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Bronze Age Håga
and the Viking King Björn

A History of Interpretation and Documentation
from AD 818 to 2018
Oscar Almgren. ATA Stockholm.
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After publishing *Cremation, Corpses and Cannibalism – Comparative Cosmologies and Centuries of Cosmic Consumption* (Kaliff & Oestigaard 2017) last year, we realised that the order of publication of these two books was unintentionally reversed, with the more interpretative book appearing before the compilation of the empirical documentation. There are several reasons for this. We have both been fascinated by the Håga monument for several years: our attention was initially drawn to the grave complex through the extraordinary cremation burial that took place there and the finding of the famous cleaved femur of a woman, indicating cannibalistic practices. This was an obvious starting point for our research, given our long interest in cremation as a funeral practice. During our work on the previous book, a growing range of research opportunities became evident – particularly the vast, though scattered empirical basis of the Håga complex. The 1905 excavation report is a meticulous documentation for its time, but it is written in an inaccessible style and only available in Swedish (with a summary in German). There are other reports of surveys and investigations, excavations conducted with minimal or no reports, and a few detailed studies contextualising Håga in the broader Scandinavian Bronze Age. Quite a number of sources about the site have, however, not been discussed as part of the history of Håga.

We therefore felt the time was right to collect all these sources and present other preliminary interpretations of the site to illustrate Håga’s potential, but also some of the fascinating threads linking the site to other global processes in time and space. We are solely responsible for any errors and for the interpretations we put forward in this book. While we have aimed to present a history of ideas and interpretations of Håga and believe that most of the important documentation has been included in this book, we may unintentionally have omitted other empirical documentation from archives. Fortunately, future studies will reveal new insights on Håga and challenge older ones, particularly in relation to the analysis of the human bones in the grave. Moreover, while the history of interpretation to date has always mentioned the remains of a king, the main person buried in the mound may be a woman. It is our
hope that future research can shed light on this ambiguity and reveal where the deceased was from.

A number of people have helped and inspired us over the years. We have already thanked them in other books and articles and will therefore keep our acknowledgements brief. We would like to thank Joakim Goldhahn for comments on parts of the manuscript and Terje Gansum for allowing us to use an illustration. We are thankful to Karin Ojala and John Ljungqvist for our productive and important discussions with them. We would also like to thank Francesca de Châtel for commenting on language. A special thanks to the friendly staff at Antikvarisk-topografiska arkivet (Riksantikvarieämbetet/Swedish National Heritage Board) in Stockholm. We are also sincerely grateful to the Royal Gustavus Adolphus Academy (Kungl. Gustav Adolfs Akademien för svensk folkkultur) and the Rydeberg Foundation for their valuable financial support. Lastly, we would like to thank Martin Högvall (Graphic Services, Uppsala University) for doing the layout.

*Anders Kaliff & Terje Oestigaard*

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CHAPTER 1

An Introduction to the History of Håga

From the Viking period to the Bronze Age

In the history of ideas and interpretations of Håga, 2018 marks a small jubilee. The Håga burial complex in Uppsala is well known, not least for the extensive contact networks that the site maintained to the south, east and north, and the richness of its grave goods. Yet despite its importance for understanding the Northern European Bronze Age, it remains the subject of very few empirical studies. The mound, which is approximately 50 m in diameter and about 8 m high, was partly excavated in 1902–03 and dated to around 1000 BC or Period IV (Fig. 1.1). While the site has never been surveyed as a whole (Fig. 1.2), it is clear that the surrounding area is also extremely rich. The Håga Church is a cult house dated to Period III, but with a continuity up to the end of the Bronze Age. Another cult house, just a few hundred metres to the west of the mound and the Håga Church, seems to have been in use throughout the Bronze Age.

Håga’s unique character makes it a rich resource that can shed light not just on the Scandinavian Bronze Age, but also on later periods. The Håga Mound is the site of the northernmost oak-coffin burial in the European Bronze Age. However, what sets it apart is the fact that this funeral took place centuries after the first funerals of this type in the unburnt Danish princely graves and that at Håga the deceased was cremated.

In terms of grave goods, gold was a rarity in the Swedish Bronze Age. This makes the amount of gold found at Håga all the more remarkable as a third of all gold artefacts and fragments from this period were found in the Håga Mound. Ritually, it seems that humans were sacrificed as part of the funeral, with remains of at least three unburnt individuals found at the site besides those of the cremated deceased. One of the most clear-cut examples of ritual cannibalism was also found at the site.

Håga is indisputably a unique site in Scandinavia. Not only was it the site of grandiose events and extraordinary developments; it also lies at the centre of traditions that were established in the Late Bronze Age and perpetuated for centuries after. As such, it can be considered a forerunner for the cult place
at Old Uppsala. Indeed, from the very beginning, Old Uppsala and the royal Jellinge mounds in Denmark shaped the perceptions of Håga. The royal character of the Håga Mound was further enhanced when Prince Gustav Adolf, later King Gustav VI Adolf of Sweden, took part in the 1902–03 excavations led by Oscar Almgren (1869–1945) with financial support from the prince’s grandparents, King Oscar II and Queen Sofia. Almgren later became the first holder of the Chair of North-European Archaeology at Uppsala University in 1914, a year after its establishment.

Almgren (1905) found that the area surrounding the Håga Mound was also extremely rich. For example, in the early 1900s he partially excavated the so-called ‘Håga Church’, a cult house dated to Bronze Age Period III but with activities up to Period V–VI, which was re-excavated by Michael Olausson in 1999. Another cult house from the Early to Late Bronze Age situated a few hundred metres to the west of the Håga Mound and Håga Church was excavated by Helena Victor in 2000–01 in cooperation with Anders Kaliff (Victor 2002).

The name of the mound itself underscores the continuity into the Viking period. Today, the mound is commonly referred to as King Björn’s Mound, but earlier texts referred to a Viking king named Björn by Håga. According to the
Hervarar Saga, the Håga Mound was actually the place where Björn had his farm, not the place where he was buried. The tradition tells us that the mound already existed when Björn had his farm built in the vicinity.

After a version of the Hervarar Saga was brought to Uppsala in the second half of the 17\textsuperscript{th} century (see Chapter 9), Swedish scholars in the 18\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th} century unquestioningly identified the mound with the Viking period and a king named Björn. Besides its close proximity to Old Uppsala, the size and shape of the Håga Mound also appeared to confirm a late Iron Age dating.

Two of the royal mounds at Uppsala had been excavated in 1846 (the eastern mound) and 1874 (the western mound), and Almgren wrote that his main motivation for conducting the 1902 excavation was to discover whether Håga was similar to the Danish Jellinge Mound with a wooden chamber (Almgren 1905:11). Uncovering magnificent grave finds from the Bronze Age Period IV in Uppsala, this far north in Sweden came as a total surprise, not only because the artefacts were unlike any others found in Uppland and the middle parts of Sweden, but also because there were hardly any parallels to Håga even in southern Sweden (Almgren 1905:45).

Still, even after the great mound had been positively identified as Bronze Age, the Viking Age paradigm was so strong that it prevailed. When Almgren excavated the ‘Håga-Church’ (Fig. 1.3), which did not reveal any significant finds for dating, he stated that it should be dated to the Late Iron Age.
From a historical point of view, there are popular and scholarly reasons that explain why the Viking paradigm was so deeply rooted. Indeed, both Almgren’s interpretations of Håga and King Björn and those that persist today can be traced back to a 1200-year tradition.

Interpretation and documentation from 818 AD

While he was not the first to connect Håga to the Viking King Björn, the 18th-century Swedish antiquarian Johan Peringskiöld (Fig. 1.4) was the first to pinpoint the exact date that Björn allegedly came to Håga. In his *Monumenta Ullerakerensia* (Stockholm 1719), Peringskiöld states that King Björn came to Håga in 818 AD, introducing Christianity to Sweden. While sound source criticism urges one to be sceptical of the authenticity and historicity of such a precise date, not to mention the actual existence of a Viking king named Björn, it is nevertheless intriguing that there was a tradition in the 18th century that placed King Björn at Håga in 818 AD. This tradition seems to be distinct from the Icelandic *Hervarar Saga*, which Swedish authors before and after Peringskiöld used as a reference to document Håga and King Björn.

There are also other Old Norse texts referring to a Swedish King Björn from the Viking period (Fig. 1.5). *Landnámabók* mentions a Swedish man among the first settlers in Iceland, whose father was ‘Björn at Haugi’. Another text, *Skáldatal*, also mentions Björn and his court poet Bragi the Old. Rimbert’s
Fig. 1.4. Portrait of Johan Peringskiöld (1654–1720). Probably a late 19th-century impression. Signum: Waller Ms se-02461. Source: Alvin database, Uppsala University Library.

Fig. 1.5. Plate in Linköping Cathedral mentioning King Björn in AD 813. Is this the same Björn who allegedly came to Håga in 818?
9th-century *Vita Ansgarii* confirms the historicity of a Swedish King Björn. It tells us that this king (*Rex Bern*) initiated Ansgar’s voyage to Birka around 830 AD. Some scholars call this Bern ‘king of Birka’, but this has no foundation in Rimbert’s writings. The *Vita* only describes how Ansgar went ashore in Birka – a place that was part of Björn’s kingdom (Jónsson 1890:143–45). However, it is not clear whether these texts refer to the same King Björn (Lindqvist 1924).

On the other hand, the *Hervarar Saga* explicitly mentions a Viking king named Björn living next to the great mound at Håga, though it does not mention the year 818. Scholars writing before Peringskiöld, including the universal genius Olof Rudbeck, do not date King Björn to 818. Thus, it seems that there was a living tradition at Håga interpreting an alleged documentation of the Viking King Björn who came to power at Håga in 818. According to this tradition, King Björn died in 840 and was buried in a great mound, which is today known as King Björn’s mound (Almgren 1905).

Since the dawn of antiquarianism at Uppsala University, Håga has drawn attention, with scholars documenting it over the centuries. Among the earliest documents is the *Ransakningar om antiqviteterna* (‘Investigations for antiques’), a comprehensive inventory of ancient monuments, artefacts and oral traditions, which was produced in Sweden between 1667 and 1693. Theoretically, Almgren argues that the popular tradition among locals at Håga about a king by the name of Björn who lived there may originate from the works of leading scholars of the time. There is no doubt that Olof Rudbeck and his followers played a key role in antiquarian history, not only in the Uppland area, but also for Sweden as a whole and indeed the world – at least from Sweden’s perspective. But although Rudbeck was fascinated by Håga and the *Hervarar Saga* (Chapter 9), Almgren does not believe that Rudbeck or other contemporary scholars shaped the tradition about King Björn and the Viking era of Håga. Chronologically, it seems that Johan Eenberg, the vice-librarian at Uppsala University was the first scholar to explicitly make a link between Håga and King Björn in 1704, though he did not mention the year 818 (Fig. 1.6). In Almgren’s opinion, such a story would not have become a local tradition at Håga in the space of just a few years simply based on Rudbeck’s unpublished ideas (Almgren 1905:48).

While the early history of documentation at the Håga site remains unclear, it seems unlikely that the years cited by Peringskiöld were his own invention, because they did not correspond to those mentioned in the scholarly debate at Uppsala University. Also, one of the original manuscripts of the *Hervarar Saga* had been located at the university since 1658, and while it was a highly corrupted and distorted version, the manuscript did not mention the year 818. Hence, there may have been a local tradition at Håga that persisted independently of the 17th-century scholarly debate at the university. There is
considerable evidence, including archaeological material, to show that Håga has been a centre of tradition and folklore throughout history. For example, when Almgren excavated the cult house or ‘church’, he also found four coins – Carl XIII’s quarter-shillings – from 1817, which were originally placed beside a stone. He interpreted this as an ‘offering’ in the ‘church’ (Almgren 1905:39).

Given that these coins were deposited or sacrificed in the ‘church’ after 1817, it is unlikely that local farmers at Håga should have developed a new ritual tradition based on academic interpretations of the university scholars.
a few kilometres away in the first half of the 19th century. On the contrary, it is much more plausible that there were local traditions at Håga dating back at least to the Viking period, and probably much earlier. We also see a pattern that is repeated at several ancient sites in Sweden, connecting the site to traditions, folklore and ritual use. Another common question is whether these traditions are genuine or not. There is no clear answer here and researchers’ view of this question often says more about their attitude to the age of traditions, than about the availability of facts and real sources.

In any event, numerous rune stones were found in this area (Fig. 1.7). On one of the latest, from the early Christian era, the death of a baptised person was documented (Fig. 1.8): ‘...had this stone erected for Önd’s(?) soul. He was dead in white clothes in Denmark. Öpir saw to the runes.’ Thus, the religious and ritual monuments at Håga show that there was a continuity from the Viking period through Christianisation. The arrival of Christianity in this part of Uppland has to be seen in relation to Old Uppsala and the developments there (Fig. 1.9), but there was a strong local religious tradition at Håga, which
also included Christianity. Whether this introduction or conversion of beliefs took place in 818 is an entirely separate question.

Relevance and research questions

Today, Håga is more famous as a popular sporting and recreation site than for its archaeology, despite the presence of unique and clearly visible ancient monuments, such as the great grave mound. The mound itself is 43–49 m in diameter with a height of 6.25–8.75 m (or even 9.50 m depending on the topography) and forms a landmark in the nature reserve that surrounds the archaeological monuments and remains. In popular media, the hit TV series ‘Vikings’, inspired by the stories of Ragnar Lothbrok, has created new interest in Håga. According to the Hervarar Saga, King Björn is one of Ragnar Lothbrok’s great-grandsons. In view of Håga’s popularity as a recreation site and the growing public interest in the place, it is important to spread knowledge about the excavations and the research that have taken place here. However,
in order to understand more of Håga’s history, new research and investigations need to be conducted.

