Figurines as multiple art

– Studying the shape and forms of Neolithic Statuettes

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Abstract

The focus of this paper is on Neolithic figurines and the type of plurality found in four statuettes.

We follow why three dimensional figurines are a part of many museum collections and yet documentation is often comparatively scarce compared to other fields of archaeology. How this is connected to figurine's uncertain imagery and why their visual ambiguity raises questions about what is deemed 'cultural and well formulated art'.

Scandinavian figurine character and plural imagery is compared with multi-representational statuettes from other parts of the European continent.

The result of exploring Neolithic figurine's art is with an aim to broaden insights into what the statuettes depict. This includes studying why ceramic moulded art is easier to understand, when each sculpture is allowed several interpretations.

Seeing them as pluralistic is a move that invites modernity to examine unexplored areas of what their combinations represented for the cultures that produced them.

The paper examines an artistic approach to figurines and asks if art can enable archaeologists to see three dimensional images as a definable form of expression that belongs to the Neolithic period's accomplishments?

The Image on the cover: figurines from Älby, Ösmo parish, drawing Änggård after Janzon 1983:3

1. Introduction

1.1 Plurality

In this essay I discuss three Neolithic figurines from Scandinavia, especially focusing on their plurality and meaning. Three are ceramic figurines from Korsnäs, Överåda and Ire. A fourth statuette is earlier and comes from Svinesund in Norway and is used for comparison.

A complication with those writing about statuettes' plurality is that figurines have never been specifically defined as multi-representational, and when they are, it is without deeper reflections. This is an area that needs further study.

These are reasons why the more numerous southern European figurines are going to be used as a ball-plank to broaden the discussion. Comparing the Scandinavian figurines with those from the more southern parts of the continent is a method of identifying the particularities of the northern figurines.

What triggered wanting to write this paper was when Jackie Taffinder at 'Statens Historiska Museer' (SHM) gave me the chance to examine and photo several of the burnt clay (ceramic) figurines housed there. My interest grew when confronted with a pluralism *not* found in southern figurines. To better explain such particularities I take up an example of the earliest found Scandinavian figurine at Svinesund.

Comparatively little Swedish research has been done on the figurines compared to other artefacts and then only sporadically (Almgren 1907; Nihlén 1925; Janzon 1983; Werbart 1984). A time gap needs filling, and certain research ideas are inaccurately remembered; e.g. in 1925 John Nihlén saw Neolithic figurines as belonging to a lower artistic level (Nihlén 1925:216). Today the message has somehow stuck as evidence for an overall Neolithic 'primitiveness'.

Present day children are still shown films and cartoons, which all too often distort our prehistory. The happy half dressed, dishevelled, grubby human-beings are seductively represented for our children and grandchildren to laugh at. The unwritten sub-message is; 'primitive Stone Age ancestors can teach you nothing. This record also needs putting straight and even if this study is not going to do so, a few preparatory stones may be put in place for later consideration. This is also a reason for me wanting to write.

1.2 The objective in writing

The object is to look at the Neolithic figurines as an artistic part of the period in which they were made, which includes their conditions and influences.

In considering the sculptures for their plurality is to draw attention to the style of artistic expression and what form it takes.

1. *Can art as a form of expression be used within archaeology, as a useful tool for investigation and analysis?*
2. *If one was freed from the belief that figurine imagery is necessarily realistic and imitational, would we find a more satisfactory insight into their representation?*
3. *Do other art forms show similar particularities to figurines as an artistic way of thinking?*

1:3 Method: Uncovering three dimensional art

To study ceramic figurines as closely as possible has been an essential aspect in preparing this paper, as well as visiting museums where figurines can be seen exhibited. My visits to SHM and following discussions with Jacqueline Taffinder have been an important addition, which enabled me to examine the shapes and material of figurines more closely.

If figurines plurality is to be seen within the context of when they were created, recognising the geographical conditions during the Neolithic period had to be undertaken, as each of the figurines were excavated in different areas.

My museum visits in 2013 would provide the first extensive collection of figurines to be seen in Europe at the British Museum. To study the exhibits and listen to these and other lectures was a method of increasing an understanding of how figurine plurality was represented.

Reading the literature provided access to the periods prior to and during the Neolithic era, raising awareness of the variations in place and time as compared to today.

1.4. Theories that impact figurines

In this section I am writing about the theoretical aspect of the figurines from three angles, as each angle relates to how the figurines are discussed.

1.4.1 Hodder and Trigger and human behaviour

An approach to archaeology that first made sense for me was reading Bruce Trigger's *A History of Archaeological Thought* (Trigger 1989). Another book that gave food for thought was Ian Hodder's *Reading the Past* (Hodder 2008). Hodder went to lengths to put his intentions into practice when excavating at Catalhöyük (Hodder 2006). He wanted to give the material greater recognition and dignity and place it within its context (Hodder 2008:185-187). Theoretically he focuses on the relationship of the individual as related to the collective. Studying figurine's representation meant putting the excavated material into a period's social context as an integral step towards gaining results (Hodder 2008:163). For Hodder this is seen as opening a door to a broader set of questions about the data (Hodder 2008:191).

Bruce Trigger traces a similar set of ideas stating that archaeologists should pay more attention to assessing the extent to which cultural conditioning rather than universal logic influences human behaviour as found reflected in the archaeological records (Trigger 1990:379).

Towards the end of both these books one can read of the need for 'contextual' thinking. Hodder then glides into hermeneutics and explains that this "involves understanding the world not as a physical system, but as an object of human thought and action" (Hodder 2008:195). Among the artefacts the figurines were included.

Fig 1a. Left: Femme Mandoline George Brassaï, 1947 Ivory H.21.7cm Le Centre Pompidou Paris. (Cook 2013:240)

Fig 1b. Right: Vénus noire 1 George Brassaï, 1967 Black marble   H.15.2 cm   Le Centre Pompidou, Paris. (Cook 2013:244).

Fig 1c. Figure sitting in a decorated chair. The inspiration for a ceramic work by Picasso now at the Antibes museum. Tisza culture, from Kokénydomb south-eastern Hungary: Early fifth millennium BCE. H.23 cm (Gimbutas 1999:76).

1.4.2 Gender and feminist insights

I shall try to avoid the gender question as much as possible. Because figurines have multi-representational shapes they are often gender related and this is why the theoretical aspect of gender plurality needs to be mentioned.

When considering human's diversity it would be amazing if the Neolithic times were not different from our own times. They had another set of ideas that cannot be related to our political, religious or gender theory during modernity. Figurines before and during the Neolithic period can well represent more practical survival interests than the symbols and art of today.

From a feminine angle what has been recognised during present times is that gender determinants form social and cultural behaviour (Moore 1991). Gender theory gives insights into how we judge our past (Gero & Conkey 1991; Wylie 1991; Moore 1991). Non-egalitarian gender conditions undermine being aware of the possibilities to create wider social constructions (Janzon 1983; Gimbutas 1999; Arwill-Nordbladh 2001; Mussi 2004; Bolin 2004; Jennett 2008). The point to be focused on is that when the Neolithic gender puzzle bits are put together today, they can be recognised as practicing a more egalitarian approach than is often accepted in the present, because their sculptures and forms of expression exhibit quite a different art style.

1.4.3 Art as part of theory

The last theoretical aspect is how figurines are seen as art. Art is not judged here as what is seen as today's visual attraction and aesthetics.

If art reproduces cultural expression through the individual artist, this is what the figurines will represent. As such they are a theoretical window into their period.

Neolithic figurine art is seen as abstract (e.g. non-realistic); it is symbolic and schematic (divided plurality), figurines are therefore only loosely connected to representation but carry multiple forms of communication. Transportable Neolithic art 6000 yrs ago was visually of extra importance and the period's figurines make every use of form, size, choice of protruding shapes and even use the material's rough texture to enhance expression (fig. 35a & b).

The artistic form of 'expression' is significant, because however small figurines are there is a strength and simplicity in their shapes. This has attracted modern easel and sculptor artists. Today examples are found in George Brassaï (fig 1a, 1b) and a moulding by Pablo Picasso at Antibes Museum is similar to a Neolithic figurine excavated by János Banner in southeast Hungary (fig 1c). Neolithic pluralism and expressionism and what it involves have another social point of departure from aesthetical modern art and therefore archaeologically the two should not be confused. Neolithic art is marked by their times, just as Picasso and Brassaï are marked by theirs.

2. Boundaries and research history

One stone and three moulded ceramic figurines are the basic material to explore plurality in forms of artistic expression.

As said, it was by being shown the three figurines at the 'Statens Historiska Museer' (SHM) and finding that their multi-representation had not been considered as an express artistic intention when first made, that prompted my investigation.

The other focus is how modern conditions influence present day attitudes. By recognising there can be dissimilarities in historical conditions that impact earlier concepts, is to accept possible differences between the Neolithic period and our times.

In considering the Scandinavian figurines, it is the influence of plurality in southern European carved and moulded figurines as an artistic way of thinking that are unavoidably connected to northern figurines. In this case it means recognising plurality even when it is not specifically defined in research. Visual imagery within archaeology Magnus Ljunge says is seldom articulated as such (Ljunge 2015:69).

This undefined area is so contradictory that it forms the boundaries around much of this essay's discussion.

Perhaps most easily explained in a visual example.

Research does not define plurality in the headless figurine (fig 1d), that has changeable heads that can be united with zoomorphic and anthropomorphic symbols.

For example in the left hand the figurine holds a mask instead of wearing it and in the right hand it holds a symbolic bird shaped vase. With changeable heads the undefined examples of plurality are endless, yet the figurines plurality has never been taken up as a specific characteristic of interest. The example is from the Vinča culture, 4700-4500 BCE (Gimbutas 1999:10).

Fig 1d. A headless figurine holds a mask. The right hand holds a 'asko' (bird shaped vase). Liubcova Caraș-Sever, in southwest Romania) H. 11.5 cm. (Gimbutas 1999:10).

The attraction in SHM Neolithic moulded figurines is that they are a variation on this theme since they are unique in having to be turned around before their zoomorphic and anthropomorphic representations become visible.

This is why the objective here is not to reach any set conclusion, as too little is known as yet about figurines. It is rather to unravel if this form of plurality in Neolithic figurines is indeed a representative art form – or should one say, is plurality an advantage to archaeology that broadens how the Neolithic period is considered.

2.1 What previous research reveals

Fig 2. Oscar Almgren refers to burnt clay and moulded Elk figurines from Åloppe, Nysätra parish in Uppland. (Almgren 1907:115)

Figurines have been investigated since the nineteenth century; however by the twentieth century frequent finds aroused new interest. Oscar Almgren in 1907 reflected over burnt clay and moulded Elk figurines newly found in Åloppe, Nysätra parish in Uppland (fig 2). That year he published copies of the two figurines, seen above, in the archaeological magazine Fornvännen (Almgren 1907:114, 115).

