certain conclusions from such relatively limited material and number of archaeo-

logical excavations. I have, nevertheless, with my studies shown that much new knowledge may be acquired from archaeological excavations of picture stone sites.

Finally, it can be said that the significance of picture stones throughout the centuries has undoubtedly been multifunctional and changing – as territorial marking, a memorial, preserver of oral tradition, burial site and religiously charged artefact. The picture stones have played a key role in the Gotlandic society in the late Iron Age and early Medieval Period, they were a focal point for social and ideological communication between the people of their time.<sup>63</sup>

**Table 1. Picture stones discovered at their original sites<sup>64</sup>**

Alskog Visnar ängar	3
Buttle Ungelheim	1
Buttle Änge	2 (+5+1+4)
Bro Eriks	2
Bro Stenstu	2 (+3)
Fole Vatlings	1
Fröjel Stenstugu	1
Hejnum Nygård	1
Hejnum Riddare	1
Lummelunda Etebols	1
Lärbro Stora Hammars	5 <sup>66</sup>
Tofta Smågårde	1
Västerhejde Suderbys	1
Väskinde Vis	1
Totalt	23 (36)

### Notes

1. Bengtsson 2004; Goldhahn 2006; Kaul 2006; Ling 2008; Ling et al., publication forthcoming; Nilsson, publication forthcoming.
2. Ljung & Thedéen 2009; publication forthcoming.
3. Andreeff, publication forthcoming; Andreeff & Bakunic a; b, publication forthcoming.
4. Mähl 1990a; 2002; Andreeff, publication forthcoming.
5. Burström 1996a; see Rundkvist in this volume; Andreeff, publication forthcoming.
6. See Rundkvist in this volume; Andreeff 2001.
7. Johansen 1997, pp. 211–219.
8. Burström 1996a.
9. Lindqvist 1941, 1942.

10. Varenius 1992; Wilson 1998; Göransson 1999; Imer 2004; Snædal 2002; Nylén & Lamm 2003; Thunmark-Nylén 2006.
11. Máhl 1990a.
12. Máhl, since his studies in 1990, has identified a further picture stone, with only the root preserved, beside a road (Lummelunda Etebols). Máhl 2002.
13. Andreeff, publication forthcoming.
14. Andreeff & Bakunic a, publication forthcoming.
15. Andreeff 2007; Andreeff, publication forthcoming.
16. Máhl 1990a, pp. 22–23.
17. Lindqvist 1941, 1942.
18. Norderäng & Widerström 2004.
19. Lindqvist 1941, 1942.
20. Lärbro Stora Hammar's five picture stones, known as the Daggäng monument; these have also most probably been discovered in their original location.
21. Lindqvist 1941, 1942; Máhl 1990a, pp. 22–23.
22. Zoomorphic ornamentation style, named after the archaeologist Bernhard Salin. Lindqvist 1941, pp.118–119, 1942, p. 34.
23. Lindqvist 1941, 1942; Máhl 1990a, p. 23.
24. Lindqvist 1942, p. 143.
25. Lindqvist 1941, 1942; Máhl 1990a, p. 23.
26. Lindqvist 1941, Taf. 49; Lindqvist 1942, p. 38.
27. Part of a certain type of horse harness.
28. Wennersten 1973, p. 117.
29. Máhl 1989, p. 246, 1990a, p. 23, 1990b.
30. Andreeff, publication forthcoming.
31. Andreeff & Bakunic, a, publication forthcoming.
32. RAÄ (Riksantikvarieämbetet/ Swedish National Heritage Board) 12:1.
33. Fastighet Stenstugu 1:8.
34. Hilffeling 1799, p. 164; Rosvall 1983, p. 2.
35. Karl Gustaf Máhl, verbal info. 2007.
36. Caroline Arcini, verbal info. 2007.
37. Andreeff, publication forthcoming.
38. Máhl 2002.
39. Andreeff, publication forthcoming.
40. Clover 1993; Arwill-Nordbladh 1998; Göransson 1999.
41. Nerman 1969–75; Thunmark-Nylén 1995; 1998.
42. Andreeff & Bakunic, b, publication forthcoming.
43. Fastighet/Property Änge 1:28.
44. RAÄ (Riksantikvarieämbetet/ Swedish National Heritage Board) 42:1–2.
45. Lindqvist 1941, 1942.
46. RAÄ (Riksantikvarieämbetet/Swedish National Heritage Board) 145:1
47. RAÄ (Riksantikvarieämbetet/Swedish National Heritage Board) 42:3–7
48. Lindqvist 1942, pp. 36–39.
49. FMIS (Fornminnesregistrets Fornsök/ The Archaeological Sites and Monuments Database), *www.fmis.raa.se*.
50. Riksantikvarieämbetet, Swedish National Heritage Board, *www.raa.se*.
51. Andreeff, publication forthcoming.
52. Andreeff, publication forthcoming.
53. A silver shilling from 1535–1537, minted in Visby (Monica Golabiewski Lannby, Royal Coin Cabinet).
54. Lindqvist 1941, 1942; Wennersten 1973; Máhl 1990a; Nylén & Lamm 2003; Andreeff, publication forthcoming.
55. Nylén & Lamm 2003.
56. Kitzler Åhfeldt 2002, 2009; see article in this volume.
57. Lindqvist 1941, 1942; Wennersten 1973; Máhl 1990; Nylén & Lamm 2003; Andreeff, publication forthcoming.
58. Andreeff, publication forthcoming.
59. See Hamilton in this volume.
60. See Rundkvist in this volume; Andreeff, publication forthcoming.
61. Eshleman 1983.
62. For a discussion on chronology see Varenius 1992; Wilson 1998; Göransson 1999; Imer 2004; Snædal 2002; Thunmark-Nylén 2006.
63. Thanks to: Stiftelserna Wilhelm och Martina Lundgrens Vetenskaps- och understödsfonder, Kungl. Vetenskaps- och Vitterhets-Samhället i Göteborg, Birgit och Gad Rausings stiftelse för humanistisk forskning, Helge Ax:son Johnsons stiftelse and Gunvor och Josef Anérs stiftelse. Gotland County Administrative Board, Västra Götaland County Administrative Board, Gotland University, University of Gothenburg, Monica Golabiewski Lannby at The Royal Coin Cabinet, Pia Sköld the Laboratory for 14 C-dating (University of Lund), Fröjel Local Heritage Association and Buttle Local Heritage Association. Landowners and archaeologists, doctoral candidates and undergraduates at the Universities of Gothenburg and Gotland, who participated in the archaeological excavations at FRÖJEL STENSTUGU and BUTTLE ÄNGE.
64. Lindqvist 1941, 42; Máhl 1990, 2002; Nylén & Lamm 2003; Andreeff, publication forthcoming. This table makes no claims to have listed all the late picture stones that can be found in their original locations.
65. The picture stones were discovered by Nordin in 1911 in their original locations, but are today on exhibition at the Bunge Outdoor Museum.

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