The last documentation of Håga before Almgren’s excavation, though not published, was written by Phil. Mag. Joh. Janzon in 1807 (Fig. 1.10). Despite meticulous documentation and the use of the most sophisticated techniques available, severe weather conditions made the 1902–03 excavation difficult. While this affected documentation and interpretation possibilities, Oscar Almgren still published the results only two years after the excavation. Given the circumstances, it was a well-documented presentation of the survey, the excavation and its results (Almgren 1905). Yet, a century later, no complete inventory of the finds has ever been produced, the artefacts from this and later excavations at Håga are scattered across different museums, while the chronological relations and stratigraphy of the mound have been unsettled. Moreover, the Håga area has never been properly surveyed, which is essential to understanding the mound in its context. This book therefore has four main objectives:

First, despite the extraordinary richness of the grave goods, the extreme and extravagant rituals and its unique character in a Europe-wide context, Håga is at once famous and strangely unknown. Moreover, despite the physical closeness of Håga to the Department of Archaeology and Ancient History at Uppsala University, studies of Håga have always been overshadowed by Old Uppsala and other magnificent localities in the vicinity. More than a century after the Almgren excavation, our modest aim is to initiate a process that will change this by taking the first steps in placing Håga in the international spotlight it deserves. This relates to the next objective.

Second, although Håga is an under-researched archaeological site, various studies have focused on parts or the totality of the Håga complex. However, many of these studies are difficult to track down and are often written in Swedish, making them inaccessible to English-speaking audiences (some are even written in Modern Swedish, the language used from the 17th to the early 20th century). There is therefore a need to create an up-to-date summary of previous research and present new interpretations and documentation. This relates to the third objective.

Third, a history of documentation and interpretation from 818 to 2018 will not only reveal the long continuity of changing traditions and understanding of this place, but will also show the potential for further studies. Håga was not only unique in its time and the research questions it raises may cast new light on a number of central research topics in archaeology, which include, but are not limited to, analysis of inventions and continuities of changing traditions from a theoretical perspective, with a particular focus on mortuary rituals and sacrifices in general and cremation as a funeral practice in particular, and
Fig. 1.10. The original handwritten document by Mag. Joh. Janzon from 1807. Source: ATA Stockholm.
studies of contact networks. This will place Håga in local, regional and international contexts. This relates to the last objective.

Fourth, while there are endless possibilities and much more to do from archaeological and interdisciplinary perspectives, our last aim is to show some of these opportunities by presenting past and present work on Håga, including our recent analyses and perspectives, and thereby making the data and knowledge as inclusive and accessible as possible to researchers and the general public. We hope that this will also generate new interest in the site and encourage further studies of Håga that will increase interest in this special place.

Contents and structure

Chapter 2 is a compressed, translated version of Oscar Almgren’s original excavation report from 1905, *Kung Björns hög och andra fornlämningar vid Håga* (KVHAA Monografi nr 1. Stockholm). Written in Swedish, it is an invaluable source about the 1902–03 excavation. While it is available in various libraries in the Nordic countries in Swedish, an English version may highlight the site in an international context.

Chapter 3 presents parts of the original documentation from the 1902–03 excavation which have never been published. The original photos and documentation are archived at Antikvarisk-topografiska arkivet (Riksantikvarieämbetet/Swedish National Heritage Board) in Stockholm. These photos and plans of documentation are invaluable historic documents.

Chapter 4 is an analysis of the ritual stratigraphy of the Håga monument based on Almgren’s meticulous documentation of the excavation and stratigraphy. By seeing the complex stratigraphy as different time sequences where qualitatively very different rituals have been conducted, it is possible to get a deeper understanding of the ritual scenarios that took place at Håga. This is important for further interpretations of the religious tradition and cultic practices, which must be seen in relation to the other activities that took place at Håga and in the vicinity.

Chapter 5 places Håga in the context of the province of Uppland. In recent years, major contract archaeological excavations in addition to specific research projects have shed new light on the Bronze Age in Uppland. The new cultic places that have been identified do not reduce the significance of Håga in time and space. On the contrary, they provide new information about the social and religious milieu at Håga, its place in a European context and the development of contacts to the east. However, although Håga has a vibrant past, its history includes theft. Indeed, one of the most notable finds, the spectacle-shaped gilt brooch, was stolen from the Museum of National Antiquities in Stockholm in 1986.
Chapter 6 places the unique Håga find in local, regional and European contexts. The closest parallels in Scandinavia are the Danish burial mounds from Bronze Age Period II. The main difference here is that whereas the remains in Denmark were unburnt, the deceased in Håga was cremated, and it is only after Håga that cremation started taking place in the Danish oak-log coffins. On the continent, the closest parallel to Håga is the so-called ‘Royal Mound of Seddin’ on the border between Mecklenburg and Brandenburg in northern Germany, an even larger and richer burial. Still, none of the contemporary and parallel finds show such clear indications of human sacrifices and cannibalistic practices as Håga. The chapter also discusses ritual practices and possible cosmic interpretations.

Chapter 7 further analyses the sacrificial practices at Håga, focusing on a very particular aspect of sacrifices that has few ethnographic parallels. In the Håga Mound (as well as in other funerals) there is a large presence of lower jaws, and Almgren notes with slight horror that humans and animals seem to have been treated in the same way as part of sacrifices and possible consumptions. Besides long bones like femurs or tibia, which are commonly found in the mound, the high presence of lower jaws is puzzling. Tentative interpretations are put forward based on structural premises and reasoning.

Chapter 8 elaborates further on animal sacrifices, with an emphasis on human and horse sacrifices. Based on an empirical and theoretical understanding of the Vedic sacrifices, it presents fruitful analytical approaches to interpret cosmic sacrifices. The Håga Mound contains limited amounts of horse fragments, but given the general omnipresence of horse sacrifices in the Norse tradition, they are discussed as an example of how to understand sacrifices of large animals. In sacrificial hierarchies, sacrifices of humans and large animals have a special cosmological importance, and the presence of such sacrifices indicate the stakes involved in the funerals.

Chapter 9 ends with a presentation and documentation of the most important written document referring to Håga: the Hervavar Saga. The story in this saga could have been taken from J.R.R. Tolkien’s The Lord of The Rings; there are brave shield maidens, warriors similar to the Rohirrim, haunted barrows and a cursed sword similar to the ring. In fact though, it is the opposite: the best translation of the saga was produced by Christopher Tolkien, whose father, J.R.R. Tolkien, drew inspiration from the Hervavar Saga. The book concludes with an account of how the Hervavar Saga, in which King Björn is mentioned, ended up in Uppsala and how its translation has affected all studies of Håga since the 17th century.

We hope that the documentation and interpretation of Håga from 818 AD to 2018 will motivate further studies and interest in Håga and that this book may encourage different approaches and directions. This is why we have also
included a large number of photos, original documentation, maps and drawings, which form a resource in themselves, but also a valuable tool for new understanding and interpretation.
CHAPTER 2
King Björn’s Mound and Other Archaeological Remains at Håga: Oscar Almgren’s 1905 Excavation Report

Translated and partially annotated

Preface to the translation


This translation aims to provide an overview of the excavation report, highlighting the stratigraphy and location of the finds as documented by Almgren. It is inevitably a selective interpretation, in which the focus lies on enhancing easy comprehension of an English version and emphasising the most relevant current and future uses. It also aims to serve as reference material for future research. In the section describing the catalogue and the finds, Almgren's original discussion and comparison with other and similar finds has deliberately been kept brief. Moreover, the comparative knowledge base has increased substantially over the last century since the results of the excavation were published in 1905.

The translation is not literal and some liberties have been taken in the text to enhance readability in English. For example, when Almgren writes ‘I’ or ‘we’, the translation uses ‘they’. The original pagination is included at the beginning of each paragraph for readers who want to refer to Almgren’s Swedish publication. Original photos and illustrations from Almgren’s publication include figure numbers used in the original report as well as the size of the artefacts. The Latin name of human and animal bones has been included in places to facilitate comparison. Comments have also been added where necessary, for instance with regards to the stratigraphy, where Almgren measures and documents from two directions. The stratigraphical 0-level is at the bottom of the
mound whereas many of the finds and bone remains have been measured from the top of the mound as the excavation proceeded deeper. Finally, explanatory comments and interpretations are presented in footnotes.

I. Introduction

(p. 1). During H.R.H Prince Gustaf Adolf’s visit to Uppsala in the autumn of 1902, he conducted several archaeological surveys. He was particularly interested by the archaeological remains at Håga. By the middle of October, the prince contacted Oscar Almgren to announce that he had procured the necessary funding to investigate the great ‘Björn by Håga’ grave mound. He suggested that the investigation should start immediately, since he would not return to Uppsala before the following spring. After the Department of Antiquities had procured the excavation licence, the necessary preparations were at once made. The excavation started on Monday 27 October with a workforce of six men, which was soon increased to 11. Despite the fact that it was late autumn, weather conditions were favourable, and digging only had to be interrupted for a day and a half during the more than three-week-long excavation. During the last two or three days, heavy frost caused difficulties, but since the excavation was by then focused on the inner cairn and involved little soil, work could continue. Still, when the sword and the brooch were found on 18 November, the team found it advisable to postpone the rest of the excavation until the following spring and by 20 November the work was terminated. The bottom layer of the mound was then covered.

It was a mild winter with exceptionally low snowfall, though a substantial amount of ice formed in the mound, which melted in spring. Work resumed on 27 April 1903, though intensive rainfall hampered progress somewhat. By 15 May, the bottom layer of the shaft had been excavated, after which the restoration of the mound started. This was completed by mid-summer.

II. The archaeological remains at Håga according to older historical accounts and their current condition

(p. 3). Håga is located 3 km south-west of Uppsala city centre on the western side of the river (Hågaån), which turns southward immediately north of Håga. The river continues running in this direction until about 500 m from Håga where it enters the Ekoln Bay/Gulf of Lake Mälaren.

Since the dawn of antiquarianism, the archaeological remains at Håga have drawn attention. Over the centuries, they have been documented in various ways. Among the earliest documents is Ransakningar om antiquitetera 1667–1684 by And. Pehrsson. The actual date of the Håga entry is uncertain, but in
a different part of the book where Håga is documented, the year 1672 is mentioned. According to this text, Håga belonged to Isack Nielsson’s farm where there was a rune stone with an inscription. Furthermore, the Jagebacken Hill featured a mound encircled by stones and also the masonry of a wall, which was the foundation of a church. Above the fence there was a mound with a large, long stone on top, but without any inscription. Next to the village there were three long, raised stones in the hillside and just above these there were two other graves.

(p. 4). There is a much more elaborate and interesting description of Håga from 1704. Magister Johan Eenberg, who was the vice-librarian at Uppsala University, published a ‘travel-guidebook’ with the Swedish title Kort berättelse af de märkvärdigste saker som för de främmende äre at bese och förnimma uti Uppsala stad och näst om gränsande orter, utur de förmämste svänske Antiquarier sammendragen (simplified translation: ‘A short description of the most extraordinary things and antiquities in and around Uppsala’). Chapter XIV in this book (pp. 129–145) is about the king’s farm at Håga, the church and King Björn who lived there.

According to Eenberg, in 1704 there was a village south-west of Uppsala, which is today known as Håge. In the past, it was called Haugi, which means ‘mound’ (Latin: *collis*), and refers to both natural mounds and grave mounds. This village is remarkable, not only because there are many antiquities, but also because one finds the name Haugi in our old histories. It is also where King Björn had his residence in the 9th century. There are small mounds around the village. In particular, there is a large mound in the forest hill south of the village, though the vegetation there is currently so dense that it is impossible to see it either from the village or from closer by, except from one side. The mound has a very deep pit at the top, so it seems that it was originally much higher than today, though on the eastern side the distance from top to bottom is about 40 footsteps. This mound is therefore similar to the large royal mounds at Old Uppsala. This mound is nowadays known as King Björn’s Mound. The honourable count (‘Högwälborne Hr. Gref’) Jacob Gyllenborg, who was the county governor (‘landshövding’) in Uppsala County between 1689–1695, dug a large shaft in the northern side of the mound, but did not find anything but soil, stones and gravel, since he did not excavate to the central part of the mound.

When walking a musket-shot distance from the mound in a southern direction, there are remains of a masonry construction of grey stones, which form a concealed place. The construction, which measures 40 footsteps in length and 8–9 footsteps in width, seems to have been rectangular. The height of the wall is small since it has deteriorated, but it is obvious that this was once a house. The common people in the vicinity refer to this as ‘King Björn’s Church’.
Heading eastwards from this place, there are more remains of buildings. There is no doubt that this was a king’s farm – even the field is named Kungssäng (‘The King’s Field’ or directly translated ‘The King’s Meadow’). This field stretched towards the village of Gottsunda, but was divided and integrated into other farms.

Almgren writes that Eenberg has a longer chronological passage about ‘Björn in the Mound’ – written in the typical style of that time – but that there was only one short note that was of any archaeological interest. There is a reference from 1696 that Olof Rudbeck showed King Carl XI some remains of a bridge by Ulva Quern, which King Björn used when he rode to his brother in Old Uppsala. Almgren writes in a footnote that Rudbeck’s comment or guess about this bridge as a transport route is puzzling as the road from Häga to Old Uppsalas does not pass Ulva Quern and the quern is located north of Old Uppsala.

(p. 5). Johan Peringskiöld’s Monumenta Ullerakerensia (Stockholm 1719) mentions the old royal farm (‘Konunga-säte’) near Häga. In pagan times, many kings were buried in mounds here, and the king’s farm received its name Häga or Högä. On Jagebacken, the hill by the village, there is an impressive royal mound encircled with stones that are the same height and width as those of the royal mounds at Old Uppsala. In this village, above the fence on the southern side, there is also another royal mound with a height of 30 footsteps, on top of which there was a long stone/menhir.