Fired clay breaks easily or crumbles and for clarity Almgren ties their depiction to other types of visual material like decorated heads on bone harpoons from Denmark, a bone comb
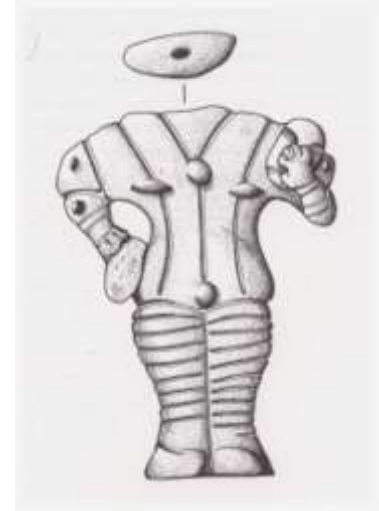
from Gullrum, Näs parish in south Gotland (Almgren 1907:115). The reason for unclear representation is a recurring problem.

When John Nihlén discusses the moulded burnt clay figurine of an elk's head from Ire, Hangvar Parish Gotland (SHM id 15505) in *Forvännen* in 1925 (fig 13 s.16), it was the sculptures ambiguity that irritated him. The lack of any specific likeness made him label the Ire figurine (id 15505) as a 'lower type of art' (Nihlén 1925:216).

Finds of pottery sherds from Siretorp in Blekinge are talked about in 1939 by Axel Bagge and Knut Kjellmark as "clay spoons" or "concave convex figurines" (Janzon 1983:2). The broken figurines were almost indistinguishable from the kilos of sherds Greta Arwidsson had found (Janzon 1983:1).

The finds of twenty four clay zoomorphic figurines in a terracotta pot were found by Birgitta von Heland, in an Älby grave in Ösmo parish, Södertörn (von Heland 1962). There is a slightly different version of this find given by Janzon in the 1983. She talks of the "80 fragments of zoomorphic figures from Älby" and with the broken pot a total of 300 fragments all together found in a grave (Janzon 1983:4).

Writing about figurines in 1983 Gunborg O. Janzon discusses both Almgren from 1907, Nihlén from 1925, Bagge & Kellmark from 1939, and Gimbutas from 1972. She is prompted to reason that if figurines were 'indeterminate and ambiguous' objects, then their ambiguity was certainly for a practical reason and must be related to the period in which they were made (Janzon 1983:15). By this time in citing these authors, Janzon has shown figurines are "among the earliest instances of ceramic manufacture" (Janzon 1983:12), and the eastern Europe Palaeolithic is the start of multi-messages in schematic figurines (Janzon 1983:15).

Plurality involves the blending of subject qualities and by 2004 this habit of blending is also discussed in other forms with regard to Neolithic artefacts, which include hatchets and tool heads that are also said to have multiple gender representation as a visual quality (Gløstad 2004:104-105; Hallgren 2008:224).

Another insight into Neolithic artistic attitudes is found in Stone Age rock art etchings. If Christopher Tilley is prepared to see rock art as ambiguous, in *Animal Magic*, Hans Bolin takes up "that elks and humans as well as elks and boats in a number of cases actually merge together in a variety of ways" (Bolin 1999:148-49). His example is taken from the couple Hallström's work in 1960. Christopher Tilley in several pages of illustrations relates forms of expression where plurality is present. Tilley asks "What is to be made of rock carvings? Since they are so utterly removed from contemporary experience . ." (Tilley 1991:7-8).

Ylva Sjöstrand's discussion on rock-carving-hybrids instead takes up what is flexible and changeable in the images. By adding a single additional line they are equally related to figurine pluralism (Sjöstrand 2011:184-187). The same applies to the thesis *Bortom avbilden* ("Beyond Representation" my translation) involving a discussion that rock carving's materiality is related to a visual experience (Ljunge 2015:101).

All these links to art carvings, including being 'a visual experience' indicate that plurality is present in several forms of Neolithic expressionism.

If the merging of terracotta figurine's representation is multi-formed, when seen from different angles, as a quality unique for Scandinavia, the question is raised as to how this variation was arrived at?

3. The study of three Neolithic figurines compared with a fourth

The zoomorphic figurines grow out of these values as related to humans. The animal shapes are connected to human qualities. By combining animal representation it is the human qualities that are being linked and recognised as a form of group understanding. In Scandinavia it seems to be as much the link to and dependency on certain animals for survival that lies behind their dual form of representation, probably because of the climate.

3.1 Where figurines have been found.

What is surprising about the Scandinavian figurines is the number of them that have been found. It is Werbart who puts them into a context, placing them out across the Scandinavian Peninsula and into Finland, the Baltic States and Russia. The Baltic was a waterway that gave possibilities for seafaring and contact with ideas from other areas.

The map (fig 3) describes where figurines and graves have been located,

Fig 3. Localities of figurine finds and graves in the GR and KA complexes in north and north-eastern Europe. (Taken from Wyszomirska 1984:208)

related to the Pitted Ware Culture (GR) and Finnish Comb Ceramic cultures (KA).

The waterways through Germany and Denmark were not necessarily the only means of communication (Wyszomirska (Werbart) 1984:208). The map shows how figurines have been found along the rivers in Russia extending southwards. Rivers from the south flow into the sea from the Baltic States and Poland creating another connection (Wyszomirska (Werbart) 1984:208). Influences can have come from both the west, south and equally from the east. These are certainly routes of communication by which southern European figurine knowledge could have been transported into Scandinavia. This suggests those ideas of unity and plurality prevalent in Stone-Age figurines from southern European can have been shared by many routes with the north.

Bozena Wyszomirska (Werbart) sees variations in collections of statuettes, which she uses to group the figurines together within the different types of pottery (Wyszomirska (Werbart) 1984). She then connects these to the pottery's cultural periods. She notes that in north and north-eastern Europe zoomorphic and anthropomorphic Scandinavian figurines are frequently found among the Pitted Ware and Funnel beaker cultures.

If there are differences in figurines' representation, it is that the ecological conditions of west Scandinavia and its connection to the North Sea vary in relationship to Sweden's east coast and Archipelago, while island conditions that are found on Gotland vary again. The hope is by studying four figurines that are spread across Scandinavia from west to east, an area from south of Oslo to just south of Stockholm to Gotland, will broaden a perspective of
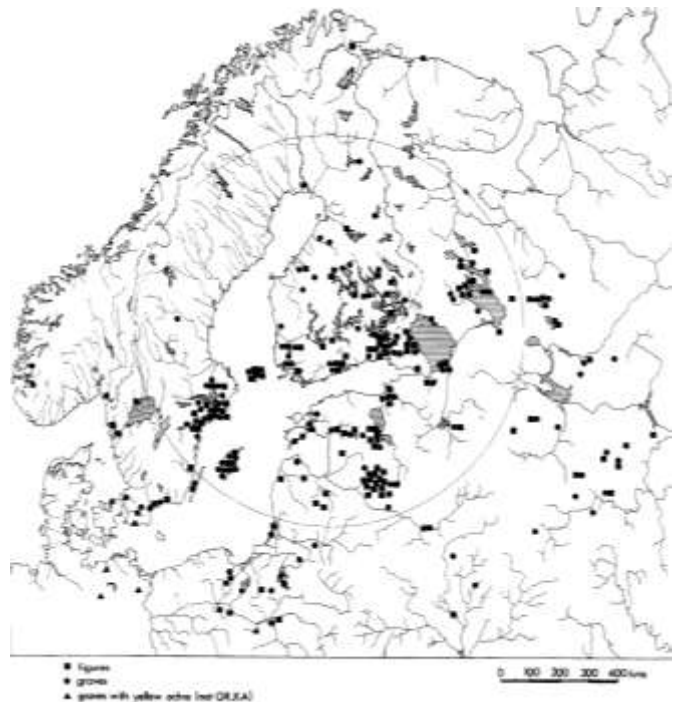
what figurines with a plurality of meaning can tell us about the period in which they were made.

Fig 4. View 1. Animal head figurine; zoomorphic (SHM 32990) Korsnäs. Photo Jenny Nyberg.

Fig 5. View 2. Seated figure; anthropomorphic (SHM 32990).

Fig 6. View 3. An Elk's head; zoomorphic. (SHM 32990)

3.2. Presentation of the figurines

3.2.1 Korsnäs and its background

At the 'Statens Historiska Museum' (SHM) the moulded Korsnäs figurine was the first to catch my attention of those shown to me. Above are the three photographs of the statuette's different images (fig 4, 5, 6).

From habit I looked at the figurine as schematic imagery and with no expectation of it being realistic. To look at art and preconceive a realistic concept, demands another approach and interpretation (Änggård 2014:72).

Korsnäs lies in Grödinge parish Södermanland and has as many as thirty Neolithic sites close by, among which is the Älby group finds located within the vicinity of Södertörn (von Heland 1962:71). The evidence is of a comparatively populated area (Fornander 2010:3).

In Neolithic times, today's grounds of Korsnäs Gård overlooked a sheltered bay that faced southwards onto a waterway containing several islands. The channel ran from north to south and slightly eastwards past an archipelago of islands and down to the Baltic Sea. Since then the land has risen some 25 to 30 metres. A map (fig 7) gives an overall view of Korsnäs and Överåda. There is also a more detailed map from Sveriges Geologiska Undersökning (SGU) of the shoreline as seen 5000 years ago (fig 8).

An artefact found in the 1920's, attracted Ivar Schnell, Nils Åberg & Sten Florin to investigate the area. Many sherds and bones etc were found but little was done afterwards. In 1964 a bulldozer removed 1,250m^2 of top soil exposing a Neolithic site and again interest was raised (Fornander 2010:5). Large quantities of Pitted Ware pottery were found – 49.8 kg to be exact – as well as 70 stone artefacts, with arrow heads made of imported flint (Fornander 2010:5,6).

The C^{14} datings that were carried out established that the Korsnäs area was occupied between 3350-2640 BCE (Fornander 2010:6).
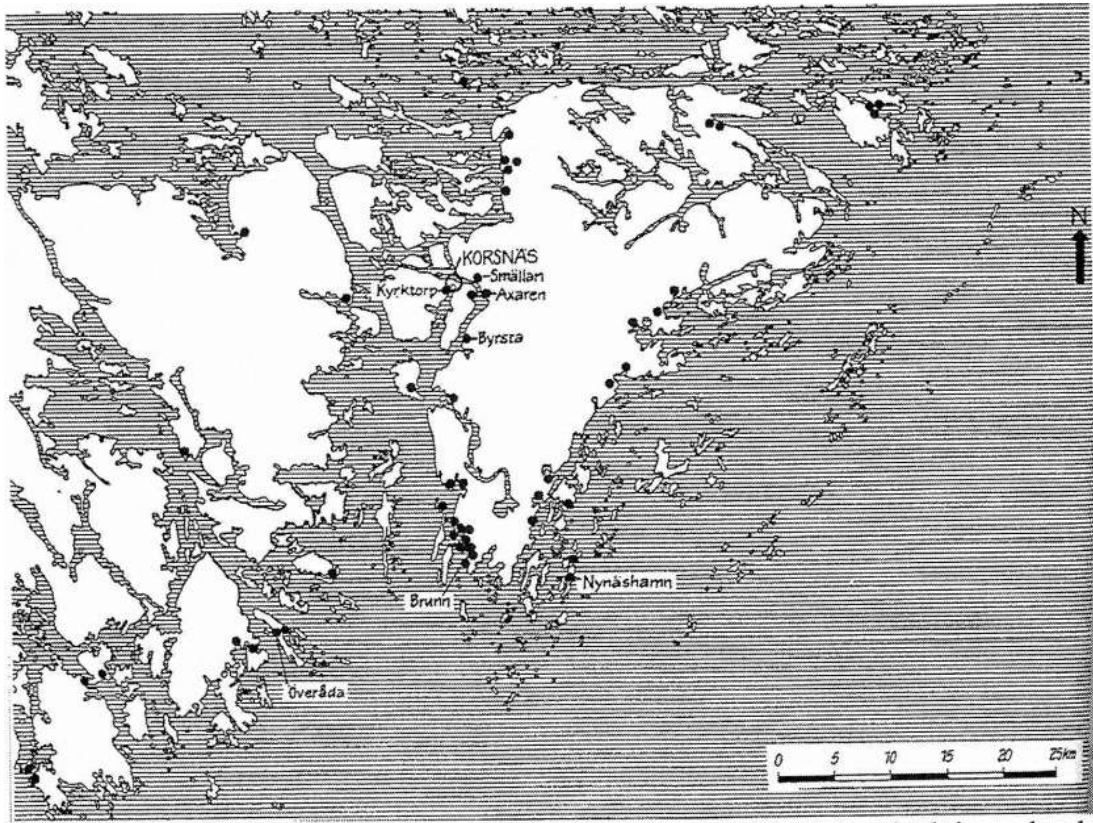
Fig 7. Korsnäs and Överåda are marked with a few surrounding localities. To illustrate a 25 meter difference in water level from today. Originally taken from Olsson et al 1994:63 and edited by Heimadahl 2010:10.
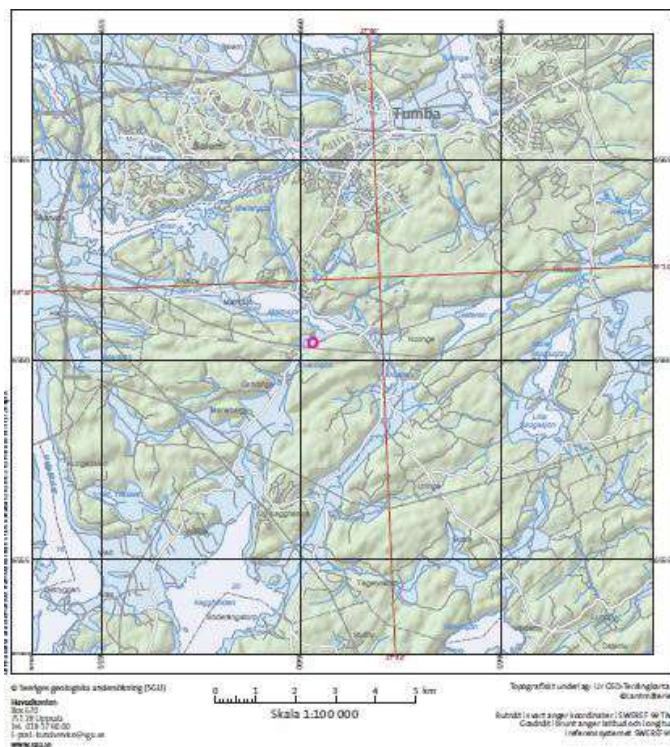
Fig 8. (left) A SGU map giving the water level as it was 5000 years ago around Korsnäs; marked in red (author's addition).

Fig 9. (right) Artefact SHM 32990:B (72) is a bone anthropomorphic figurine from Korsnäs. (S-G Broström 2014:4).

The large quantity of sherds etc indicated that from their youth people were involved in a unique craftsmanship. Finger prints indicate small hands and Hallgren in a very thorough investigation, describes that the pottery and ceramics were almost certainly made by women (Hallgren 2008:196-197). A community dependant on endless shaping and carving (for tools

to build shelters, collecting and processing food and stitching cloths) think naturally in three dimensional terms, enabling a skill to model the intricate shapes of figurines. It is more likely to be a flight of fantasy that led to symbolically rolling the three identities into a tiny moulded object.

After the top soil was stripped, it was the Grödinge Folklore Society, led by Sven-Gunnar Broström that effectively sieved the soil during the summer of 1971-72 and from 2005-2012 making many finds (Broström 2015:6). Analysis from bones and teeth from 7 individuals, of stable isotopes show a marine life diet with a dominance of seal (Fornander 2010:6).

What attracted special attention, and became almost a symbol for Korsnäs, was a carved well-polished bone figurine with a clear human likeness seen in (fig 9) (Broström 2015:4, 6).

3.2.2 The Korsnäs figurine

On their website the SHM presents this Korsnäs figurine as zoomorphic, which is certainly justifiable (fig 4). The next image to appear was a rather schematic sitting figure (fig 5). The third image was identified as an elk's head (fig 6). Familiarity with the Cucuteni sitting figurines from Moldavia, north east Romania came to mind as parallel (Gimbutas 1989: plate 9) (fig 10a).

This meant the Korsnäs figurine had two zoological images and one anthropomorphic image, which appeared when the figurine was twisted around. Was it a mistake? Jackie Taffinder who had brought the figurines out was also curious.

Fig 11. Zoomorphic figurine fish looking right. Vogelherd Cave, carved in mammoth ivory Palaeolithic H.1.8 W. 2.5 D.0.6 (Cook 2013:49).

If I was right, here were both zoomorphic and anthropologic images intertwined in a single figurine of minute size.

Months later, in an effort to understand the shape better, I made the first copy of the Korsnäs figurine out of polymer clay that was three times larger than the original. I found the sculpture was a complicated shape, based on a central core from which rounded protrusions extended to create the varying images (fig 10).

It was in making the copy I became persuaded the variations in representation were intentional. To carry out such an unusual shape demanded proficiency, skill and an agile mind. The unique accomplishment lay in being able to mould such a minuet size, which was hardly more than 1 to 2 cm in any direction. My copy was much larger and therefore coarse by comparison; it was like comparing 19th century 'petit-point' embroidery, to the much thicker modern 'cross-stitch'.

What provoked surprise was that the Korsnäs figurine's form of plurality was not the same as that found in southern figurines. In the south figurines' plurality was usually seen when analysing the figurine from one angle. My favourite example was of a fish looking right (fig 11). There is another zoomorphic image for my reader to find, that is carved into this mammoth ivory image. The second image, was how the figurine was presented at the British Museum, as being its only image (Cook 2013:49).

Even if the Palaeolithic example of plurality (fig 11) is so long before the Korsnäs statuette was ever thought of, it shows multiple art as a way of thinking was already an artistic reality.

Fig 10 Model of figurine SHM 530181, three times larger than the original.
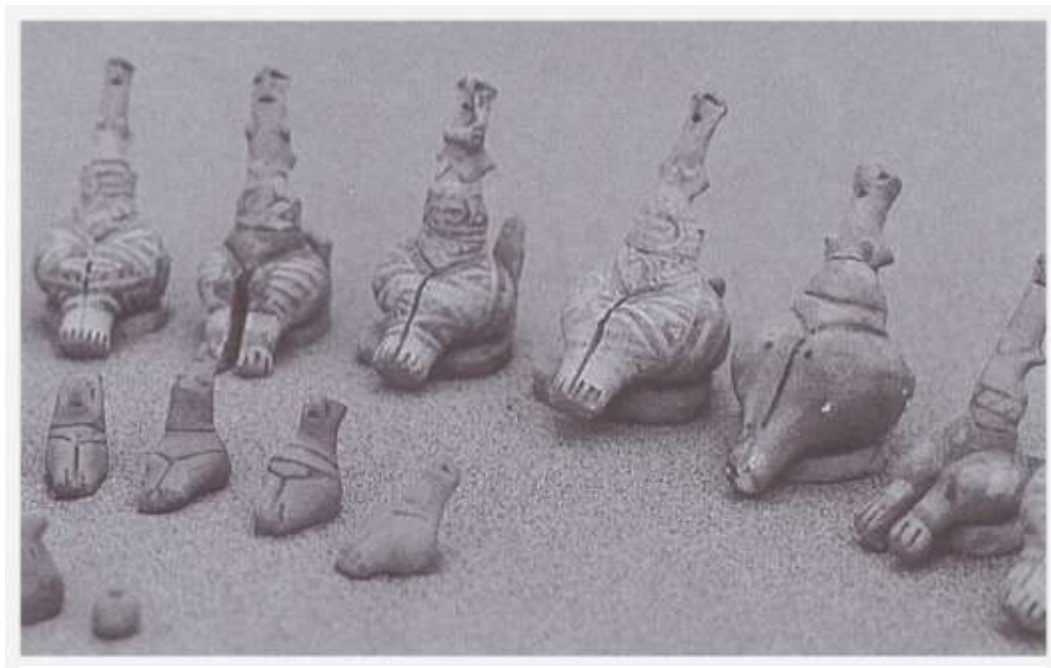

Fig 10a. Sitting figurines early Cucuteni (Podur-Dealul Ghindaru, Moldavia NE Romania, 4800-4600BCE (Gimbutas 1989:plate9).

As I had first seen fig 11 as a fish, it is for me still one of the clearest examples of two well formed images that can be seen from one perspective (fig 11).

Fig 12. View 1. Bird figurine; zoomorphic (SHM 30097). Överåda. Photo Jenny Nyberg

Fig 13. View 2. A quadruped figurine; zoomorphic (SHM 30097). Turned upside-down.

Fig 14. View 3. Gesture of raised arms; anthropomorphic figurine (SHM 30097).

3.3 Figurine from Överåda, Trosa parish, Södermanland.

3.3.1 How the Överåda figurine was found.

Överåda, where the terracotta Bird figurine was found, was once an island about 7 kilometres long and half a kilometre wide. This is due to the change in sea level since the Neolithic period. (Sveriges Geologiska Undersökning (SGU) fig 15). Överåda is roughly 3.5 kilometres south west of Trosa, where above the map's centre a west to east oblong island is visible. Today the area is well in land and lies on a pinewood ridge that is 26 to 32 metres above sea level.