There are also two graves with a length of 28 footsteps with three large, raised stones. Apart from these mounds, there were also two other mounds encircled by stones – one in Långgiärdet and the other in Lundgiäredet. This was a heathen sacrificial place for the petty kings, who lived by this king’s farm and had their court here, in particular when the kingdom was divided by two brothers; one of the brothers was called the King of Uppsala and the other was called the King of Häga and Ulleråker. Peringskiöld writes that one may read about these kings in the Hervarar Saga (Chapter 20). Erik Refilsson’s sons were Emund in Uppsala and King Björn. Then Sweden once again became divided by two brothers, since they took the kingdom after King Erik Refilsson. King Björn built the village which was named Hauga, and he was called Björn at Högä, and Bragi Skald stayed with him.

According to Peringskiöld, King Björn Eriksson at Häga, the third one of that name, started his reign together with his brother Emund in the year Anno Christi 818, and introduced Christianity to our dear fatherland. It is said that next to the king’s farm at Häga, he built a Christian church. From the king’s farm at Old Uppsala, the road to the Church passed straight across the Fyris River. He often visited the Church until it was burnt down during a heathen ritual by locals. Today, there are remains of the Church in Jagebacken,
and one may see part of the walls, like a foundation wall of a church. King Björn on Håga died in the year Anno Christi 840 and had his grave mound built in Skogsbacken on the southern side of the village, and it is called King Björn's Mound ('hög').

In Peringskiöld's *Monumenta Ullerakerensia*, the rune stone named 'Liljegren 118', which is documented in *Ransakningar*, is described and depicted. The rune stone was shortly afterwards moved to Uppsala (see P. J. Lindal, *Runstenarne i Upsala* [Upsala 1881], p. 8), and together with other rune stones they are placed in the Botanical Garden outside the museum.

It is quite puzzling to see how in his documentation of the archaeological remains at Håga Peringskiöld follows, sometimes almost word for word, And. Pehrsson's description in the *Ransakningar*. Peringskiöld adds the measurements of some of the mounds, but it is remarkable that he does not mention Eenberg's meticulous documentation and not even Gyllenborg's excavation. The only passages that may refer to Eenberg's documentation mention King Björn's road across the Fyris River from Håga to Old Uppsala. Furthermore, Almgren notes that there may have been some rivalry between Peringskiöld and Eenberg. In a footnote, he suggests that Peringskiöld took part in the Gyllenborg excavation. In 1902, C. M. Kjellberg from the county archive in Uppsala informed Almgren that he recalled having seen an old letter concerning Gyllenborg's excavation in which Peringskiöld's name was mentioned. However, the original letter was not found and its content could not be confirmed.

(p. 6). A last documentation of Håga comes from 1807. The documentation, although not published, was written by Phil. Mag. Joh. Janzon. One thousand feet south of Håga village there is a huge mound located in Lundparken, called King Björn's Mound or Björn's Grave. The mound is hemispheric or rather conical. The height is 41 feet (12.5 m) and the periphery is 500 feet (152.4 m, which gives it a diameter of 48.5 m). The mound is encircled with stones, some have deteriorated whereas others have been removed. On the top as well as on the northern and western sides, there are several pits with a depth of 4–5 feet, which were probably made in recent times out of curiosity. There are still clear and visible traces of the excavation conducted by Gyllenborg on the northern side. On top of the mound, there is a huge pine tree that was damaged by lightening, and next to it an even taller flag pole has been erected. The lower parts of the mound are covered in shrubs and vegetation.

About 550 feet south or south-south-west of the mound there are the remains of the foundation walls of two adjacent buildings with an east-west orientation. The width was 20 feet; the length of the western part was 52 feet and the eastern part 56 feet. This place is called King Björn's Church. Apart from these antiquities in the park, there are remains of smaller mounds and ancestral graves here and there. On the western side just beside the village,
there is one larger and one smaller grave mound encircled by stones. Local people refer to both as Rawar's Mound. They are documented by Eenberg but omitted by Peringskiöld, unless he sees Jagebacken and Skogsbacken as the same place, which is doubtful. On an agricultural field south of Lundgärdet and south of the village, there is a mound that is 25 footsteps in height with a pit in the middle, and another mound on the south-western side (Fig. 2.1).

(p. 7). According to Peringskiöld, a large menhir/stone was placed on top of this mound, but this is now completely missing. There were also two oval mounds, encircled by stones: one in Lundgärdet and the other in the above-mentioned agricultural fields on the western side of the above-mentioned mound. They were oriented from east to west and both had almost the same size – 30–32 feet high and 36–38 feet long – and on top there were pits or depressions, although it was uncertain whether they were made by humans or were a result of time.

Joh. Janzon continues discussing the previous documentation by Eenberg and Peringskiöld with the aim of correlating their documentation to his own. Janzon meticulously documented a huge number of mounds and archaeo-
logical remains and also identifies what Peringskiöld probably interpreted as a sacrificial place. On the hillslopes of Lundgärdet south-west of the village, there are numerous small mounds, and several larger stones placed in order, although Janzon could not find the three erected stones mentioned by Peringskiöld. In between these two mounds at Lundgärdet and the adjacent agricultural fields, there probably was a Thingsted (Tingställe). Janzon mentions a 4½-feet tall stone (probably a stone measured by Almgren to 2.80 m) resembling a rune stone in size and shape, but without any inscriptions. This stone was located in the middle and encircled by several smaller stones, to form a circle or ellipse. Although most of it was disturbed, it probably had a diameter of 100 feet.

(p. 8). Almgren continues describing the area before he starts the excavation (Fig. 2.2). About 160 m south of the mound, the so-called ‘Church’ is located in a dense forest. North-west of this building, or south-west of the great mound, are seven smaller mounds, which are mentioned by Janzon, but not in the older documentations. There are also two medium-sized mounds in this area. The northern one is a mound containing much sand and stone, measur-
ing 12 m in diameter and approx. 1.6 m in height. The southern mound has an oval shape measuring 24 m in east-west and 16 m in north-south direction with a height of 2.5 m. Topographically, this is partly a natural mound, which was extended by humans, at least on the eastern side.

In the small valley to the west, south of Håga village and immediately to the east of the road, there is a large mound about 20 m in diameter with a height of 2 m. The mound is heavily excavated and damaged on the eastern side, exposing small stones with largest stones on the edge. Ten footsteps to the south there is a mound about 8 m in diameter with a height of 1 m. Forty footsteps east of the large mound is the tall erected stone – 2.80 m in height, 1 m width and 0.5 m thick – placed in a north-south orientation and surrounded by a small pile or collection of loose stones (from the fields?). Ten footsteps south-east of this stone there is yet another large mound, measuring 18 m in north-western/south-eastern direction with a height of more than 2 m.

(p. 9). Almgren points out that it is remarkable that Peringskiöld does not mention the tall stone in between the mounds, although both And. Pehrsson and Peringskiöld described a large and long stone/menhir on top of one of the mounds. Almgren says that he is tempted to interpret this as a mistake documented by And. Pehrsson and Peringskiöld, and that the stone was not the grave mound’s top, but a stone placed between the mounds. Still, Almgren is puzzled that Peringskiöld gives a different measurement for the stone than And. Pehrsson, so he must have seen it himself and may have corrected Pehrsson’s description of the stone being located on the top if that was incorrect. Almgren did not see or document the ellipse or circle of smaller stones documented by Janzon.

(p. 10). Almgren faced great challenges when he tried to correlate the earlier descriptions and documentations at Håga, and he points out that even Janzon in 1807 had difficulties in correlating his documentation with And. Pehrsson and Peringskiöld.

A couple of elders told Almgren that one of the stones used as a post for the farm’s gate had in the past been an erected stone on the hillslope. This ‘bau-tasten’ (menhir) measured 1.4 m in height and was 0.7 m in width above the ground. A rune stone stood near the main entrance to the farm. Peringskiöld called it the Flögsta stone and had it described and depicted (= Liljegren 119, but for a long time it was lost until it was found by Dybeck in 1863, see Dybeck, *Sverikes Runurkunder*, I, No. 165 and report to Vitterhetsakademien 1863).
III. Investigation and excavation of ‘King Björn’s Mound’

The mound is not completely circular, and if one follows the outside of the stone kerb at its base, the diameter varies between 43 m and 49 m. The height is even more variable, depending from which side one measures, which is a consequence of the natural topography. From the north, the height is 6.25 m, but from the south it is 8.75 m (in fact, given the natural sloping character of the ground, the maximum height from the south is 9.50 m. While the northern, eastern and southern part of the top was even, the north-western part was irregular due to the earlier trench made by Gyllenborg.

The depression in the central and upper part of the mound does not seem to have been created during the previous excavation. The almost regular and crater-shaped depression demarcated by a six-metre curve suggested natural decomposition due to the collapse of a wooden chamber or a similar structure. Almgren writes that the main reason for excavating the Håga Mound is to explore whether it is similar to the Danish Jellinge Mound with its wooden chamber grave. However, due to the damage caused during the previous excavation by Gyllenborg, this question remained unanswered. Thus, when the excavation started, the team was fully aware that the mound may contain a much simpler grave and for instance be a cremation grave with much poorer finds and artefacts, like the royal graves in Old Uppsala.

From the start, compared to the excavation at Old Uppsala, the aim was to be as time- and cost-efficient as possible. It was therefore impossible to conduct an excavation on the same scale as in 1874, when large parts of the Uppsala Mound were excavated from the outskirts to the centre. This had been a very expensive enterprise. At Håga, it was decided to restrict the excavation to a shaft from the outskirt of the mound to the core area, with sufficient width so that the original burial complex at the bottom of the mound would be exposed. The width was determined at about 15 m or approximately one third of the mound’s diameter.

The excavation started from the same direction as the previous one, which turned out to be a fortunate choice. Not only could the old terraces be reused, but, strangely, the soil in the Gyllenborg Shaft was more compact than elsewhere in the mound. This proved crucial, because when the team needed to bring in a crane, the soil in the Gyllenborg Shaft was compact enough to bear the weight of the heavy machinery.

Since it was essential to properly document the profile walls in the mound’s inner parts, the excavation was conducted in such a manner that the cross-shaped inner walls were kept as long as practically possible. Hence, the work was divided into four sector-shaped shafts. Each of these were further divided
into two; one inner and one outer part. On the documented plan drawing, the shafts were marked with dotted lines and numbered I–VIII.

It soon became evident that the topsoil layer, without any stones, was confined to the mound’s upper part, and that beneath there was a cairn without soil and earth. Given that the cairn’s stones were of considerable size, a new approach to excavation and investigation was adopted. The stones were transported in wheelbarrows to the crane and lifted into another shaft (IX). From here they were deposited beside the mound for the duration of the excavation and replaced in the mound once the excavation had been completed.

The cross profiles (see original documentation plan III) allow one to study the construction of the mound. Profile A–B portrays the western side of the wall, which separates Shafts I, II, VIII and VII from the others; profile C–D portrays the northern side of the wall between Shafts III, IV and II on one side, and V, VI and VIII on the other side.

Both profiles only show the central parts of the mound in detail; beyond that the contours and the probable borders between the soil layer and the cairn are indicated.

The upper, vertical part of the soil layer consisted of turf and humus. Almgren proceeds to give a meticulous description of the consistence and composition of the soil layer (p. 14–18), see below. One unusual structural feature is also documented. (p. 14). There is a pit with disturbed layers and material, which is visible along profile A–B to the left of the Gyllenborg Shaft. Almgren interprets this as an earlier excavation or exploration. Still, he is puzzled by a clear layer of charcoal, situated approximately halfway down, on the border between the disturbed hard clay and the loose turfs. This charcoal could have appeared if a heavy fire had been lit when the pit was half filled. However, as documented on the profile wall, the pit was only 1.50 m from the surface and not included in Gyllenborg’s excavation.

In the undisturbed layers of soil documented on the profiles, there were fine layers or lines of soil separating the layers of clay or sand. At certain points, these soil lines expanded and turned into small charcoal patches. (p. 16). Almgren initially struggled to explain these lines and believed that they must indicate the remains of fires. However, Docent Sernander showed that these layers have a quite different origin. The lines do not run parallel but are irregularly connected in lens-shaped meshes, indicating that these are simply the decomposed part of the turfs’ grass surface (Figs. 2.3–2.4). This was even more visible when the soil composition in the northern wall dried up during the spring excavation; the cracks between the individual turfs highlighted this structure.
Fig. 2.3. (Almgren’s Fig. 11, p. 16). Stratigraphy of soil layers of the lower part of the eastern end of the eastern sectional wall. From the south.

Fig. 2.4. (Almgren’s Fig. 12, p. 16). The lower part of the soil layer at the southern end of the profile wall A–B.
(p. 18). The conclusion is that the layers of soil above the cairn were built of *grass turf* and not heather turf. And while the soil or turf layer hardly contained any stones, the cairn hardly contained any soil.

(p. 19). It was clear that the cairn or the layer of stones were not originally mixed with earth or soil. Since the original soil layer consisted of grass turfs, there were limited possibilities for the turf to penetrate into the layer of stones. Even after the turfs decayed, in many cases they formed a compact and protective layer above the stones, which also enabled the excavators to put their whole arm beneath the turf layer deposited above the stone cairn.

According to the profile drawing (plate III, E) along Shaft IX, the surface of the cairn was exposed to the outskirts of the mound and was in one place dug to the bottom. This suggests that that the cairn covered the whole bottom or original surface of the mound from the central part to the outer stone kerb.

The stones in the inner cairn were seldom too large and/or heavy for one man to carry. None of them had a diameter over 0.8 m – with one exception. There was a huge block of stone – 1.5 m in length, 1.2 m in width and 0.5 m thick. This boulder was a moraine block that had been in place from the beginning, since the bottom part of the stone was approximately 1 m above the end of the oak coffin.

The stones were almost exclusively from the moraine deposition found in the vicinity, with in addition some pieces of red and grey ortocer limestone and so-called Baltic limestone (‘Östersjökalk’). All of these limestones originated in the Bothnian Sea and were transported to the Uppsala region over the ice.

Even in the cairn (as in the turf layers), there were scattered finds of animal bones and small remains of charcoal. Almgren highlighted the cranium of a cow or ox and a pig’s jaw.

However, the excavators were particularly interested by the presence of large amounts of half-decayed oak logs in the cairn’s lower parts. It soon became apparent that these had originally been part of a construction, although it was difficult to figure out exactly what this had been. The oak logs were just short pieces, with the longest and thickest measuring just over 1 m in length with a diameter of about 0.4 m. Given the fragmented patterns and the advanced state of decay, it was impossible to connect the different pieces and remains, though there were some exceptions. It unfortunately also proved difficult to obtain exact reference points to measure and document the oak logs at the bottom of the mound in the cairn of stones. This was partly due to the fact that some oak logs were found during the autumn of 1902, while others were found during the spring of 1903. Nevertheless, Almgren made two plan drawings: one of the finds of the 1902 season and one of the oak log remains, during the 1903 season.
Almgren points out that during the 1903 excavation and documentation, there were some inaccuracies regarding the correlation of the measuring points from the previous year's excavation. He says he clearly remembered where the sword was found in 1902, but according to the 1903 measurements it should have been approximately 0.4 m further north-west from where it had been documented in 1902. Thus, if one follows the 1903 documentation, the sword and the A–B profile line should be moved 0.4 m to the north-west (Figs. 2.5–2.7).

(p. 20). The oak logs were in varying states of decay. Some parts were clearly intact and visible, whereas others had turned into black lumps of soil. Moreover, some of the oak logs were burnt and there were also patches of charcoal and soot.
Fig. 2.6. (Almgren's Fig. 15, p. 21). Plan of the artefact distribution, spring 1903. The bold dark line indicates the border of the charcoal layer at the bottom.

Fig. 2.7. Close-up of Fig. 2.6 with the remains of the oak logs.
(p. 22). The most striking feature of the distribution of the oak logs is the relative difference between the eastern and western parts of the mound. The relative absence of oak logs in the western part corresponds to the western part of Shaft VIII, where the Gylenborg Shaft reached its deepest point.

It is clear that there was a dense concentration of oak logs – mostly oriented in an east-west direction – in the cairn’s lower part, and it is very likely that they covered the whole investigated area. Many of the oak logs were probably more widely distributed in both eastern and western directions toward the cairn’s outskirt/periphery, in parts which were not investigated. For instance, one log in the south-western part continued far into the wall of the shaft. In the central part of the mound in the area closest to the grave, the logs were distributed differently and positioned perpendicularly against each other.

Even the grave coffin was probably made of the hollowed-out trunk of an oak log, which was placed in a roughly east-west direction. Around or above this coffin there was a timber structure or perhaps the logs were stacked perpendicularly to keep the coffin free from the enormous pressure of the cairn and the layer of soil above. This primitive ‘chamber’ left a considerable empty space in the middle of the mound, which could be discerned above the grave where the mound had significantly collapsed. This is clearly visible in the profiles, in particular C–D, but also on the surface and on top of the mound.

When the oak logs were being investigated on 18 November 1902, the excavators saw a shimmer of gold. It was the edge of a round gold-plated piece of bronze. Other parts were found beside it, and soon they recognised this as a spectacle-shaped gilt bronze brooch from Bronze Age Period IV (pl. II:1). Just 15 cm from the second brooch buckle, they found a bronze sword, which was fully unearthed after a stone had been removed. The sword was intact.

(p. 23). Only the tip of the sword had been damaged by the enormous weight of the stones above it. It lay on a structure of oak remains (floor/platform?) and both the timber and the sword were oriented in an east/south-east – west/north-west direction. There were also numerous pieces of pinewood remains (see below), and a large piece of bark chip suspended in an empty space located between the brooch and the hilt of the sword.

Two gold rivets were found in the wooden remains of the sword’s grip, while a third loose rivet was also found. The former two are depicted on the sword (pl. I). The next morning (i.e. 19 November 1902), a frozen lump of soil and wooden remains were found close to the sword. When the lump melted, the excavators found a small but massive golden artefact, which was probably the sword’s pommel.

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1 The chamber may therefore have been built on a platform of oak logs, see Chapter 4.
Next to the sword and between two layers of wood, a couple of *burnt (human) bones* were found. Other burnt bones had been observed next to the brooch and half a metre to the west of it.

As mentioned, the excavation was concluded for the season as winter was approaching and the site had been sufficiently covered.

When work commenced in the spring of 1903, 10 other gold rivets of the same type were discovered in the remains of tree and bark chips where the sword had been deposited. A pair of bronze tweezers, two hanging bronze ornaments and a number of *burnt bones* were also found.

When the excavation continued further to the east, a number of crossed or perpendicular remains of logs were found (Fig. 2.8). One of these, with a diameter of about 30 cm, appeared to have been sharpened (at its eastern end). The area east of this cut log contained a layer of light-yellow wood on top of a stone. Lecturer Alb. Nilsson identified this as pinewood. This layer of wood (and bark chips) was also found where the sword was placed. The light-yellow colour of this layer was clearly distinguishable from the dark-brown oak remains. It stretched on beneath the cut logs, and between the layer of logs (with a diameter of about 30 cm) and the other wood above.

Fig. 2.8. (Almgren’s Fig. 18, p. 24). ‘End-part’ of the oak-log coffin.

(p. 24). The presence of pine remains and unidentified bark chips together with pieces of oak found next to the sword and the cut log indicate a close relation between them. The oak remains were all laid out in the same direction which differed to that of the other tree remains.
The cut (end) log seems to have formed the eastern end of the oak-logged coffin where the burnt bones and the grave goods used to be placed in the early days of cremation. The 30 cm diameter of the end piece is rather small, though this may also be due to deterioration. Still, if one looks closely at the distribution of the burnt bones and the artefacts, one finds that they are all located in a rectangular area which can reflect the presumed wood or stocks in the oak-logged coffin. If this area with the artefact distribution represents the two ends of the coffin, the coffin had a length of 4 m. However, if one excludes the two westernmost finds, one spiral of gold and one piece of bone, which could have been disturbed by the many voles living in the mound, then the coffin may not have been longer than 2.5 m.

In his Fund af Egkister (1894–95), Boye describes 27 oak-logged coffins. Twenty of these had a length of 2.6 m to 3.1 m, six had a length of 1.9 m to 2.5 m, and one was a colossal 4.4 m. All these coffins were prepared for unburnt corpses.

The presence of a coffin long enough for a human body that was used as a container for burnt bones as late as Bronze Age Period IV is very puzzling. The closest parallels are the oldest cremation graves from the first part of Period III when one also finds burials of unburnt corpses in long coffins. Moreover, even the grave goods bear testimony to a very conservative tradition, which more closely resembles Period III funeral practices.

As shown in profile C–D, where the position of the coffin is indicated, the coffin was not placed at the bottom of the mound on the original surface. The bottom was topographically highly uneven; in the south-western part of the investigated area there is a small bare cliff or rock surface similar to the ones north of the mound, of which there are many. Thus, it seems that some kind of a platform was built of stones (although it was not possible to distinguish these from the stones in the cairn) upon which the coffin was placed.

One consequence of this construction was that when the oak-coffin started to rot and deteriorate, part of the grave goods, in particular smaller artefacts and bone fragments, fell through the empty spaces between the stones under the coffin. A bronze button with a long rib was found deposited in this way (pl. II:6).

(p. 25). This bronze button was found at the 25 cm level. Further down (but not at the original bottom level) and slightly to the west, a deteriorated razor was found.

However, most of the artefacts had fallen to the bottom of the mound and onto the original ground surface. Approximately half of the burnt bones were found here, but also numerous artefacts including another razor (pl. II:2), several gold rivets and gold-thread spirals.
All the water that percolated through the mound ended up at the bottom, which caused severe difficulties. It was therefore necessary to collect the clay soil in which all the artefacts were deposited and sift the soil, even parts of the more compact clay lumps from the layer containing the coffin were treated in this way. This method proved highly successful, yielding five gold-plated bronze buttons (pl. II: 3–5), a number of gold rivets, fragments of gold spirals like the ones described above, another pair of bronze tweezers (Fig. 22), a couple of bronze fragments (Fig. 25, 26), and finally a small piece of ceramic and some resin fragments.

All these finds deposited at the bottom of the mound were situated in a sizeable layer of charcoal. Its thickness was exposed to the south and southwest (marked by a thick black line in the documentation). In the south-western section, it was partly deposited on the bare cliff or rock surface (at levels 50–55 cm). From here, the charcoal layer stretched in all directions as far as the excavated shaft exposed the bottom layer. The charcoal layer was deposited on the original gravel bottom and had a varying depth from -65 cm on the lower end of the bare cliff to -95 cm at the end of the shaft to the northeast. In the north-western section, it seems that the charcoal layer ended at a specific spot at level -75 cm. Hence, it is unlikely that the charcoal layer has a wide distribution outside the excavated area on either side. Given the high concentration of the finds in the central part that was excavated, it is unlikely that any valuable finds would be located outside this area.

The substantial area in the bottom part of the mound that was exposed south-west of the charcoal layer on the bare cliff or rock surface revealed no finds at all, besides the dispersed bones of a young marten, which had probably entered into the mound and died there. The same happened to a number of water voles and toads, whose bones were found all over the bottom. Shells were also found at the bottom (belonging to the species *Helix hortensis* and *Helix fruticum*). A few unburnt bones of domesticated animals were found, similar to those in the upper layers, and even an unburnt human bone, probably belonging to the other bones found in the layer of soil among the cairn stones below the coffin.

The charcoal layer at the bottom of the mound probably forms the remains of the cremation pyre, upon which the mound was subsequently built.
IV. The finds from the mound

(p. 26). The finds from the grave consisted of these artefacts:

a) *Bronze sword*, similar to Müller's Fig. 175 in *Ordning af Danmarks Oldsager* (1888). Current length is 77.5 cm (but it was probably at least 1 cm longer); max. width of the shoulder of the hilt ('guard') is 6 cm, and the blade’s greatest width is 4.3 cm (Fig. 2.9).

![Fig. 2.9. (Almgren's plate I). The bronze sword.](image-url)
b) 29 gold rivets, of which two were part of the sword (see above). The head of the rivets had a diameter of 0.7–0.9 cm and the pins had a length of 0.5–0.8 cm. Three of the rivets weighed 0.38 g, 0.42 g and 0.75 g. An analysis of the metal content showed 0.810 parts gold and 0.152 parts silver.

c) 1 gold rivet similar to the others, but without the pin and the top turned inwards in three places. Diameter 0.7 cm.

d) Gold button, massive and almost with five edges, probably part of the sword or forms the sword button (Fig. 2.10). Dimensions: 1.85 × 1.6 × 0.4 cm; weight: 8.89 g.

Fig. 2.10. (Almgren’s Fig. 19, p. 26).
Gold button, original dimensions:
1.85 × 1.6 × 0.4 cm.

e) Brooch in bronze, spectacle-shaped gilt bronze brooch, gold-plated, (p. 27) a form in between Montelius Fig. 222 (Svenska fornsaker) and Müller Fig. 378. Length of brooch: 13.2 cm; diameter of buckles: 5.8 and 6 cm (Fig. 2.11).

Fig. 2.11. (Almgren’s plate II:1). Spectacle-shaped gilt bronze brooch.
Length: 13.2 cm; the buckles are respectively 5.8 and 6 cm in diameter.
f) *Bronze button with long rib* (pl. II:6), similar to Müller Fig. 77, but shorter. Length: 5.85 cm; diameter of head: 1.9 cm (Fig. 2.12).

![Fig. 2.12. (Almgren's plate II:6). Bronze button with long rib. Length; 5.85 cm; diameter of head: 1.9 cm.](image)


g) *Bronze button with long rib*, similar to f), but with longer rib (broken), partly damaged and with gold threads. Length: 6.15 cm; diameter 1.9 cm (Fig. 2.13).

![Fig. 2.13. (Almgren's plate II:5, reconstruction). Bronze button with long rib, partly damaged and with gold threads. Length: 6.15 cm; diameter 1.9 cm.](image)


h) *Bronze button*, like Müller Fig. 209, gold-plated with ornaments. Diameter: 1.8 cm; height: 1.115 cm (Fig. 2.14).

![Fig. 2.14. (Almgren's plate II:4). Bronze button, gold-plated with ornaments. Diameter: 1.8 cm; height: 1.115 cm.](image)
i) Fragments of identical gold-plated *bronze button* with ornaments like h).

j) 2 *small bronze buttons*, similar to Müller Fig. 208, gold-plated on top; diameter: 1.2 cm; height: 0.95 cm. Diameter: 1.15 cm; height: 1.15 cm.

k) *Several spirals of gold thread*. All spirals have a width of 2 mm. One of the complete ones measured 8.7 cm and had 36 twists (p. 28). A second spiral was longer, a third in three pieces, a fourth in seven pieces and several smaller fragments.

l) 3 *very small spirals* of the same type of thread (gold).

m) *Razor of bronze*, resembling Müller Fig. 185. The handle entwined with gold thread (cf. Müller Fig. 184). Broken in two places and the edge severely damaged. Length: 10 cm (Fig. 2.15).

n) *Razor of bronze*, similar to Müller Fig. 186, but probably without ornaments. Partial and very damaged (Fig. 2.16).

o) *Bronze tweezer*. Length: 6.1 cm; width: 1.4 cm. (Fig. 2.16).

p) *Bronze tweezer*, similar to the other, but with ornaments. Length: 5 cm. (Fig. 2.16).

q) *Hanging ornament of bronze*. Length: 3.9 cm. (Fig. 2.16).

r) *Hanging ornament of bronze*, similar to q) but smaller. (p. 29). Length: 1.9 cm. (Fig. 2.16).

s) *Fragment of bronze*. Length: 3.4 cm.

t) *Fragment of bronze*. Length: 3.5 cm; width 1 cm. (Fig. 2.16).
Apart from the metal objects, the few other remains were insignificant. However, the remains of some resin fragments that featured wood imprints were puzzling. Two small pieces of pottery were found. One small piece of a rim, length 2.9 cm and thickness 0.95 cm, was found in the soil layer in the northern wall of Shaft 1 at a depth of 2.30 m from the surface (close to the cairn) together with a concentration of charcoal and animal bones. The other pottery remains, 2.4 cm in diameter and 1 cm thick, was found during sifting of the bottom layer and may have fallen down from upper layers.