In referring to Stig Welinder's work in 1973 Eva Olsson records that finds of decorated and plain ceramic sherds, flint and slate pointed tool heads were found in the area (Olsson & Vinberg 2003:6, 12). The archipelago conditions can well have attracted bird life to an island, that was so close to an open sea area. People's diet was mainly of seal and otherwise the bones of fish were found, a few fragments of bird were retrieved, with swine, elk and deer bones (Welinder 1973:32). The community worked shaping sandstone, quarts, and forming ceramics pots was a common need. Welinder also notes "4 Sculptured bits of burnt clay" (Welinder 1973:24).
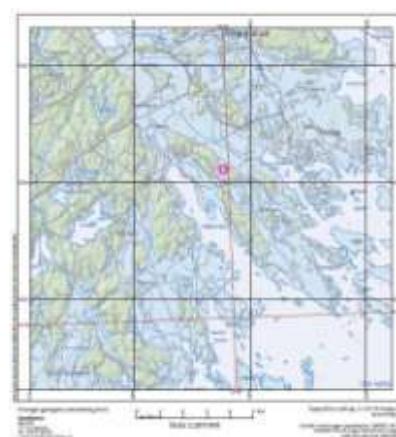
Fig 15. A SGU map of the Överåda area to the south west of today's Trosa, to show the water level as it was 5000 years ago. The long island from northwest to southeast in the map's centre is the island of Överåda marked in red, (author's addition).

3.3.2 Överåda: Beaked masks and bird image gestures.

In the cellar of SHM the task of photographing the Överåda figurine came second. It was so small with a height of 2.6 cm, and width 2.3 cm. The slightly rough texture of the burnt-umber coloured fired clay was very much part of the object's character.

After recording the Korsnäs figurine it was more natural to examine this bird figurine for alternative images, and less of a surprise to find the bird image (fig 12) could be turned into a

Fig 15a. Female figure wearing a beaked mask. Vinča mound 5000-4500 BCE. (Gimbutas 1974:62)

Fig 16. Schematic clay birds with disc shaped bodies and anthropomorphic legs, Tarxien cemetery Malta. c. mid-3rd mill. BCE H 23.1cm. (Gimbutas 1989-9)
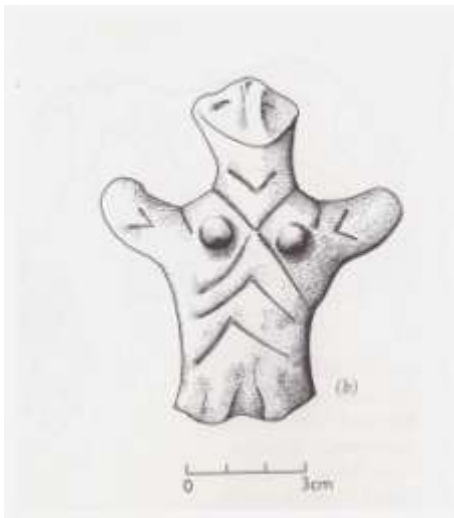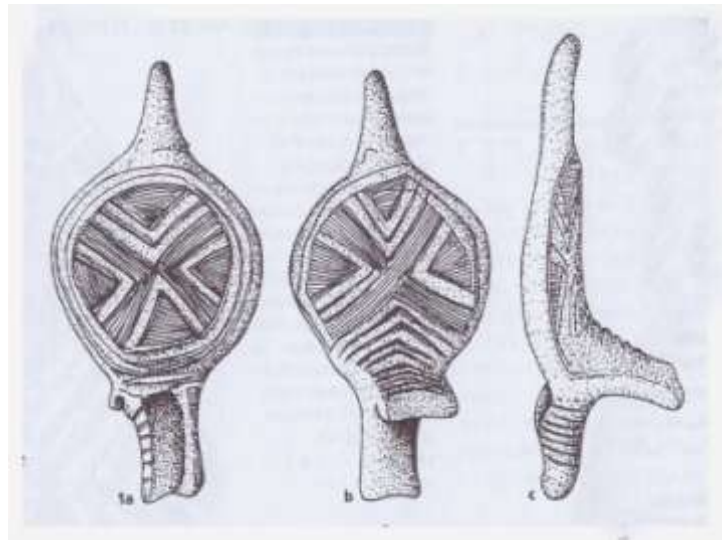

Fig 17. Bird figurine with mask, made of Terracotta . c. 5200 BCE. Turdaş, western Romania. (Gimbutas 1999-45)

Fig 18. Schematic bird figurine rising out of a pot. H 9.1 cm Karanovo VI Gumelnita Ciolanesti, S Romania 4500-4300 BCE (Gimbutas 1989:33)

rather abstract four footed beast, that I have called a friendly dog (fig 13) and an equally abstract anthropomorphic image (fig 14). Placing the bird on its tail, made it human but genderless – no less dynamic for that and with expressive outstretched arms.

In central and Eastern Europe there are many schematic figurines with the beaked mask of a bird as in fig 15a; a schematic abstract bird, shaped as a well etched disc, is represented with anthropomorphic legs (fig 16) from Malta and 3rd millennium BCE (Gimbutas 1989-9).

Many southern figurines have outstretched arms, one of which is depicted in fig 17, from Turdaş western Romania. But what topped all comparisons was the ridiculously similar shape to the female figurine extracting herself from a bowl, found in Karanovo in Southern Romania dated to 4,500 BCE (fig 18) (Gimbutas 1989:33). The Karanovo figurine profile (fig 18) was so similar when compared to the Överåda profile (fig 14), it helped persuade me that Överåda's figurine, as a bird on its tail, was a conscious reference to a known Neolithic symbol or idea. The more I looked, the SHM figurines were shown to have an individual style of their own that differed from southern Europe.

Fig 19. View 1. Elk's head figurine; zoomorphic (SHM 15505). Photo Jenny Nyberg.

Fig 20. View 2. Seal figurine; zoomorphic (SHM15505). The top of the broken head is visible.

Fig 21. View 3. Outstretched arms gesture (SHM 15505).Zoomorphic/anthropomorphic?

3.4.1 The clumsy eared figurine from Ire, Hangvar parish, Gotland

The third figurine is from Ire, in Hangvar parish in Gotland which is the best investigated locality by archaeologists of the three Neolithic areas examined so far. At the same time it is the site that has been most extensively researched.

Ire lies roughly 20 km north of Visby on the northwest end of the island, with a sheltered bay protected at one end from the sea by cliffs (Ohlsson 2005:20). The SGU map (fig 22), indicates that the bay was deeper 6000 years ago, while the difference in water levels are much less dramatic than in Korsnäs and Överåda.

I gave an overall view in the fig 7 map of Korsnäs and Överåda where sea levels had changed 25 to 30 metres describing how sea had been turned to land. In contrast in Ire this did not happen. The river Ireån still flows into a

Fig 22. A SGU map of the Ire area with the water levels as they were 6000 years ago. Where the river flows into the Baltic sea from a lake is also clearly indicated.

bay that has hardly changed. On the map this coastline is marked in a darker blue (fig 22), nor has the settlement area altered, which today has only extended towards the sea.

3.4.2 Figurine's symbolism and ceramic texture.

The SGU map as well as tracing the Stone Age coastline in darker blue shows where, the river Ire flows, and how it is fed from an inland lake. Fresh running water was a priority in Neolithic times. On the river banks Kerstin Lidén records that archaeological 'Spot tests' indicate habitation along considerable lengths of the river (Lidén 1989:11) At the time these communities surely impacted Ire's Neolithic harbour communities.

The more stable water-level at Ire appears to have contributed a sense of permanency to the area, influencing its development. Calcium rich soil Birgitta Hulthén tells us can account for the chemical ceramic stability with which the Ire figurines were made (Hulthén 1997:139).

The Ire figurine (SHM 15505) was excavated by O.V. Wennersten 1914 and handed in with pottery fragments to the National Historical Museums SHM in 1915. The SHM web page identifies the Ire figurine as an elk's head (fig 19). It is 5,1 cm long with an approximate distance of 3 cm between as the ears, which has been considered a disproportionate distance. When seen as a seal, the break in the top of the head becomes visible (fig 20). The seal, as part of the marine world, is closely related to the lives of those living in Ire, where many seal bones have been found and are related people's diet (Lidén 1989:13).

By this time because of previous illustrations when the figurine is held upright we recognise the extended arms symbol (fig 21).

By 1983 Janzon will describe an increasing number of Scandinavian figurine finds (Janzon 1983:1, 5). In the 1950's the site at Ire was to be thoroughly and informatively investigated by Greta Arwidsson (Lidén 1989:11;). When the sherds were later examined several figurines and fragments of figurines were found (Janzon 1983:1).

Similarly for artistic character when burnt clay is 'unvarnished ceramics' it has a visual character of its own that gives a very rough earthy feel to the object. I am comparing Ire figurine with a *well preserved* example from Kosovo, Romania as this is what the artist would be visualising while moulding the clay (fig 23) (Ville & Lucy 2015:58,59).

Fig 23. Ceramic figurine. (Ville & Lucy 2015:59)

3.4.3 Simplicity in the contours of Neolithic figurine art.

As said the site at Ire has been the most widely reported on and discussed of my three examples. We have Janzon's report on the Ire excavations. She compares figurines from other localities in a series of illustrations. I want my reader to have an overall view of assembled figurine images when the Ire figurines are placed in the following collection on page 20. The early finds of Åloppe figurines, Nystätra parish, Uppland (I repeat fig 2); two groups of Ire figurines fig 24, 25; a few of the group of Äleby figurines, Gistad parish, Östergötland (fig 26); a selection of the group of figurines from Älby, Ösno parish, Södermanland (fig 27), four of these Janzon has illustrated (Janzon 1983:2,3,5).

When the images are seen on one page (page 20) they exemplify the distinctions in the Neolithic mouldings with regard to profiles and shapes. This may clarify why I see distinctive

contours and typological three dimensional forms as representative of a period's natural interested in multiple representations (Janzon 1983:2, 3, 5).

Fig 2. Åloppe, Nystätra parish Uppland. Two figurines interpreted as being elk images. (Almgren 1907:115)
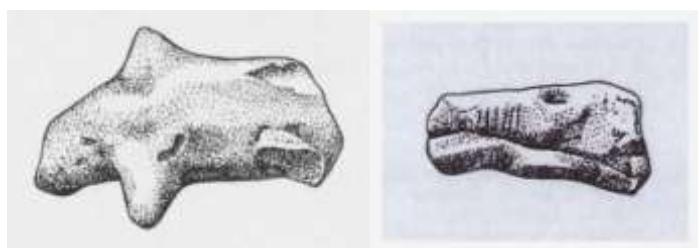
Fig 24. Figurines found at Ire Hangvar Parish Gotland, described in 1978 by Gunborg O. Janzon (left SHM 15505, drawing B. Händel. Right illustrated in Janzon (Janzon 1983:2).
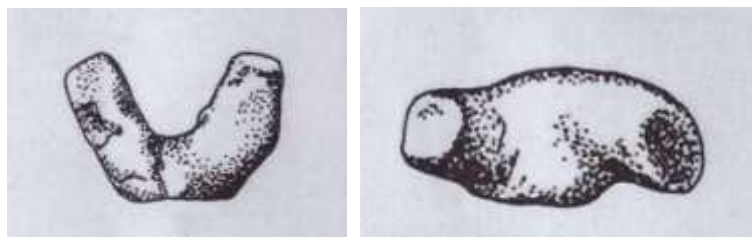
Fig25. Ire Hangvar parish Gotland. 'Spoon figurines' as described by Gunborg O. Janzon. (Janzon 1983:3)
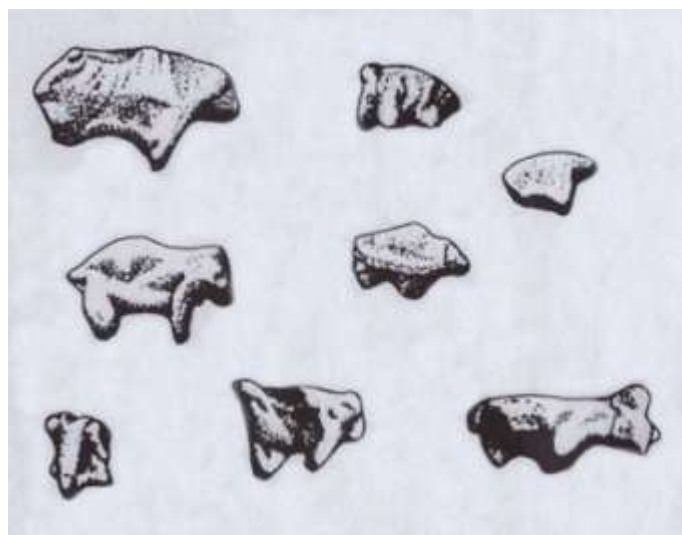
Fig 26. Group of figurines found in Äleby Gistad parish Östergötland (SHM inv nr 30041:1) (Janzon 1983:3)

Fig 27. Group of figurines found in Älby Ösmo parish, Södertörn, Södermanland. (Janzon 1983:5)

Svinesund figurine.

Fig 28. View a, b, c. Top left a: the front of the Svinesund figurine; centre b: the underneath side; right c: a side view. (Glørstad et al, 2004:99).

Fig 28a. The site Torpum 9b during excavation. Photo V. Tørhaug, UKM
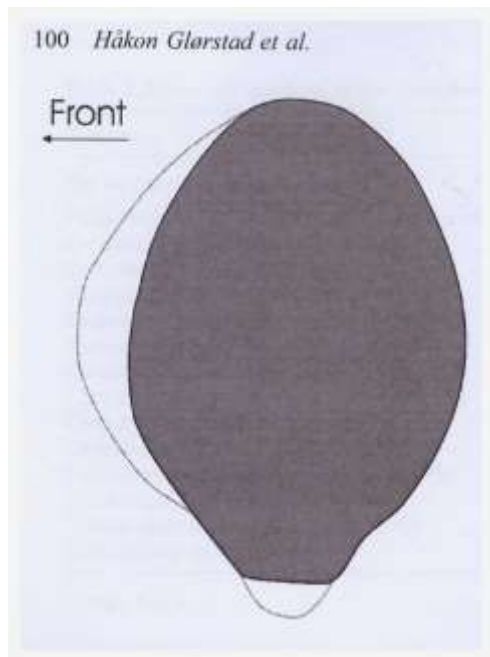
Fig 29. Material removal to form an egg shape. Drawn by H. A. Nakrem in Glørstad et al 2004:100.

3.5.1 The Svinesund figurine

Three views of the Svinesund figurine images are on the previous page. This stone figurine is taken up here to considered and compare its duality differences, with those of the figurines from Sweden.

The figurine is from Svinesund in Norway and so of the figurines under discussion, it is positioned furthest west. In 2004 *The Norwegian Archaeological Review* reported the find of a carved fossilised mollusc shell in Svinesund in south east Norway (fig 28).

Svinesund was once an island that lay north-north-east of present day Strömstad, and a few kilometres directly north of Högdal.

The fossil was dated to the late Mesolithic period a little over 6000 years old, making it the oldest known figurine in Scandinavia. Svinesund has always been part of the fjord that runs up to where Oslo is today, however the shoreline today is 47 to 50 metres above sea level. To step back in time means recognising that the *island* of Svinesund once lay directly north of an archipelago of wetland and marshes which is shown on map (fig 29). The rest of today's cost- line and sea area is not completed.

Today's excavations were carried out well above sea level. They found no signs of permanent settlements; in contrast there was activity from tool making and flint flakes and many ceramic sherds,

Fig 29. A SGU geological map of Svinesund shore line as it was 6000 yrs ago. The light blue is the present water line.

which in C^{14} testing confirmed the dating. (Glørstad et al 2004:97) The fossilised mollusc shell was found 3.5 meters away from one of the working areas, and to clarify what this means physically for archaeologists (fig 28a) is a photo of the area. It clarifies why abstract shaped objects are so difficult to detect when excavating. Often these are open areas being prepared for building of roads and houses, with stretches of open muddy soil.

3.5.2. Multiple gender qualities

From the start the Svinesund figurine was recognised as plural in having more than one message. Håkon Glørstad, Hans Arne Nakrem & Vanja Tørhaug interpreted the figurine as being shaped as an egg with feminine attributes (Glørstad et al 2004:95). The shell had been carved to emphasize an egg shape, and the author's opened their article with a synopsis saying the egg is "interpreted as an essence of female attributes, that is the hips and pelvis of a female human with the genitalia marked" (Glørstad et al 2004:95).

The shell as pictured in fig 29 reveals an experienced sculptor has minimized labour, by economically only removing two small areas in the shells profile, to produce an egg shape. The other quality this shell possesses is of being stone hard – marble. Compressed under enormous weight even the mud is turned to stone. When polished the living organisms are exposed almost like an X-ray (fig 30). We pass such stones daily without reflecting or understanding the history that they illuminate. For a paleoarchaeologist the example in fig 30 illustrates the details of what this (X-ray) polished stone represents. It was probably

consciously placed in the square in the middle of Södertörn University; it so much belongs to a world of closer knowledge about the planet in telling a story through earth and stone.

Fig 30a. A view of the whole marble stone that has a polished surface, here hidden by snow, otherwise as seen in fig 30. Placed in the central patio of Södertörn högskolan.

Fig 31. Zoomorphic/anthropomorphic figurine, of two genders. From Ajia Irine, Cyprus. At the Medelhavsmuseet Stockholm, (Winbladh 1992: 57).

Fig 32. A terracotta figurine exhibited as female but with a beard. From Ajia Irini Cyprus. At the Medelhavsmuseet, Stockholm (Winbladh 1995:51)

4. Discussion

4.1 The difficulties and the rewards

Regarding plurality and the three figurines from SHM: It can be accidental to find multiple-images in one figurine such as the Korsnäs figurine, to find it in two, represented in Överåda as well raises suspicions, while similarities in a third figurine, Ire, definitely is a reason for extended investigations. A complication is that across Europe plurality in figurines is an unquestioned quality, which is often not stipulated but simply taken for granted (Ljunge 2015:69).

A difficulty in how the three figurines were found is their similarity in tone to the soil, which impedes recognising non-representative images of clay (Broström 2012). Överåda and Korsnäs figurines were rescued from slag, left over from soil clearance, while the Ire figurine was found and handed into the museum to receive interest and later a few curt comments in 1925 (Nihlén 1925:216).

In the open terrain terracotta figurines are camouflaged, being the same colour as the surrounding soil, they break easily when struck, and unlike metal do not glitter. When abstract

in shape they are like any lump of clay. It takes a routined archaeologist to recognise hand-pressed-clay. Greta Arwidsson observed that, only by later combing through many kilos of pottery sherds were identifying figurines and fragments of them made possible (Janzon 1983:1).

Clay figurines lack any pretention of enhancing human vanity. Even when anthropomorphic, by modern standards they lack a flattering physical shape or complimentary face. In many cases there is no face at all (Änggård 2014:71-72). The three figurines in question have hardly a face between them, whatever angle they are looked at from.

Their representation is 'human and animal moulded together'. This is a plurality easily found in Stockholm's 'medelhavsmuseet', where a Cyprus figurine from Ajia Irine blends together animal and human identity, plus being dual gender (fig 31) (Winbladh 1992:57). An equally multiple Cyprus figurine is a masked and bearded woman, again combining the genders (fig 32) (Winbladh 1995:51), both figurines are various forms of plurality.

If the Korsnäs, Överåda and Ire figurines have little to offer archaeologists, it is because generally figurines do not meet up to the required criteria. This can explain why the carved and moulded images do not attract investigation, but are left on the edge of research. Albeit new finds are constantly bringing new insights and we must not disregard the relatively few and fascinating studies that have already been written.

Repeat of Fig 14.

Fig 32a. A bird symbol from Tiryns, near Mycenae. 1400-1200 BCE (Baring & Cashford 1991:124)

A very real reason for curiosity about these three dimensional sculptures is the similarities that suddenly appear between them regardless of distance in time or geography, such as gestures like outstretched arms as a symbol.

One such example is the profile between the Överåda figurine (fig 14), compared to the raised arms of the plural bird symbol (observe the bird mask) from Tiryns, near Mycenae (fig 32a). Anne Baring and Jules Cashford tell us this was a "symbolic gesture originating from Palaeolithic times continued in the Neolithic extending to Bronze Age Egypt" (Baring & Cashford 1991:124). Such a time span in symbolism makes it probable, the gesture of a figurine with raised arms as found in Överåda has a meaning. It should be seen as a symbolistic gesture that was conscious knowledge taken from the south and a figurine profile that was included into the Scandinavian Neolithic art.

This emphasises, that figurines can be made to have an explicit symbolism, which has not yet been deciphered or taken into account when examining their profiles.

The Neolithic figurines are fashioned as artistic communication of which plurality is a part. Conditions in Neolithic Scandinavia has no connections to present day circumstance, and what we identify as religion and modern forms of doctrine do not apply. In which case how unlikely with such a time spread in symbolism, as Baring and Cashford describe, rooted in the past, there should be any reason for social parallels to what we consider acceptable and natural today.

4.2 Human's sense of proportion.

Looking at these minuet images (in relation to the size of us as human-beings) they do not give the impression of domination because they are so small. In the Korsnäs and Överåda figurines, it was squeezing plurality into these tiny shapes that comes as a surprising skill.

At SHM it was in studying the Korsnäs figurine under the microscope that the simplicity of line could be appreciated. What their miniature size made apparent was that the message was hardly one of power. Huge objects with a hefty bulk that outsize people are one of several ways to express power. Clay does not glitter and has no integral value, it is not connected to power, as gold is.

From this perspective, because power is not a Neolithic visual concern, it is the solidity of line (e.g. fig 1c, 16, 27) that appears first to have attracted present day artists to Stone Age figurine art – especially in France (Parrot 1960). After their simplicity of profile inspired modern artists, there were secondary interpretations, which had little to do with the original Neolithic schematic symbolisms, which I will not take up here.