In the soil layer (Shaft V at approx. 3 m depth), a slightly burnt lump of clay was found (length: 5 cm), partly shaped but probably coincidental appearance.

We will now concentrate on the mound’s numerous remains of animal and human bones.

The burnt bones seem to belong exclusively to the deceased for whom the funeral was conducted. However, most of the burnt bones were so small that it took great effort to analyse them. Prof. Edv. Clason analysed the bones from which it was possible to determine gender and age. According to Clason, the cremated bones originated from a single individual. The person was of average
height or slightly smaller and had a rather slender skeleton. This is supported by an inch-long part of a fibula as well as other fragments. A larger fragment of the lower jaw indicates a small or at best a middle-sized skull. The same jaw fragment also indicates middle age, given the appearance of a wisdom tooth and the alveolus recovered. Apparently, the skull is dolichocephalic (a condition in which the head is longer than expected in relation to its width).

In order to ascertain whether the bones had been affected by the burning (i.e. reduced due to the temperature and the cremation) and thus ensure the validity of the analysis, Prof. Clason measured the fresh bone of an ox and burnt it. It showed that the bone neither shortened nor shrivelled, and Clason consequently concluded that his interpretation of the individual’s size was accurate. He also pointed out that there is no proof that the deceased was a man, and nothing precluded it being a woman.²

With regards to the last option, Almgren argues that the archaeological artefacts strongly point towards a man, in particular the sword, razors and tweezers, which, according to Danish archaeologists, never occur in women’s graves. As the essence of the anthropological investigation, Almgren concludes with Prof. Clason’s final words: ‘If the mound was built to honour a chief, he must have been a very wise man, because he certainly was not big and strong.’

The unburnt bones belonged to many more species and individuals. These were determined by candidate Ludvig Hedell. The bones that he identified as human were examined by Prof. Clason. A complete description of where the bones were discovered is presented below.

In this section, Almgren indicates the depths from below and above. For instance, when he states that a particular bone was found at a depth of 1.5–2 m, he is measuring from the surface or the top of the mound. When he refers to specific measurements like -10 cm or +4.5 m they refer to the 0-level at the bottom of the mound. The measurements from the 0-level and from the surface/top of the mound are not correlated (Fig. 2.17).

Fig. 2.17. (Almgren's plate III). Plan of the complete mound and excavation.
Shaft I
Western part, depth 0.60–0.70 m: cattle, fragments of lower jaw and two molars; at a deeper level, ditto and a fragment of calcaneus (heel bone).

Eastern part, depth 0.75–1 m: cattle, fragment of femur (thigh bone or most proximal bone of the leg), parts of tibia (shin bone or shank bone, the larger and stronger of the two bones in the leg below the knee in vertebrates).

In the middle, depth 1.5–2 m: cattle, fragments of unidentifiable parts.

In the middle of the northern wall, depth more than 2.30 m, almost on the cairn: human, fragments of a bone shaft, but deteriorated and unidentifiable.

In the pile of soil by the entrance shaft: cattle, fragment lumbar vertebra.

Shaft II
Eastern part, depth 1–1.5 m at various places: human, long cleaved part of left femur (Fig. 2.18); cattle, lower part of tibia and fragments of vertebrae; sheep, molar from upper jaw, condyles of femur; pig, lower part of humerus (the long bone in the arm or forelimb that runs from the shoulder to the elbow).

Fig. 2.18. (Almgren’s Fig. 28, p. 26).
Cleaved femur of a woman.
End of western part, depth ca. 2 m: *dog*, atlas (superior or first cervical vertebra of the spine).

In the deepest layers: *cattle*, part of pelvis with a part of acetabulum (the socket of the hip bone into which the head of the femur fits), fragments of a vertebral body, lower part of tibia; *pig*, fragment of rib.

On top of the cairn: *cattle*, two toe phalanges and fragment probably of a molar from the upper jaw, molars from the lower jaw; *sheep*, point of a horn, molar from upper jaw; *pig*, toe phalanx; *dog*, part of lower jaw (NB – one tuber tooth fits together with a fragment from Shaft IV); *goose*, coracoideus (from the shoulder).

Probably from this shaft: *cattle*, rear part of calcaneus (heel bone).

Northern profile wall: *cattle*, 2 molars from upper jaw, fragment of tibia, one carpal bone (from the wrist); *pig*, one incisor (front teeth) from upper jaw.

(p. 32). **Shaft III**

Upper layers: *cattle*, fragment of pelvis; *sheep*, radius, partly damaged (the radius/radial bone is one of the two large bones of the forearm/leg).

Southern part/end, depth ca. 2 m: *human*, part of femur.

In the deeper layers, depth from 2 m and below: *cattle*, fragment of scapula (shoulder blade or wing bone), lower part of humerus, fragment of left calcaneus, fragments of ribs.

In a soot patch on top of the cairn: *cattle*, molar from the lower jaw, fragment of toe phalanx.

In the northern corner between the uppers stones of the cairns: *cattle*, fragment of cannon bone (the greatly developed middle metacarpal or metatarsal bone of hoofed quadruped mammals extending from the hock to the fetlock).

**Shaft IV**

In the upper layers: *cattle*, fragment of lower jaw with both the last molars, parts of other fragments.

Depth ca. 1.5–2 m: *human*, part of femur (fits together with one of the human bones found from the deeper levels); *cattle*, molar from the lower jaw, fragment of tibia, a vertebral body, some unidentifiable fragments; *dog*, two fragments of a lower jaw (one fragment fits with a fragment from Shaft II).

In the deeper layers: *human*, several fragments of femurs and tibia, upper part of left ulna (one of two bones in the forearm, the lower or the one stretching to the little finger, the radius/radial stretches to the thumb); *cattle*, left temporal bone with the articulating surface to the lower jaw, the mastoid part of the temporal bone (left), fragment of lower jaw, 3 molars from lower jaw and one from the upper jaw, lower part of humerus, and other fragments of the same, two fragments of scapula, fragments of vertebra and a femur, and
several unidentifiable fragments; *dog*, lower part of right radius. Many of the animal bones in these layers were found together in one place near Shaft III at approximately +3.50 m level in looser soil.

In the deepest layers: *human*, most likely middle part of right tibia (?); *cattle*, 2 molars from the upper jaw and 2 from the lower jaw, processus spinosus and thoracic vertebra, lower part of scapula, piece of femur; *sheep*, molar from lower jaw; *pig*, lumbar vertebra, toe phalanx.

From Shaft III or IV (in the soil which has been thrown up): *human*; lower middle part of left tibia; *cattle*; right calcaneus.

On top of the cairn in Shaft IV as well as in the bottom of the Gyllenborg Shaft, eastern part (mixed by mistake): *cattle*, molar from lower jaw, thoracic vertebra, processus spinosus, fragment of rib, lower epiphysis of tibia, 2 cannon bones (fragmentary); *sheep*, molar from lower jaw, lower part of humerus (young animal), fragment of femur, fragment of rear cannon bone; *pig*, fragment of canine (tooth) from upper jaw.

**Shaft V**

Upper part in the clay layer, in particular at depth 1–1.5 m: *cattle*, molar from upper jaw, thoracic vertebra with processus spinosus, ditto processus spinosus, lower part of scapula; *sheep*, part of lower jaw, molar from lower jaw, fragments of radius, femur and tibia, and fragments of frontal cannon bone.

In the middle of the shaft, depth ca. 2 m: *cattle*, (right) condylus occipitalis (undersurface protuberances of the occipital bone in vertebrates = cranium), fragment of vertebra, 2 fragments of pelvis with part of acetabulum (concave surface of the pelvis), condyles internus of left femur, fragment of tibia and other unidentifiable fragments.

In the western part/end, depth ca. 2 m: *human*, thoracic vertebra; *cattle*, incisor, 1 molar from the upper jaw and 3 from the lower jaw and several fragments from lower jaw, fragment of rib, upper part of radius; *sheep*, two fragments of radius.

Depth ca. 2.5–3 m: *human*, molar from lower jaw (left side), fragment and some pieces of probably femur; *cattle*, part of cranium with processus paras- mastoideus and bulle ossea from the right part (the lower or bottom part/side of the cranium), upper part of radius and part of ulna, fragment of rib and several unidentifiable fragments; *sheep*, lower part of humerus, fragment of tibia, toe phalanx (in the eastern part).

**Shaft VI and southern profile wall**

In the upper layers, partly in the soil: *cattle*, part of lower jaw (young animal), epistropheus (the axis vertebra, one of the cervical vertebrae), fragment of another vertebra, fragment of rib, lower part of scapula, upper part of ulna
(olecranon), fragment of pelvis with part of acetabulum; pig, fragment of frontal skull with orbita, fragment of rib.

From +4.50 m level downwards: human, part of left humerus (in undisturbed layer), upper middle part of right radius (?), thoracic vertebra (in the shaft's south-western corner); cattle, part of cranium with the articulating surface to the lower jaw, 3 molars from the lower jaw, fragment of femur; sheep, 4 molars (p. 33) from upper jaw, fragment of radius, femur and two tibia, and one uncertain vertebra.

(p. 33 continues). In the inner corner of Shaft VI as well as southern profile wall (hence to a large extent part of the Gyllenborg Shaft): cattle, 3 molars from the upper jaw and 1 from the lower jaw, fragment of lower jaw, lower part of humerus, fragment of femur (young animal), fragment of tibia, 2 lower parts of cannon bone, upper part of cannon bone, fragment of vertebra, and more; sheep, 2 lower parts of humerus and 1 middle part, piece of cannon bone.

In the deepest layers: cattle, molars from the upper jaw, molar in the lower jaw, processus spinosus and thoracic vertebra, part of pelvis, toe phalanx; dog, fragment of jaw with three teeth.

Deep down in the Gyllenborg Shaft (parts of the last bones collected in Shaft IV also belong to this context): human, fragment of left tibia.

In the southern profile wall from ca. +3.50 m level and deeper: cattle, fragments of ribs, femur, tibia and upper part of cannon bone; pig, atlas, fragment of tooth and rib; dog, fragment of radius.

Shafts VII and VIII
In the upper layers in Shaft VII, partly in the soil: human (?), fragments not further identifiable; cattle, 2 molars from the upper jaw, sacrum vertebra, tarsal bones, lower part of cannon bone (situated in the upper part of the soil), fragment of calcaneus; sheep, molar from upper jaw, fragment of tibia.

In the upper layers in Shaft VIII, partly in the soil: cattle, molar from the upper jaw, fragment of lower jaw, (?) fragment of vertebra, fragment of humerus (young animal), lower part of cannon bone, left astragalus (lower part of the ankle joint), calcaneus (the point of the hock).

Shaft VIII at +4.50 m level: cattle, parts of lower jaw with 3 loose molars, lower part of humerus; dog, fragment of jaw (in eastern part/section).

From +4.50 m and downwards in both shafts: cattle, 2 molars from the upper jaw, fragment of femur, fragment of epistropheus, carpal bone (join the forelimbs), toe phalanx; sheep, molar from upper jaw, fragment of rear part of cannon bone; pig, two fragments of upper jaw – one with 3 and the other with 2 teeth, vertebra, lower part of tibia (all bones from pig in Shaft VIII were found in the eastern part); dog, molar.
From deeper layers in Shaft VIII: *cattle*, 3 molars from the upper jaw and 3 from the lower jaw, part of lower jaw with 2 teeth (young animal), two toe phalanges; *sheep*, 2 molars from the upper jaw and 1 from the lower jaw, fragments of radius, femur and tibia; *pig*, atlas, piece of upper jaw; *horse*, first toe phalanx of frontal leg; *deer*, molar from lower jaw.

From the bottom layer in both shafts: *cattle*, 1 molar from upper jaw and 1 molar from lower jaw in addition to 2 fragmentary molars, part of lower jaw, processus spinosus and thoracic vertebra and another fragment of a vertebra, lower part of scapula, 3 fragments of pelvis (one part of acetabulum), condylus internus of left femur, tarsal bone, carpal bone, astragalus, fragment of calcaneus; *sheep*, part lower jaw (younger animal), molar from lower jaw, lower part of right ulna, fragments of left tibia; *goat*, upper part of cannon bone with extremities; *deer*, part of lower jaw (left) with the last molar (found in Shaft VIII); *fox*, fragment of femur; *squirrel*, lower jaw, left part (found in Shaft VIII).

Deep down in the Gyllenborg Shaft and Shaft VIII: *sheep*, fragment of right and left tibia; *hare*, 2 right femurs, right tibia.

In the soil thrown up from Shaft VIII: *sheep*, molar from upper jaw.

From the special profile Fig. 12: *sheep*, fragment of frontal cannon bone, upper part of rear cannon bone.

On the cairn in the cross-section of the profiles: *cattle*, fragment of rib; on the cairn in the eastern part: *pig*, upper part of radius.