In opening this essay George Brassaï's sculptures were mentioned, as they were photographed for the *Ice Age Art* exhibition catalogue at the British Museum. A reminder of the work is seen in (fig 33), which is a pleasing and in many ways 'romantic' photo of a subject (Cook 2013:244). What Brassaï's work also illuminates is how strikingly different and by comparison *unromantic* the Neolithic figurines are in visual representation and the message they convey (fig 1c, 26, 27 repeated below) (Janzon 1983:3, 5).

There is another difference when confronted with figurines. Photography tends to hide an appreciation of the artefacts relative size, simply because of the medium.

In this case, the Brassaï sculpture is 26.5 cm large. Not big per se, but nevertheless in the region of ten times larger than the Korsnäs, Överåda and Svinesund figurines.

What can be misleading, is today's opportunity for illustrations that are beautifully enlarged, missing an appreciation with regard to each figurine's actual size. It is a step to losing contact with how they were historically created

Fig 33 George Brassaï sculpture from the *Ice Age Art* catalogue from the British Museum

and personally handled during Neolithic times. Therefore extra care is needed in reaching modern interpretations.

Even in reproducing the figurines' duality for this essay, to explain clearly, what their size has meant after being able to handle them in person, was difficult to convey to others and hard to make a shared appreciation.

People are very sensitive to size in relation to themselves, especially when estimating an object's visual impact and this applies to small clay objects as well as the large. A real difficulty in appreciating their symbolism is only possible by being aware of their often very small size.

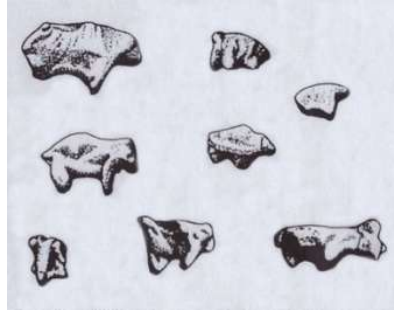Fig 1c. Tisza culture s-e Hungary. Early 5th mill. (Gimbutas 1999:76)

Fig 26. Group of figurines found in Äleby Gistad parish Östergötland (SHM inv nr 30041:1) (Janzon 1983:3)

Fig 27. Group of figurines found in Älby Ösmo parish, Södertörn, Södermanland. (Janzon 1983:5)

4.3 Korsnäs: Clear representation is not a necessity

The reason this paper discusses figurines as abstract and schematic art that combines several identities is simply because statuettes 'raison d'être' becomes easier to understand and makes more sense, when perceived of as abstract. As abstract symbols, figurines can also be more informative as a basis for archaeological research material.

Elin Fornander in writing about excavations at Korsnäs, lists "eight incomplete figurines" and writes of 115 burnt clay fragments weighing 136 grams, which 'lacked any closer description' (Fornander 2010:20).

As, we learn from Richard Heimdahl that fragments of figurines were found at Korsnäs but only one of them was a *clear figure* (my cursives) – a remark that is made in passing (Heimdahl 2010:13 §3).

That is my point all through this essay, that if the demand for figurines is to be 'a clear figure' i.e. 'realistic' which is made as a legitimate expectation, it is this which enables abstract characteristics to get lost. Abstract symbolism is then much easier to interpret as 'primitive representations'. The SHM Korsnäs figurine's several schematic images (fig 4, 5, 6) leave reality behind and when they do, they risk being given a negative interpretation.

This makes *the question critical*, as to what is accepted in figurines to give them a viable identity? Must a 'clear figure' (realistic art) be a legitimising quality?

Attitudes are a sliding scale and unspoken pressures, even within research, have a strong impact, and this is one of them. Once non-representational art is excluded from our historical past as 'illegitimate', to present abstract art as a rightful concept means it can be challenged – at which point researchers discreetly tend to let such considerations go unnamed.
In the introduction I mentioned how children were taught about 'a primitive past', well here is a sequel to this attitude among the adult population, public or otherwise.

What *also* makes Neolithic art so interesting is that there appears to be room for realism as an accepted form of art, as well as an 'expressionistic' art form. See the uncomfortable posture of the figurines leaning back, where the Cucuteni and Korsnäs figurines are shown in

an impossible recline both at approximately the same angle (fig 10a and fig 5). The abnormal posture can well have a message we know nothing about (fig10a).

Fig 4 Korsnäs figurine

Fig 5

Fig 6

Fig 10a compared with Fig 5

Fig 14 is compared to Fig 18

Fig 15 is compared to Fig 35

The wish in writing is to make acceptable that gestures and postures do not have to be understood, to be of valuable interest. They are clues, just as the earlier observations that symbols do not have to be seen as a religion or a doctrine. They contribute to recognising the figurine's artistic sophistication.

It is against this background of Neolithic clues and to recognise diversity in artistic expression, which is one of the aims in discussing the figurines.

4.4. Överåda: Pluralities numerous choices

The Överåda figurine covers quite a different set of connections from the Korsnäs figurine with regard to plurality. The images that are united in the Överåda figurine convey another set of ideas by having a strong bird-human profile (fig 14). This multi-pluralism (meaning duality that is again pluralised) belongs to the world of figurine bird symbolisms as related to humans, visible in the disc shaped Kosovo bird figurine (page 19, fig 23) (Ville & Lucy 2015:59, 60).

If we compare the bird effigies as found in southern figurines, we can note the Neolithic bird masks are constantly recurring. A bird masked figurine is fairly typical and can be seen by comparing the two bird masked humans in fig 15 with an almost identical image in the Vinča figurine in fig 35 (Gimbutas 1974:62 and 139).

The bird masks appear in several forms. Barry Cunliffe has a photo of a bird mask on a human pot – not unusual for Neolithic pots – in this case with the pot's arms grasping a pot on its head – humour is never far away when studying figurines (fig 36 page 30) (Cunliffe 1994:164).

How often masks and raised outstretched arms are combined is evident, the Korsnäs and Överåda figurines both carry the stretched arms feature.

Comparing the Överåda human-bird image in fig 14, with the Karanovo human-bird image rising from the pot in fig 18, depicts a similarity of outline that is clearly very close. It is surprising, when considering the geographical distance. The artists making the Överåda figurine in all probability were aware of the Karanovo shape and outline, and as a wish to give the gesture a respect – or their sculpture a certain meaning – they repeated the symbolism (fig 18).

Comparing fig 14,18, and 35 all with outstretched arms. (SHM 30097) (Gimbutas 1989:33, 1974:139)

The Neolithic figurines combine zoomorphic bird shapes with peoples' stiff outstretched arms (fig 14, 18, 35), whatever the connection we cannot rule out a possible meaning.

Another combination is: the schematic bird combined with a well etched disc shape as found in figure fig 16 and 23 below. The first illustration is a bird with no head. In spite of a disc shape the figurine is clearly a symbolic bird, cleverly amalgamated with anthropomorphic legs, which I find are a curious combination (fig 16).

Fig 34 Left: Bird figurines from Torlunda, Uppland. (Alexander Gill 1993:156)
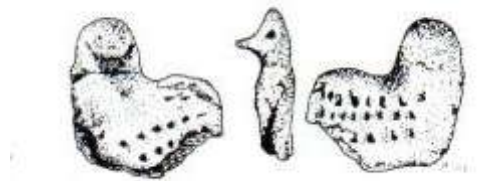

Fig 35. Right: Bird mask on a Vinča figurine no details give. (Gimbutas 1974:139)

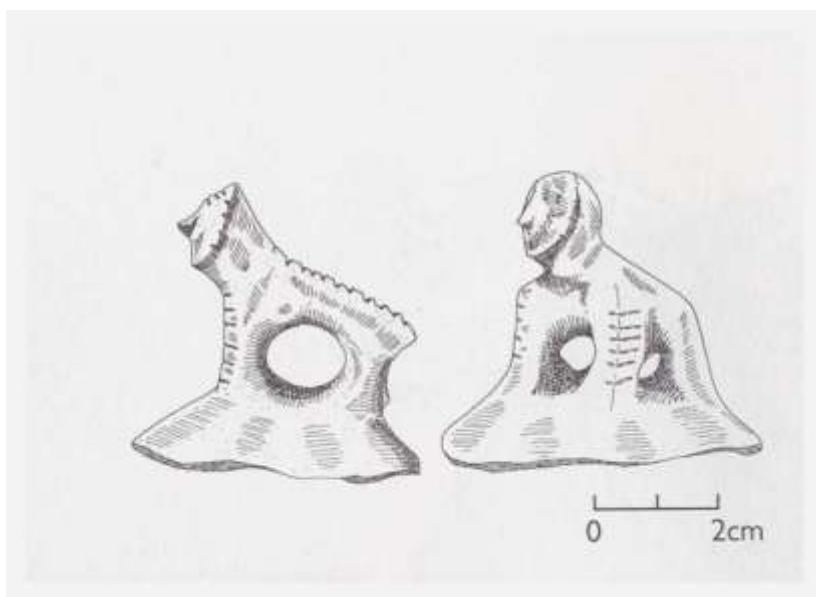Fig 36. Left: A ceramic pot form Hotnicanear Beliko Turnovo, Bulgaria, 4000 BCE. (Cunliffe 1994:164).

Fig 37. A dog with a human mask. Karanovo VI culture: mid-fith millennium BCE: Goja-mata Mogila at Gorni Pasarel central Bulgaria. (Gimbutas 1999:33).

(Fig 9 copy).

A similar disc shape and bird mask in fig 23 is combined with a quadruped body. It is these combinations, which are important archaeological clues in extending our insights into a closer understanding of the Neolithic period.

Comparing the disc shaped headless bird statuette (fig 16) with fig 23, which combines the disc shape with a bird masked and quadruped symbolism (Ville & Lucy 2015:59). Fig 16 (Gimbutas 1989-9)

The Torslunda, bird figurine from Uppland discussed by Alexander Gill, in comparison seems simple imagery (fig 34 page 30 above). Closer inspection shows the figurine is indeed schematic in being so flat (middle view), with indentations (Gill 1993:156). Since we are investigating several meanings, a figurine carrying so many organised dots as the bird statuette (fig 34), should not in haste, simply be judged to have indentations for decoration only. The possibility should remain open to consider the dots as having a meaning – *even if that meaning is not identifiable*.

Only by endless comparisons can we even attempt to speculate on the reason for Neolithic artists to combine certain identities in figurine shapes. Pluralism is often observed in research in this or that feature, but never explicitly identified as a figurine characteristic of long endurance (Baring & Cashford 1991:124).

Almost forgotten, is the third of the Överåda's images. The four footed little animal (fig 13), on being turned upside-down it is one of the shapes the Överåda figurine can represent.

I see this quadruped as a dog, that human's have been depended on, for companionship and protection, since Palaeolithic times. Their bones are so often present in Neolithic Pitted Ware (GRK) sites, it indicates their domestication (Heimdahl 2010:5).

In the TV program *Vetenskaps värld* Helena Victor from Kalmars Läns museum demonstrated that her dog's smelling abilities were far superior to modern detectors' capacity for identification (SVT2 07.09.2015 kl.20:00).

In this statuette world where so much is united, the quadruped Överåda statuette can well represent Neolithic people's practical use for dogs. An animal with such a superior sense of smell, is both a protection and an assistance in finding each other, in a terrain with thick vegetation. Such a consideration makes a dog seem a natural symbol in Stone-Age Överåda.

In the mid-5th millennium BCE, Bulgaria dog figurines are represented with human masks (fig 37). A very symbolic quadruped's body in fig 37 has a practical use by being a vase or a form of container.

Gimbutas observes human masks on quadrupeds were not uncommon during the Karanovo VI culture. The statuette in fig 37 comes from Goljamata Mogila, Gorni Pasarel, central Bulgaria (Gimbutas 1999:33). What is otherwise uncommon is an anthropomorphic mask on a zoomorphic figurine. That combination is rare in my experience. So it is interesting that this amalgamation of 'human and animal' in figurines occurs in Bulgaria, identified just during the mid-5th millennium BCE.

To sum up the Överåda mouldings: the figurines gesture can be one of the most intentional of the pluralistic factors, while the bird symbolism is found to have countless combinations thanks to the mask, some frequent and others less common. The bird symbol almost certainly had a meaning in Neolithic art, even if we cannot say what it was.

Fig 38a. & b. Well preserved terracotta Neolithic figurines from Kosovo museum. Left: H. 24,5 cm. Right: H. 11,4 cm. (Ville, & Lucy, 2015: 54, 60).

4.5 Ire: Community stability and the quality of clay.

 Certainly in representing an elk, a seal and possibly human view (fig 19, 20, 21), the Ire figurine is the most deeply rooted in the animal life as part of the climatic conditions in Scandinavia. In being almost *double the size* to the Korsnäs and Överåda figurines, the Ire figurine is slightly different in character to the other two statuettes. If in representation the difference in size is not obvious, it is because my photos hide this fact. For practical use the Ire figurine is too big to wear as a pendant as in fig 38b. An alternative employment for the 5 cm large sculpture can have been, to use to socialise over and pass round at a gathering.

Of those vicinities where the three SHM figurines come from, Ire in Gotland is the most thoroughly researched locality. Physical conditions at Ire have changed least between Neolithic times and the present day. When Birgitta Hulthén observes the Ire settlement had their own open oven with which to fire ceramics, this must be seen as no small undertaking. It gives the impression there was a permanency and community stability in Gotland's Ire community that made an oven worthwhile (Hulthén 1997:131). This can also explain the many kilos of sherds, with figurines and sculptured fragments that were found by Greta Arwidsson's when excavating the site (Janzon 1983:1).

The Ire figurine is made of especially high quality clay, (Hulthén 1997:139) which indicates they had a special social value. Firing was a real skill during Stone Age times, since the modern measuring equipment for temperature control was unknown (Hulthén 1997:135). Open ovens do not usually exceed temperatures above the 600^0 centigrade that are needed to harden the ceramics.

Of the three terracotta moulded figurines from Korsnäs, Överåda and Ire the photos clearly show the pitted surface of the Överåda figurine is most noticable. This indicates the ceramic compound is unstable, due to incorrect temperatures during firing, while the Ire figurine's surface is comparatively untouched by time.

The surface of the best preserved Neolithic terracotta figurines is seen at the Kosovo museum (fig 38a & b). They have a slightly rough and very matt earthy surface to them. This is as close as we can get, to what the SHM's three figurine in all probability looked like when first produced (fig 38a, b) (Ville & Lucy 2015:54, 60).

The oldest known fired ceramic statuette is the 'black figurine' from Dolni Věstonice in the Moravian basin south of Brno. The 'black figurine' is made of clay and ground bone and predates European pottery by ten thousand years or more (Gimbutas 1989:51). So here is abstract imagery dating back to the Palaeolithic times. We find it is pottery that is the late comer, and the pottery cultures take after the figurine forms of expression.

If figurines came first, this can account for pots employing figurine symbolic features as Barry Cunliffe illustrates so well (fig 36) (Cunliffe 1994:164). It can explain why so many pots wear masks – often very humorous ones, and why pot lids can be as plural as figurines. Did pot-manufacturing compete with the production of figurines? Figurines don't carry the quality of being objects of barter, which pots can well have done, since they break and need replacing. One would like to know more about the figurine/pot relationship and the influences in both directions.
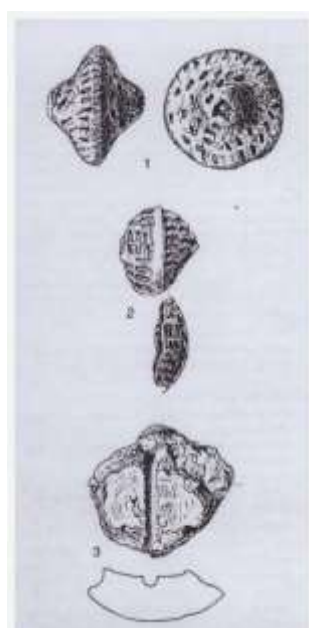

Fig 36. Left: Examples of indented beads from "field B" at Sirtorp, i Mjällby socken, Blekinge, 1. after Bagge-Kjellmark 1940; 2. Round bead with indentations. 3. A fragment of a round bead with an even more complex form. (Janzon 1983:17)

Fig 37. Below: Dual gender beads from Dolni Věstonice, in mammoth ivory. H. O.9-3.2 (Cook 2013:70)

4.6 Figurines no larger than a bead

I have to go back to this question of size. During modernity periodically size has been a critical question with regard to how small a moulding could be and still be recognised as a figurine – this has varied with time. To thumb through the carefully documented sculptures that Wyszomiska-Werbart compiled in 1984 is to raise questions as to where the boundary goes, between what form and size of carvings are identifiable as 'figurines' (Wyszomiska 1984: plates I-XX). Wyszomiska's several plates show many small statuettes are made with holes suitable for using them as a pendant. Figurines can wear a clearly etched pendant, which is seen in the Kosovo statuette on previous page (fig 38b).

A year earlier in presenting the Ire figurine material, Janzon had explored what she describes as 'beads'. She observes "it was established that another type of round sculpture existed in the shape of clay "beads" (Janzon 1983:13). That these beads took on symbolic shapes that were significant in furthering and contributing to the understanding of zoomorphic and anthropomorphic figurines is her point. She exemplifies this with illustrations of the elaborately shaped beads (fig 36) (Janzon 1983:17).

It becomes clear the term 'beads' in a modern sense is inaccurate. The carved configurations used as Stone Age necklaces are so particular in shape and etchings.

In 2013 the British Museum's *Ice Age Art* exhibition presented bead shapes for necklaces, of mammoth ivory from Dolni Věstonice (fig 37) (Cook 2013:70). The most elaborate beads are etched and can be seen as dual gender. Note that the bead on centre left has a female triangular symbol as a sign it is also female, which would not be necessary if its shape was not also masculine.

The Korsnäs, Överåda figurines could have been worn as pendants if they were originally strong enough. Janzon regrets the omission between beads and figurines, because she says the subject is too little discussed and is misleading at several levels –

> "The clay figurines in Sweden have been discussed mainly in terms of cultural identity, chronological dating". . . . . "Generally speaking, the archaeological context in which the objects have been discovered has not been closely analysed, with lack of interest in focusing on the objects themselves" (Janzon 1983:4).

There are a substantial number of Neolithic figurines where the question that needs considering is "above all related to the role which these small figures were meant to play" (Janzon 1983:8) She reflects over "what made these figurines important in the society of the time?" (Ibid).

Does it matter that we may never know the exact role that figurines played? Isn't there enough to learn from their plurality, with the complex inter-play and criss-cross uniting of symbols in many directions? Those who made them can only have been expressing ideas relevant to their Neolithic times or earlier periods.

4.7 Plurality in other art forms

Each of the three figurines has increased our insight into reasons for, or the status of, multi-representation. Now it remains for the Svinesund figurine to add a final perspective. Schematic it may be, but as a bit of art it is fairly simple in its portrayal of an egg (fig 28a), and it is zoomorphic, since the egg is a bird's method of reproduction.

Fig 28a. copy of Svinesund egg.

Interesting and informative as the Glørstad et al article is, I question the relevance of asking if the egg carving was feminine "or a male wish to ensure or control female fertility and power" (fig 28a) (Glørstad et al 2004:108). The question is modern. It lies outside the Neolithic combinations of joining zoomorphic and anthropomorphic plurality together in such a variety of ways.

What the Svinesund figurine article *does* take up is that psychologically a similar plurality is found in other forms of art. In being pluralistic there is a similar diversity of representation, which is often portrayed, for example, in rock art etchings and the elk is often a recurring subject.

Rock-art is well documented in Sweden. The Hallström couple, made detailed recordings from north to south of Scandinavia from 1907 for half a century. Hans Bolin has picked out etchings of zoomorphic and anthropomorphic combinations that exemplify plurality in rock art (Bolin 1999:148).

Recently Ylva Sjöstrand's contribution to archaeology was to analyse how the legs of elks have been illustrated differently depending on the conditions of the period.

Her hypothesis is that the straight legged elks were static animals which can have been related to social conditions, and a change in the etcher's circumstances can have produced elks drawn with bent legs representing motion.

In her thesis *Med älgen i huvudrollen* she suggests, with a very few strokes the etchings of a boat could be transformed into an elk and vice versa (see fig 39). (Indeed the bottom elk in fig 39, with a little imagination and two lines, could make an excellent boat joined to the image behind). Here Sjöstrand is suggesting how easily art could be used to transform one thing into another – certainly a latent form of multi-representation (Sjöstrand 2011:184-187).

It was exactly this type of inventiveness that belongs to the state of mind that produced three dimensional art in the three moulded SHM figurines.

At one point in Glørstad et al's article they describe a rock etching of an elk accompanied by an illustration. This is best described as looking like an X-ray (see fig 40 below). The elk's outline is filled with images – some must be drawn to represent internal organs. (Glørstad et al 2004:106).

Fig 39 A picture of how rock etchings with a few line can turn what started out as a boat into an elks. (Ylva Sjöstrand 2011:186).

In the name of plurality the elk's face fascinated me. By drawing the elks head in black, I saw it was really a fish. To make this clear, I left the rest of the drawing in green (fig 41), undoubtedly this was indeed a beautifully illustrated fish.

The horns were soon discovered to represent a boat with the oars in the air (fig 42). I have to admit the horns can also be seen as a penguin. If the black part of the drawing is turned up on its tail to look to the left my reader may see the penguin as well (fig 42). A rock-etched boat from Drammen could be turned upside-down to become a crab (fig 43). Rock-art is in the open and this enables the viewer to walk round the rock comparatively easily, so plurality was automatically seen from different angles – another clue fell into place.

These are multi-imageries in etched art that supported using the imagination as I had seen it

Fig 11 repeated

used in SHM's figurines. Above all this also demonstrated that pluralistic art in Scandinavia was similarly expressed in a different artistic technique. Here was supported for what had been seen in the Korsnäs, Överåda and Ire figurines as unique in character for Sweden. The reason was the image had to be walked or turned around, for an alternative representation to appear.