*In the cairn 1902*

In the soil that had fallen into the cairn in the inner part of Shaft IV, ca. +1.50 m level: *human*, right clavicula/clavicle (collarbone).

High up under Shaft VI: *cattle*, lower part of cannon bone.

Beneath northern profile wall: *sheep*, fragment of rear cannon bone.

In the southern part deep down (approximately at level ±0 m, see Almgren's Fig. 14): *cattle*, part of cranium.

(p. 34). Context not specifically documented: *cattle*, fragment of thoracic vertebra.

Deep down beneath the border between Shafts II and VIII, approximately at level 0.50 m, below a stone: *pig*, left tibia of a very young pig.

Deep down, although not specifically documented context: *squirrel*, left femur.

On the lowest/bottom layer of stones in the middle of the pit: *squirrel*, right humerus.
From the soil layer and the cairn (but not the bottom layer) 1903

Without further specified location: cattle, several fragments of lower jaw and 4 molars from lower jaw, 1 incisor, fragment of femur, lower part of tibia, fragment of toe phalanx and (?) processus paramastoideus – part of skull (of young animal); sheep, part of tibia.

Deep in the cairn (level -10 cm) in the northern part of the investigation area (see Fig. 2.6 or Almgren's Fig. 15): pig, part of upper jaw (right side) with 3 teeth still intact (nos. 4, 5 and 6 counted from the front).

In the cairn in the excavation’s northern wall: cattle, part of lower jaw (articular-part), lower part of scapula, upper part of radius, fragment of femur.

In the immediate vicinity and surroundings of the oak-log coffin: cattle, fragment of lumbar vertebra; pig, part of cranium with the articulating surface to the lower jaw.

Just below the oak-log coffin: human, part of right humerus (just next to sulcus spiralis); cattle, 2 molars from the upper jaw of a young animal.

In the bottom layer 1903

In the charcoal layer: cattle, fragments of lower jaw, molar and incisor, molar from upper jaw (of a young animal), fragment of rib.

On the bare cliff or rock surface south of the charcoal layer: sheep, fragment of radius, lower epiphysis of femur; marten, diverse skeleton remains, like cranium, extremities, etc. (of a young animal).

Here and there: squirrel, right tibia; pike, upper part of left clavicular (of a smaller fish); water vole (Arvicola amphibious L.), fragments of 11 craniums, diverse teeth and other skeleton remains; toad, diverse bone remains of at least 4 individuals, and among them one of considerable size.

Several conclusions may be drawn from this summary of the bone finds. Most of the fragments came from cattle and sheep and clearly originated from several individuals. However, among the bones classified as sheep, some may be goat bones, as these two species are osteologically very difficult to distinguish. Still, only one bone fragment (from Shafts VII–VIII) was positively identified as goat.

Regarding the pig remains, one may conclude that there were at least two fully grown adult individuals based on the atlas vertebra in Shafts VI and VIII. External analyses of the pig bones suggested that they were small (or young) domesticated pigs, since even small wild boars would have been bigger. Perhaps the pigs were similar to the Swiss domesticated pigs Sus scrofa palustris.
Among the many finds of dog bones there is a particularly high presence of remains and fragments of lower jaws. From those found in Shafts II, IV and VI, it seems that they belonged to two individuals, both fully grown and large. A fragment found in Shafts VII–VIII may belong to a third individual. The jaw fragment from Shaft II with only one tuber tooth is of some zoological interest.

It is puzzling that the only remains of a horse is a toe phalanx found in the deeper layers of Shaft VIII. With regards to wild mammals, the finding of a fragment of lower jaw and a molar from the lower jaw of a deer were highlighted.

(p. 35). The three bones of hares (including 2 right femurs) were all found in the Gyllenborg Shaft. They may be of recent origin. The bones of a squirrel, on the other hand, were found in different places (deep in Shaft VIII, in the cairn, and in the bottom layer). One bone of a fox (fragment of a femur) was also found in Shaft VIII. The world of birds is only represented in the form of a small bone of a goose found on the cairn itself, and the world of fish is only represented in the find of a bone fragment of a small pike in the bottom layer. The bones of a marten, voles and toads, on the other hand, are probably of secondary and more recent origin.

All the other bones were clearly deposited when the mound was built, and there are probably various reasons for their presence. They are all edible animals (except the remains of the fox, which may have been transported by the soil and natural processes); they are all, almost without exception, fragmented, and they are also all thrown in from all directions in distinct layers. It seems obvious that these are remains of meals, partly eaten during the main funeral, and partly or perhaps mainly during the time-consuming job of the building of the mound. The fact that only some bone fragments were found can be explained by the fact that only parts of the mound were investigated and that many of the bones of the consumed animals were never deposited on the mound itself, but thrown on the ground beside the mound where they soon decayed.

However, the most peculiar thing is that the parts of unburnt humans that were found were in a similar state to the animal bones. In order to gain further understanding of this curious phenomenon, Prof. Clason conducted a separate study of the human bones, which Almgren discusses in his report:

Shaft I, in the middle of the northern wall, at approximately 2.80 m depth and almost on the cairn: fragments of a deteriorated bone shaft, unidentifiable.

Shaft II, eastern part, depth 1.5 m: a 26.5 cm long cleaved left femur, upper part of a gracile individual, see Almgren’s Fig. 28.

Shaft III, southern end, depth 2 m: parts of femur, including 1) frontal part of left femur partly below trochanter minor (trochanter is the anatomical part of the femur connected to the hip bone) from a robust/strong individual, and
2) probably frontal part of left femur slightly below the middle (and probably
not the same individual as the one above).

Shaft IV, depth 1.5–2 m: part of femur, right middle part of robust/strong
individual (the bone piece fits with 1b below). In the deeper layers: several
pieces of femurs, including 1a) lower part of right femur below trochanter
minor (robust/strong individual), 1b) lower part of right femur just above
popliteal fossa (the shallow depression located at the back of the knee joint),
robust/strong individual), 2) part of left femur (?) just below trochanter mi-
nor (another individual than 1); parts of tibia: a) frontal fragment of right tibia
approximately by the middle, b) probably fragment of right tibia, uncertain
because heavily worn. Also upper part of left ulna from a middle-sized indi-
vidual. In the deepest layers: probably (?) right tibia, middle part.

In the excavated soil thrown up from Shaft III or Shaft IV: lower middle
part of left tibia, middle-sized individual.

Shaft V, western end, depth ca. 2 m: thoracic vertebra, no. 8 or 9, of a fully
grown but not large individual, probably male. In the same area, depth 2.5–3
m: left molar from lower jaw, hardly worn and hence a young individual; prob-
ably some fragments of a femur.

Shaft VI, from +4.50 m level and downwards: lower diaphysis of left hu-
merus, medium strong (found in undisturbed layer); probably upper middle
part of right radius (the sharp edge worn); thoracic vertebra, no. 4 or 5, of a fully
grown but not large individual (found in the shaft’s south-western corner).
Deep in the Gyllenborg Shaft: lower middle part of western tibia.

Shaft VII, in the uppermost layers: some unidentifiable bone fragments,
uncertain if human.

In the cairn (1902), in between soil fallen down in the innermost part of
Shaft IV at ca. +1.50 m level: part of right clavicula of young, but fully grown
individual, probably woman.

Just beneath the oak-log coffin: fragment (not burnt!) of right humerus, just
by sulcus spiralis, of strong/robust individual.

Prof. Clason concludes that these remains originate from at least three in-
dividuals (based on the upper parts of the femurs).

(p. 36). All individuals are adults, but one is young (the tooth):
– one probably a woman (clavicular, the gracile bones, Fig. 2.11)
– one strong/robust man
– one medium-strong/robust man

3 The thoracic vertebrae, in particular nos. 4–9, are intriguing as these are located in the area
covering the heart. Given the presence of human sacrifice as well as cannibalistic practices,
this may suggest rituals centred around a human or sacrificial heart. If the descendants were
aiming for the deceased’s heart, one of the ways of procuring it would have been to break
open the chest and these vertebrae, see Chapter 8.
Particularly the cleaved femur requires closer attention (Almgren's Fig. 28). The cleaved bones have a hard texture and sharp cut marks, probably reflecting the intention of reaching the bone marrow as part of a type of cannibalism. This will be further discussed in Chapter 7.

The unburnt remains of wood are presented and discussed in Chapter 4. We will here continue describing the numerous charcoal samples from the different parts of the mound. The analyses were conducted by Dr. Alb. Nilsson.

**From the soil layer**

From a charcoal patch with a diameter of about 50 cm and thickness of 2–3 cm situated approximately in the middle of Shaft I’s northern profile wall ca. 75 cm below the surface: hazel; from a charcoal layer in the same wall, a couple of metres eastwards and ca. 2 m below the surface: deciduous, cfr Salix and aspen. From around the same place 2.80 m below the surface (not far above the cairn): deciduous, cfr Salix (in the same place a small piece of pottery and numerous bones were found).

From a charcoal layer on the border between Shaft I and Shaft II about 1 m above the cairn: some small remains, partly pine, partly deciduous, cfr birch. From a charcoal layer in Shaft IV at ca. +3 m level: oak. From the deepest layers in Shaft IV: two pieces of oak, two pieces of hazel.

From a charcoal patch in the eastern profile wall’s northern side (Shaft III) about 1 m deep (marked on the planch and profile C–D): ash (Fraxinus excelsior). From a charcoal patch in the same wall’s southern side above the special profile (Almgren’s Fig. 11), approximately 1.50 m below the surface: small fragments of oak. From a charcoal patch with a diameter of about 40 cm and thickness of 5 cm situated in the middle of the wall between Shaft VII and Shaft VIII (see plate) at +4.50 m level: deciduous, cfr birch. From a charcoal patch immediately on the cairn: deciduous, cfr aspen or alder.

(p. 37). In the Gyllenborg Shaft there were several finds of hard burnt pieces and charcoal of pine, in particular in the southern parts and at higher levels, which should be dated to the time of this excavation. The heavy layer of charcoal in the soil pit in the northern profile wall (see profile A–B) is probably from around the same time. The charcoal pieces are relatively large and were partly pine and partly deciduous, cfr lindes (Tilia cordata).

**From the cairn’s deeper parts (around the oak-log coffin)**

a) From the autumn investigation (see Almgren’s Fig. 14): piece of charcoal found at -15 cm level about 1 m south-west of the sword: cfr birch; numerous pieces of charcoal found immediately east at levels +10 to -30 cm: some pieces of pine, two of deciduous, cfr birch, one of oak; partly charcoaled piece of
wooden stock found slightly less than 1 m south of the sword at level +30 cm: *pine*. Charcoal found 2.25 m south of the sword at level +50 cm: *oak*.

b) From the spring excavation (see Almgren's Figs. 15 and 18): pieces of charcoal found 2.5 m south of the sword at partly level +75 cm and partly level +40 cm: *oak*. Larger piece of charcoal (length: 6.5 cm; width: 3 cm) found in some of the wooden patches south of the sword: *pine*. Pieces of charcoal found by the end of the oak-log coffin at level -15 cm: mostly *hazel*, but also pieces of ash up to 2 cm in diameter and even a burnt bark roll of *pine* (†). Pieces of charcoal found beneath the northernmost exposed logs on Almgren's Fig. 18: mostly *hazel*, some pieces of *pine*.

*From the charcoal layer at the bottom (the cremation pyre?)*

Most of the charcoal remains are from *pine*, quite a few from *oak*, some *hazel* and minor remains of *deciduous*, cfr *birch*. Almgren argues that where pieces of a given species occur, these may have fallen to the bottom layer from the higher levels where the coffin was placed. South of the proper charcoal layer on the bare cliff or rock surface: *oak*.

The great fire that was burnt on the ground before the burial, whether it was the cremation pyre or not, consisted mainly of pine. However, even in this large fire, and probably in many smaller fires during the construction of the grave chamber and the coffin, other types of wood were also used, including oak, hazel and probably birch and some branches of ash. Even around the oak-log coffin, branches of pine were burnt.

In the many fires that were made here and there during the construction of the mound's upper part, it seems that pine was only used once, whereas four types of deciduous were burnt, including some species of *Salix* and possibly ash or alder. In a footnote, Almgren points out that it is strange that spruce, which was omnipresent in the area at the turn of the 20th century, was not found in the material from the mound. This could be used as an indication regarding the era when the spruce immigrated to the area, but as Alb. Nilsson pointed out, it is very difficult to distinguish charcoal of pine and spruce. Part of the identified charcoal of pine may therefore be spruce. During later excavations in the mound before the archaeological investigation, it seems that pine and linden were burnt.

Lastly, Almgren points out some finds from the mound's upper parts and layers that are certainly more recent. In the Gyllenborg Shaft, they found a clay pipe, clearly lost during the excavation, and an iron arrowhead measuring 10.4 cm in length and with a maximum width of 1.9 cm. Dating this arrowhead is more difficult, since it was a socketed type, which was unusual in the Viking period when having a tang was the most common practice.
Socketed arrowheads are, however, common in the previous Iron Age period (ca. 600–800 AD).

Moreover, arrowheads found in Ultuna and Vendel generally have a relatively shorter blade with the greatest width located more towards the middle of the arrow. It is therefore doubtful that this arrowhead belongs to this period and one cannot exclude a dating to the Medieval Period. The arrowhead was found in the eastern part of the Gyllenborg Shaft just at the border between the disturbed and undisturbed layers approximately 1 m below the mound’s surface. The arrowhead was most likely deposited there when the shaft was filled. One may assume that the original deposition was somewhere immediately beneath the mound’s surface, and probably belonged to a hunter who shot the arrow onto the mound.