Not like the figurine (fig 11) that was a fish looking to the right and a lion looking to the left, both seen when regarded directly from the front. The art varied from the rock art boat-turned-crab image that had to be turned upside-down (fig 43).
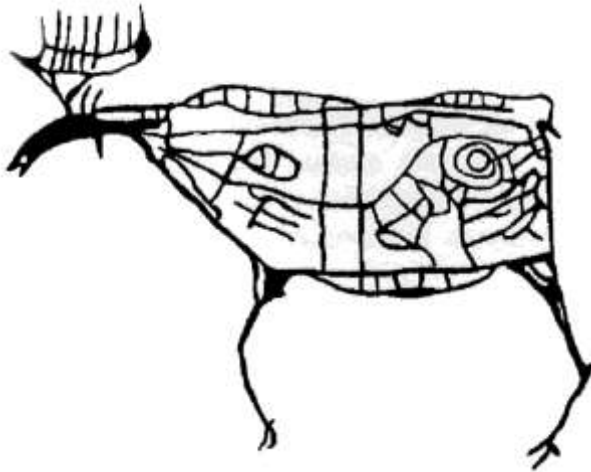
Fig 40. Glørstad et al after Mikkelsen rock-carving of an elk from Drummen.
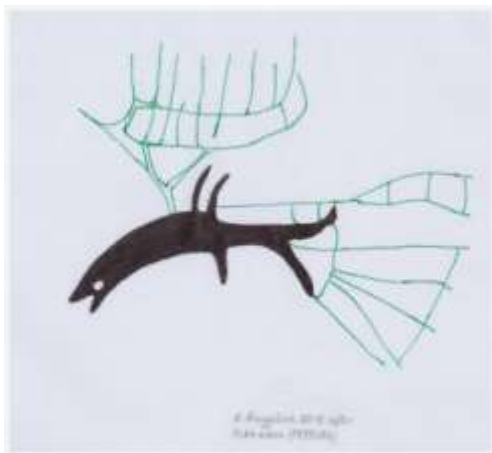

Fig 41. The Elk's head is a fish drawn in black, taken from the rock-carving of an elk above.
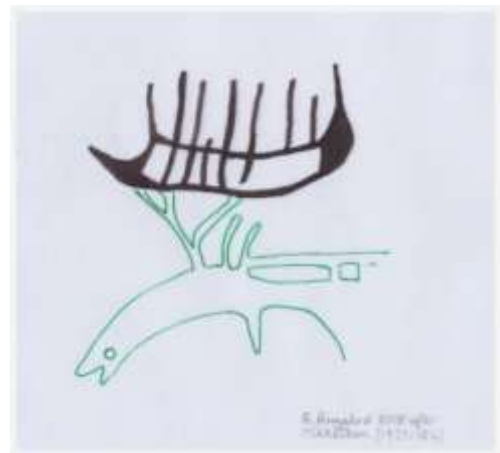

Fig 42. Right: Elk horns as a boat, drawn in black take from the elk rock-caving above. A penguin is also visible by standing the black image up on its tail to look left.
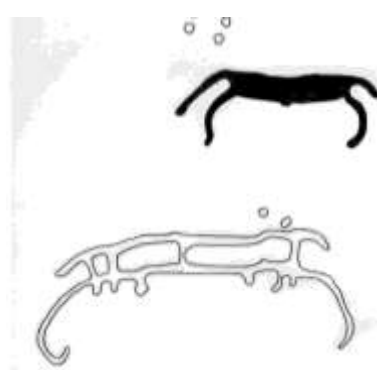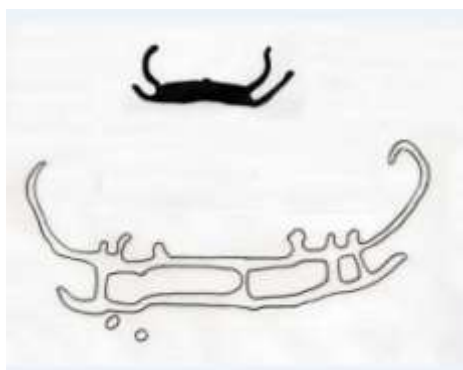

Fig 43. A boat when turned upside-down can be seen as a crab, at least the image that is filled in black as on the left.

Different angles seemed to be the special Scandinavian characteristic that made their artistic creativity unique as an art of its own, and particular to their land of origin.

Figurines plurality, recognised or not, has frequently provoked contentions, recently one of them has proved to be of enough psychological interest to be observed and re-examined in Britain in 2013 (Hahn 1970 see Cook 2013:28).

4:8 Respect for the past

The first extensive display of figurines in London in 2013 certainly recognised plurality as a bridge that had to be crossed. The catalogue to *The Ice Age exhibition* readily describes how there were numerous exhibits that illuminated the intricacy of combinations of zoomorphic and anthropomorphic art. This illustrated clearly that Stone Age man – in the catalogues wording – had "a complex super brain like our own" that was capable of "communicating ideas in speech and art". Facts that when first presented in the 1970's caused a sensation (Cook: 2013:28).

The statement was made by an archaeologist of particular patience. Dr Joachim Hahn had reassembled a mammoth bone figurine from 200 fragments that when assembled represented a lion's head on a mainly human body (dual representational). Hahn was later to explain his recognition that our ancestors were "of a mind (and) capable of imagining new concepts rather than simply reproducing real forms" (Cook 2013:29-30).

I wish to observe that if as Hahn says, the human brain was as advanced as 'our modern brain' is today, then during the Palaeolithic period, there is little evidence to suggest our ancestors fell into a retarded state during the Neolithic period to later regain intelligence during modernity. A period of serious retrogression seems very unlikely. Certainly figurine art shows no signs of become less lively or pluralistic during the Neolithic period than the art was previously. In saying this I am again questioning the validity of those who talk of our past as 'primitive'.

Finally may I say the terracotta figurines have a special appeal for me, because of their sense of fun.

When people can be creative and produce a rather crazy pot with upraised arms holding another pot on top of its head, both viewers and artists must have had something to smile about. So I imagine, the same smile must have applied to the spectators of the Korsnäs, Överåda and Ire figurines when the sculptures were twisted and turned around to reveal the presence of yet another motive.

For some reason in research this sense of fun has got lost and goes unobserved, and yet is it not exactly *this fun*, which is a thermometer of sound cultural living conditions? When people become mal-nourished, seriously threatened or despair, one of the first things to disappear is a sense of amusement.

The Korsnäs, Överåda and Ire figurines are not just pluralistic art, they show the minds of people "with a well developed pre-frontal cortex powering the capacity to communicate ideas in speech and art". (Cook 2013:29). Their art's plurality often gives a sense of being constructively engaged in life.

There are reasons to appreciate that figurine pluralism can widen the archaeological scope and respect for how we can investigate our ancestor's more positive qualities. When we let plurality be part of examining art, we are accepting reasons for seeing the brain's

development in our ancestors to be on a level with own – capable of producing new concepts. It is the ability to produce multiple images in three dimensional forms, which widens the horizons for respect and furthers research investigations.

Summary

It was a succession of discoveries that confirmed the SHM terracotta figurine's plurality, as evidence that this was a characteristic that stretched from the mainland Sweden to Gotland.

Each of the three figurines, that make-up this material have a story to tell about plurality. We follow the journey from artistic creation, to becoming an archaeological artefact that needs academic interpretation. How acceptable is an object that represents several artistic images? Identifying non-realistic figurines is not easy, with the result they have often been overlooked.

Archaeologists have unravelled the story of their discovery. In this essay southern figurines are a ball-plank used to extend understanding northern statuettes. Ceramic mouldings have a history that depends on skilful techniques that took many thousands of years to developed, before the SHM's figurines could come into existence.

Gudrun Janzon can tell us the archaeologist Oscar Almgren in 1907 was weighing new finds against their cousins in southern Europe to penetrate a better understanding (Janzon 1983:4).

In 1984 Wyszomirska's compendium of illustrations particularly focuses on giving an overall view of figurines (Wyszomirska 1984). Late researchers would connect the sculptures symbolism to tools with similar symbolic shapes (Hallgren 2008). While plurality, as an artistic way of thinking is found in other forms of Neolithic art, that show similar attitudes in creating multiple imagery as those exhibited in figurine art.

A recent new figurine that is not broken has been unearthed in Åby, Öglunda parish, Östergötland, so archaeology continues to provide interesting information (Runeson 2015).

5. Results.

The artistic qualities in moulded figurines are their simple yet firm profile that is visible in SHM statuettes. The Korsnäs, Överåda and Ire sculptures between them unite and combine certain animal and human gestures and characteristics; here they are compared with a stone image from Svinesund.

Figurines as multi-representational fall into two qualities; anthropomorphic figurines like the Svinesund egg figurine create one category. In being of stone they have similarities to etchings in stone, such as rock art, they also artistically expose the variations in the material. The second quality is terracotta figurines where plurality is evident in how the human and animal shapes are fused, just as statuettes combined the genders. Influences of Stone-Age sculptures from south Europe are included, to highlight how the figurines can have zoomorphic masks, or multi-head additions, in endless forms of plurality.

Sculptures are created by humans, therefore when there is an explicit artistic intention of combining zoomorphic and anthropomorphic representation there is a human reason behind the act. It is logical to suggest the qualities they join together are those linked to the primary set of values during the Neolithic period, when they were created.

In Scandinavia the link is to certain animals. Those selected for representation are most naturally those zoomorphic images that represent and combine human welfare and survival at the time. The makers of figurines were hardly out to flatter the human form. Nor was an appealing human face evidently important. The Korsnäs, Överåda, Ire and Svinesund figurines do not have a single face between them. The artists must have had other concerns of a more ecological nature.

There are several forms of artistic expression during the Stone-Age period of which rock carvings across Scandinavia is a more widely researched area. Plurality between the rock carvings and figurines is shown to be closely linked. This is a bridge that can help to widen the scope of how we understand the Neolithic period.

We find the identification of what is an accepted 'figurine' within research has change over the past centuries depending on size. An elaborate bead was not always considered a statuette. For Neolithic people the miniscule size of 1 to 2 cm objects can have facilitated transport. Present day paper reproductions all too easily enhance and enlarge statuette pictures. Size makes an enormous difference to accurate modern interpretation, which is why the actual size comes under discussed.

Figurine sculptures themselves portray how moulded pendants were worn. When they were larger (approximately 5 cm) they can have been passed round as a form of socialising. Figurines as art are closely connected to modern 'expressionism'; they preceded pottery, which then takes after them by wearing masks – often amusing ones.

This study puts forward the belief; that once archaeologists identify figurines as pluralistic, the Neolithic times will be seen to have many lively and sophisticated artistic qualities, which can easily get over-looked today. At the same time an artistic approach opens a door for a wider archaeological platform of discussion – within an area that as yet has often been left unexplored.

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