Another puzzling artefact that was dated to the Iron Age was found one year after the excavation. In June 1904, Almgren was notified that a group of visitors had found an oval bronze brooch (Fig. 2.19) (length: 6 cm; width: 2.7 cm) depicting an animal with four feet. Almgren suggests that this brooch and the arrowhead were originally deposited in the mound’s upper layers. They were probably dug up and covered in clumps of discarded soil. When the mound was filled, the first layers that had been dug up were obviously the last to be used to refill in the mound, which is how the artefacts became exposed.

Fig. 2.19. (Almgren’s Fig. 30, p. 28). Bronze brooch. Length: 6 cm; width: 2.7 cm.
This oval brooch could also stem from a secondary burial in the Late Iron Age. However, the bones found in the soil layer cannot be part of a secondary burial, since they were found in undisturbed layers (with only one fragment of a tibia found in the Gyllenborg Shaft). If there was a secondary grave, it was probably situated so close to the surface of the mound that the bones would have deteriorated. Unless the oval brooch was simply lost on the mound, it seems most likely that it stems from an offering or a sacrifice. If this is the case, we have a small indication that the mound was part of living practice in the period right before King Björn built his farm ‘by the mound’, if the tradition is correct.

V. The investigation of the house structure and the smaller mounds

The house structure was also investigated during the spring 1903 excavation, and several areas of the inner part were excavated (marked on Almgren’s Fig. 32). The excavated section of the house (a cross-section in the width) covered only half of the house – the other half was schematically reconstructed. Moreover, the hearth documented in the profile was actually excavated some metres apart (see A).

The house construction was a long and comparatively small rectangular stone setting built with large blocks. The blocks were tightly placed next to each other, making a vertical side facing inwards. However, in some places in the wall the stones had fallen inward. The dorsal side of the blocks was supported by a wide earth embankment of soil and smaller stones. The earth embankment’s approximate contours are marked by a dotted line in Almgren’s Fig. 32.

There are no entrances through the earth embankment and stonewall into the structure. In the south-eastern corner, there was an empty space from a removed stone, but this stone was discovered beneath the surface. The earth embankment itself had no openings anywhere.

The inner surface, which is completely even, measures 33 × 5 m (Fig. 2.20). All the sections that were excavated inside the house structure revealed a brown, thick soil layer situated 30–60 cm above the natural or original bottom surface. At both ends of the stone structure, the lowest soil was covered in a thin layer of charcoal. During the excavation of the area marked ‘A’, a proper fireplace or hearth was found; it was an intensive charcoal pit with fire-cracked stones. The hearth was almost circular with a diameter between 1.25–1.5 m. Its upper surface was 40–50 cm below the soil surface and the greatest depth was 25 cm. It is a bit puzzling that the hearth is not located in the middle, either in the length or width directions. The charcoal from the hearth
mainly consisted of deciduous (cfr ash or alder), a few pieces of Salix, a couple of pieces of hazel and some pine.

In the excavated part east of A, a coarse iron nail was found, 7 cm long, with pieces of wood rusted together. Moreover, four coins from 1817 – Carl XIII's ¼-shillings – were found. They were intentionally placed beside the stone, suggesting an 'offering' in the 'church'.

None of the artefacts could provide precise dating of the structure. Since the context and the conditions were so difficult to interpret, Almgren writes that he wanted to leave a large part of the area undisturbed for next generations of researchers, who would ask new questions that his generation did not. Then Almgren discusses a similar house construction at Ljunga near Söderköping, which had an inner length of 24 m.

(p. 40). There were no finds of artefacts in this house in Ljunga either, but the construction was surrounded by many beautiful grave mounds. Several of the mounds were investigated: the majority belonged to the Viking Period, although one of them was dated to the first part of the Late Iron Age. Based on this, Almgren suggests that the house construction at Håga should perhaps also be dated to the Late Iron Age. (However, a later archaeological excavation by Michael Olausson in 1999 clearly showed that it is a monument from the Bronze Age. See Chapter 5.)
Regarding the roof construction, it seems that the roofs of buildings like these were raised directly from the earth embankments and supported by the stones. With regards to other details and practical arrangements, Almgren did not want to make any suggestions or qualified guesses.

(p. 42). The top of the roof was probably covered with grass turf, and it is likely that, together with deteriorated rafters, these turfs formed the upper layer of soil.

The smaller grave mounds in Skogsparken or Lundbacken, south-west of Björn’s Mound (labelled Nos. 2–6) were investigated. Nos. 1 and 7 were inaccessible due to trees and dense vegetation (see Almgren’s Fig. 2b). The diameters of the mounds were recorded as follows: No. 1: 10 m; No. 2: 6.5 m; No. 3: 4 m; No. 4: 6.5 m; No. 5: 7 m; No. 6: 5 m; No. 7: 9 m, a beautiful mound with a height of 1–1.3 m.

Mound No. 4 had previously been heavily excavated and disturbed, and the only finds were a couple of burnt bone fragments and an unburnt molar of cattle. Even in Mound No. 6, only a small fragment of burnt bone was found. The mound also contained a small cairn, which seemed to be undisturbed.

In the remaining three mounds, there were heavy layers of charcoal (there had been very large fires in Mound No. 2) with burnt bones (in graves Nos. 2 and 5, the burnt bones even included remains of what appeared to be a dog: grave No. 5 contained a positive caudal vertebra or tailbone of a dog). There were also some rivets and iron nails. In Mound No. 2, there were also some course fragments of pottery and a piece of flint, which were fractured from burning. The piece of flint also had a small polished surface, which may indicate that it is part of a (rather thick) polished flint axe. The piece of flint was obviously used to make fire in this context. In Mound No. 5, besides some fragments of rivets or nails, there were five fragments of a bone comb and two of the teeth fragments had ornaments. These pieces of combs (like the nails) date this grave with certainty to the Late Iron Age (9th and 10th centuries).
VI. The archaeological results – ‘Björn at Håga’

(p. 43). We will now present the conclusions one can draw based on the documented investigation and the artefacts.

During Bronze Age Period IV, which according to Montelius’ meticulously developed chronology corresponds to the closest centuries before and after 1000 BC, a great and magnificent cremation took place on the hillslope of what is today known as Håga. It involved such a huge participation and work force that it must have been conducted for a powerful chief who ruled over a populous chiefdom.

Cremation was at this time the dominant funeral practice in the Nordic region, hence this chief from Uppland was also burnt. It seems that the cremation pyre was located at the same spot where the mound was afterwards built – in any case a huge fire (of pinewood) burned here. The burnt bones were carefully collected, but instead of using a small coffin of appropriate size or an urn, which was the common tradition at this time, a much larger burial cache was chosen. If we have interpreted the context and artefacts correctly, the funeral followed an old tradition whereby the bones were placed in a coffin made of a cleft hollowed-out oak trunk. This practice was used to bury unburnt bodies in the Early Bronze Age, and earlier, as part of the oldest funerals in the first part of Period III, burnt human bones were also buried in this way.

The richness of the grave goods, which were deposited in the coffin with the dead, is also more reminiscent of the Early Bronze Age than of Period IV. Among the many finds from the Late Bronze Age in Denmark, which Müller documented in his tables in Aarbøker 1891, none compare in find frequency with the Håga Mound. Moreover, the construction of such a huge mound solely for a grave in the Late Bronze Age is unparalleled in Scandinavia, as far as we know.

All aspects of the funeral of this Bronze Age king from Uppland suggest a strong tradition and continuity with older burial practices. Only one grave find from the Nordic Bronze Age surpasses Håga in terms of the opulence of the grave goods and the colossal size of the mound. The so-called Königshügel or ‘Royal Mound of Seddin’ near the village of Seddin in West-Prieglitz (the north-eastern part of Mark-Brandenburg between Mecklenburg and the province of Sachsen) was excavated in 1899 to reveal magnificent finds. The mound is dated from Period V, a bit younger than Håga. It is located in the opposite periphery of the Nordic Bronze Age area on its southernmost border.

(p. 44). The construction of the Håga Mound has been sufficiently described above: the coffin was not placed at the bottom or on the original surface of the mound, but partly in the cairn, which has a considerable height and width. The cairn also covered the coffin, which for a period of time was covered and
protected by a construction of course oak logs, which prevented it from being crushed by the masses of stone. An impressive layer of soil, primarily made of grass turfs cut from clay and sand fields in the vicinity, was placed on top of the cairn.

The question remains whether this layer of soil was deposited when the mound was built or was a later construction, as is common in Bronze Age mounds. Besides the soil layer, the Håga Mound is identical to other stone cairns found in the middle region of Sweden. These are often considered to be the original Bronze Age grave type and are common in Uppland. Although there are no Bronze Age finds from a cairn in Uppland yet, there are numerous grave finds from stone cairns, including the Finnish ones, which obviously derived their Bronze Age culture via Uppland.

There are several reasons why it is unlikely that the layer of soil is a later addition to the mound. If the cairn had remained open for a longer time period, the timber constructions would have been exposed to oxygen and rain and would have deteriorated. No remains of the size found in the mound would have survived. Moreover, the depression or collapse in the middle of the mound shows that the layers of soil were placed on top of the cairn before the ‘chamber’ was crushed by the weight (and the decaying timber). Lastly, the presence of animal bones and charcoal patches are similar in the cairn and in the soil layers above, and there are no traces of secondary burials, which indicates one construction phase.

The above-mentioned scattered fragments of animal bones and hearths can be explained as remains of the meals consumed during the long construction of the mound. Probably people from across the deceased’s kingdom partook in the construction. Numerous species of domesticated animals and some wild animals were killed during the long funeral feast.

The presence of the unburnt human skeleton remains from at least three individuals remains unexplained. The human remains are scattered in the same way as the animal bones. They do not originate from disturbed secondary graves in the mound, as the bones were found in otherwise undisturbed layers.

Almgren tentatively suggests that older graves in the vicinity had been disturbed and the bones were in the soil that was carried to the mound for building material. This explanation can be immediately invalidated, as the soil layer consisted of cut grass turfs. It is unlikely that prehistoric graves were located so close to the fields’ surface that they would have been destroyed by this turf removal procedure.

The only viable conclusion is that humans were sacrificed in a similar way to animals, and, most probably also eaten to honour the dead chief. This explanation is also supported by the above-mentioned cleaved femur (see Fig. 2.18).
It is difficult to associate such horrific practices with our ancestors and utmost care is needed when interpreting them. Yet according to Almgren certain comparisons can be made, as cannibalism did occur among Bronze Age Swedes. As late as 1000 AD, Adam of Bremen (IV, 27) describes human sacrifices at Old Uppsala, and some ethnologists have interpreted human sacrifices as a ritual practice that evolved in part out of proper cannibalism. This reflects the prevailing early 20th-century evolutionary view. Human sacrifice is discussed in more detail in Chapter 8.

(p. 45). If this was the case, it is no surprise that this practice prevailed in the same area 2000 years earlier. Almgren compares the consumption of human remains at Häga with two Stone Age sites where scattered human remains were found amidst animal remains from daily meals.

Almgren then proposes a three-stage typology of a declining or extenuating practice of cannibalism in Uppland’s past: first, in the Stone Age, cannibalism was commonly practised whenever there was an opportunity; secondly, in the Bronze Age, human sacrifice with consumption of flesh was a ritual practice in solemn funerals, and thirdly, from the end of the pagan era, human sacrifices took place, but without cannibalism, and only at large festivals that took place in Old Uppsala every nine years.

Almgren writes: ‘This magnificent grave find from the Bronze Age Period IV, so far north in Sweden and in Uppsala, was by all means a total surprise.’ In middle and northern Sweden, Period IV generally yielded few finds. The precious artefacts from ‘King Björn’s Mound’ are therefore very isolated in Uppland and the middle parts of Sweden. Indeed, there are hardly any Bronze-Age parallels from the much richer parts of southern Sweden.

(p. 46). One has to go to Denmark to find anything similar, both in terms of the opulence and type of artefact and the amount of gold. It is tempting to see a special link between Denmark and Uppland, which bypassed the areas in between (possibly the loot of a Bronze-Age Viking raid), but one must be careful in drawing such conclusions.

(p. 47). There are numerous rich graves in wealthy Denmark (though none as rich as Häga), but in Sweden one expects to find fewer of this type, though some may one day be found in southern Sweden. If so, they will form the bridge between Denmark and Uppland.

In any event, two unquestionable facts arise from the investigation of ’King Björn’s Mound’: during Period IV of the Bronze Age, the region around Uppsala had a sophisticated culture based on kingship that was heavily influenced by Denmark, the centre of the Nordic cultural area. The term ‘king’ is appropriate for a man who was after his death honoured with a colossal monument that was erected by a large workforce, with grave goods of an opulence un-
paralleled in the Nordic region and with a lavish wake and funeral feast that included the sacrifice of animals as well as humans.

So far, the tradition has been perfectly right when describing the mound as the ‘King’s Mound’, but the archaeological investigations have disproved the assumption that a Viking king name Björn was buried in the mound (Fig. 2.21).

Moreover, the term ‘Björn’s Mound’ is a distortion of the original Icelandic tradition – *Björn at Haugi* – and should more accurately be translated as ‘Björn by the Mound’. This is also recalled in the *Hervarar Saga*, which states that King Björn arrived at the farm, which is named ‘by the Mound’ [or ‘by the Barrow’] and the reason he was called ‘Björn by the Mound.’ This is plausible and may correspond to the archaeological investigations. The great mound existed long before King Björn’s time. It was so impressive that it gave its name to the place where the farm was built. But do we have any evidence to place the Icelandic *Björn at Haugi* at Håga outside Uppsala?

Olof Rudbeck’s research tradition first established the connection between the Icelandic *Björn at Haugi* and the Håga Mound. The *Hervarar Saga* became known in Sweden in 1658 in the form of a late handwritten document.
The document was brought from Iceland by the young Icelander Jonas Rugman. He was on a ship en route to Copenhagen, but during the ongoing war the ship was burnt by the Swedes, whereupon Rugman joined the ranks of the Swedish army.

Prof. Olof Verelius in Uppsala published a version of *Hervarar Saga* in 1672, which included a translation and commentaries. In this translation, Verelius writes that King Björn lived at a place called Höga and hence he was called ‘Björn at Höga’ (‘Biorn på Höga’). However, Verelius does not say anything else about Björn in his commentaries. More remarkably, Olof Rudbeck’s map of the Uppsala region that accompanies the text does not include Håga village. Apparently neither Verelius nor Rudbeck connected *Haugi* with Håga; Verelius translated the Icelandic word to ‘Höga’. Still, in the same year 1672 that the saga was published, And. Pehrsson reported about antiquities and mounds, including Håga.

In the preface to the first part (1679) of his *Atlantica*, Olof Rudbeck writes that he was motivated to start the scientific inquiries that eventually resulted in this notorious work (Lat. *Olavi Rudbeckii Atlantica sive Manheim vera Japhetii posterorum sedes ac patria ...*, 1677–1702) after he was commissioned to make the map for the translation of the *Hervarar Saga*. However, in his epic work, Rudbeck does not cover the period of King Björn, only mentioning the king in the large *Tabula chronologica* in the atlas of volume I, where he calls him *Biorn a Haugi*.

Eenberg concludes his inquiry (from 1704) by saying that he could not find any documents about Håga written by other authors. Eenberg seems to be the first to connect *Björn at Haugi* with our Håga in a written and published text, even though he is probably not the first to make this connection. Eenberg mentions that in 1696 Rudbeck showed King Carl XI the remains of the bridge over the Fyris River, which King Björn allegedly crossed on his journey from Håga to Old Uppsala. This suggests that the great master himself first made the connection possibly between 1672 and 1696, although he never wrote about it. However, it soon became common knowledge in Uppsala, and apparently led county Governor Gyllenborg to undertake the excavation some time between 1689 and 1695. The identification of King Björn with Håga also became part of Eenberg’s ‘travel-guidebook’ and Peringsköld’s documentation from 1719, further strengthening the basis of the tradition.

However, it is intriguing that Eenberg explicitly referenced a lay tradition to support his story. He says that the mound is called ‘King Björn’s Mound’ and the house structure was described by locals as ‘King Björn’s Church’. He then adds some reflections from locals about this church.

Almgren argues that the popular tradition may be rooted in the work of scholars who identified this connection as indeed many local traditions can be
retraced to scholars working in same period and tradition as Rudbeck. However, in the case of Håga and its identification, Almgren says this is unlikely. Eenberg was the first to document and publish it (in 1704) and it is unlikely that it would have been so firmly consolidated that he would have perceived it as the indigenous local tradition.

Instead there may have already been a popular tradition about a King Björn by Håga in the late 17th century. Eenberg for instance mentioned that the fields below Håga were called Kungsäng or King’s Field. One would have expected that And. Pehrsson would have recorded the name of the mound and the stone construction in his work from 1672, but perhaps he only wanted to document facts and not record common ‘talk’.

Almgren then discusses how the connection between Björn at Haugi and Håga relates to contemporary and critical research in the early 20th century.

Even the place name is not easy to unravel, and the etymology is much more complex than scholars assumed in Rudbeck’s time. Fortunately, there is abundant material on the history of the name Håga stretching back 600 years.

In Svenskt Diplomatarium we find the various forms of the name in the 14th century:

- II, p. 341, year 1301: de haghe
- II, p. 446, year 1305: in Haghi (it is doubtful whether this is a reference to our Håga)
- III, p. 282p, year 1316, in haghi (twice)
- IV, p. 538p, year 1337: de haghe (twice), de hage
- IV, p. 644p, year 1339: in haga (twice)

In Svenskt Diplomatarium från 1401 the name ‘i Hagha’ is documented from 1409. In Skandinavian under unionstiden from 1456, the name Haage is used.

Almgren employed the notary G. Hedin to compile a list of the names based on the documentation in the land registry and registry for tithe in the 16th and 17th centuries:

Hage 1610; Håge 1568, 1612, 13, 22, 27, 65, T 1680; Håge 1618; Hogge 1594; Hege (? – possibly also Hage) 1619, 22.

Haga 1574, 78, 90, 1610; Håga 1550, 53, 54, 55, 66, 67, 72, 73, 89, 90, 1605, 09, 15, 40, 45, 75, 85; Hågha 1556, 84, 1604, 45, 55.

(p. 49). Hågga 1583; Hoga 1547, 54, 81, 1600; Hogha 1542, T 1634, 39, Hogga 1593, Hoggan 1598.

In the 18th century, Eenberg (1704) uses Häge and Häga interchangeably, whereas Dijkman (1711) and Peringskiöld (1719) only use Häga. However, in a publication printed in Uppsala in 1776 about the village, the name Häge was consistently used (4 times).
Professor A. Noreen together with Docent O. von Friesen and Dr. S. Lampa concluded that the original ancient Swedish name was Hāghe, and the current Håga or Hāge are modern-language updates. Regarding the etymology, the inevitable conclusion is that it originally meant haugr, ‘hög’ or mound.

Thus, since the original name of the village was Hāghe similar to the Icelandic Haugi, from an etymological and linguistic point of view there are no factual hindrances to this connection. One may simply assume that the Icelanders replaced the ancient Swedish name with the Icelandic equivalent. The most meticulous description is from the already discussed Hervarar Saga (see Chapter 9 for an in-depth discussion of and references to King Björn in this saga).

Since the 18th century, many researchers have pointed out that Björn at Haugi in the Hervarar Saga could in fact be King Bern, who according to Rimbert’s Vita Ansgarii, Chapter 11, reigned in Sweden when Ansgarii visited Birka for the first time in 829. Adam of Bremen calls this king Beorn. This date would fit well with the chronology of the Hervarar Saga in which Harald Finehair starts his reign in year 872 when Björn’s brother’s son Erik Emundsson reigned. Lastly, the Hervarar Saga states that the skald Brage visited Björn by the Mound. This is also mentioned in Snorre Sturlason’s Edda as well as in a similar, albeit different, story featured in Egil Skallagrimsson’s Saga (Chapter 59).

Finally, Björn at Haugi is also mentioned in a couple of places in Landnamabok, the famous chronicle of Iceland’s colonisation by migrating Norsemen during the time of Harald Finehair. According to one handwritten text, Hauksbok (Chapter 178), there was a Swedish man named Tord Knapp, and he was the son of Björn by the Mound’s sister. He travelled to Iceland.

(p. 51). Tormod the Strong was another Swedish man. Not long after Tord Knapp went to Iceland, Tormod the Strong killed Gyrd, Skjalg’s grandfather, at Jäder. Tormod the Strong was exiled by King Björn by the Mound, and fled to Iceland.

Obviously, one cannot assume that these medieval texts accurately depict conditions in 9th-century Sweden. However, it is striking that all these sources place a king named Björn by the Mound in roughly the same time period in the 9th century. Historically, there may therefore have been a king of that name at that time. Moreover, the information about Björn in the Hervarar Saga may be largely correct and a king named Björn may have built the farm ‘by the Mound’. The proximity to Old Uppsala, where his brother with whom he shared the kingdom lived, does not disqualify this identification.

Nevertheless, although Almgren is initially optimistic about a possible correlation between text and context, he acknowledges that such connections cannot be proven. He then presents the analysis of his colleague Prof. H. Hjärne,
who is highly critical of the sagas as historical sources, and the identification of King Björn with Hága. Almgren concludes with the more optimistic approach of Docent K.G. Westman, who believed that the *Hervarar Saga* may have a historic core.

(p. 52). According to Westman, the ancestral mound must have been well known in its time, and by building his farm next to this mound, Björn may have aimed to establish it in similar fashion to the royal farm that stood beside the three large grave mounds at Old Uppsala.

Almgren then connects this to the presumed dating of the house and hence places it in the Iron Age. The mere size of the stone structure would have been worthy of a great hall of a royal farm. The surrounding Iron Age graves may strengthen such an interpretation and date. In any event, the numerous mounds from the Late Iron Age clearly show that the village of Håghe was a place of great importance, with long historical continuity going back to heathen times – even without the great Bronze Age mound it is named after.
CHAPTER 3

Original documentation from the 1902–1903 excavation

Fig. 3.1. Investigation of the bottom layer, 1903. Note the size of the stones that can be carried by one man. Source: ATA Stockholm.

Fig. 3.2. The eastern wall, 1903. Source: ATA Stockholm.
Fig. 3.3. The upper part of the cairn in Shaft I–II with the north-eastern profile wall seen from north. Source: ATA Stockholm.

Fig. 3.4. North-eastern profile wall. Source: ATA Stockholm.
Fig. 3.5. Parts of the north-eastern profile wall. Source: ATA Stockholm.

Fig. 3.6. The place where the prestigious finds were discovered. Remains of the coffin were found just above the white line. Source: ATA Stockholm.
Fig. 3.7. The cairn's surface in Shaft I–II and the north-western profile seen from north-east. Source: ATA Stockholm.
Fig. 3.8. In situ finds: A) the swords and b) the brooch. Source: ATA Stockholm.
Fig. 3.9. Remains from the oak coffin in situ, 1903. Source: ATA Stockholm.
Fig. 3.10. *The shaft used in Gyllenborg’s excavation. Source: ATA Stockholm.*

Fig. 3.11. *The cairn in mound no. 2 during the excavation. Source: ATA Stockholm.*
Fig. 3.12. Grave mound no. 2. Source: ATA Stockholm.

Fig. 3.13. The cult house in the forest before the excavation. Source: ATA Stockholm.
Fig. 3.14. The cult house during the excavation. Source: ATA Stockholm.

Fig. 3.15. Original documentation of the lower part of Fig. 2.20. (Almgren's Fig. 32, p. 41). Plan of the house structure and tentative reconstruction. Source: ATA Stockholm.
Fig. 3.16. Original documentation of Fig. 2.6. (Almgren's Fig. 15, p. 21). Plan of the artefact distribution, spring 1903. The bold dark line indicates the border of the charcoal layer at the bottom. Source: ATA Stockholm.
Fig. 3.17. Original documentation of Fig. 2.5. (Almgren’s Fig. 14, p. 20). Plan of the artefact distribution, autumn 1902. The vertical sketches are remains of oak logs, dotted marks are deteriorated oak logs, and the patches are charcoal remains. Source: ATA Stockholm.
Fig. 3.18. Western profile wall's northern part in Shaft II. Source: ATA Stockholm.
Fig. 3.19. Original documentation of grave no. 5. Source: ATA Stockholm.
Fig. 3.20. Original documentation of Fig. 2.8. (Almgren’s Fig. 18, p. 24). ‘End part’ of the oak-log coffin. Source: ATA Stockholm.
Fig. 3.21. Original documentation of Fig. 2.4. (Almgren's Fig. 12, p. 16). The lower part of the soil layer at the southern end of the profile wall A–B. Source: ATA Stockholm.
Fig. 3.22. The reconstructed Håga Mound, 1929. Source: ATA Stockholm.

Fig. 3.23. Original profile drawing of the mound, 1903. Source: ATA Stockholm.
CHAPTER 4
The Ritual Stratigraphy of the Håga Monument

Excavating stratigraphical cosmology

Stratigraphy is a core concept in archaeology. The basic axiom is that different strata are superimposed, with the lower layers being the oldest (Harris 1989). Excavations are meticulously conducted from the upper (latest) to the lower (earliest) layers. Deposits and sediments build up in many natural processes. The construction of large grave mounds follows a different process though, as they are intentionally built by humans and the stratigraphy is the result of a series of intentional actions (Gansum 2002, 2004). Stratigraphy and rituals share many structural similarities: rituals such as funerals are time-consuming religious performances that are conducted within a time sequence. Dissecting a grave mound into different actions and events in a chronological time sequence may offer greater understanding of the various ritual scenarios and provide a deeper understanding of the cosmology (Gansum & Oestigaard 1999, 2004; Gansum and Risan 1999). As with stratigraphy, rituals that have left material traces are layered: the first rituals are visible in the lower strata and the later ones are embedded in the upper strata when the mound was closed or finished:

‘A ritual takes time. The stratigraphy of a grave mound may tell us the story of these rituals: it may be possible to deconstruct the ritual scenario and trace rituals through sequences in the stratigraphy. By a deconstruction of a mound into different rituals or actions within stratigraphic sequences, faces and time sequences, it is possible to illuminate some of the practices and religious perceptions of the past. Each stratigraphic unit from the bottom to the top of the mound represents a distinctive and special ritual practice with its own meanings, prescriptions and performances’ (Gansum & Oestigaard 2004:69).

Of course, innumerable rituals that were performed at grandiose funerals such as the one at Håga have not left any material traces. This makes it all the more important to identify the rituals that have left archaeological traces. By reversing the excavated stratigraphy, starting at the bottom and following the successive layers as the funeral proceeded and the mound grew, one can
gain new insights into the ritual scenarios and also empirically document time sequences and different parts of the mortuary rites. This is vital for a deeper understanding of religion and cosmology. In this case, the time depth of the rituals, and the timing and location of sacrifices can give new insights into the Håga monument as a whole (Figs. 4.1–4.2).

Despite being more than a century old, Almgren’s report is a good point of departure for analysing the ritual stratigraphy. Some of the current limitations, future challenges and possibilities will also be discussed as part of the analysis.

The Great Funeral – and many rituals

Before the funeral
Both cult houses existed before the mound was constructed, indicating that the Håga area was already a cultic place before the great mound was built. Given the size and positioning of the mound in the landscape, it seems plausible that this initiated this ritual area as a cemetery. However, as only a few of the graves have been excavated and dated, there may be older structures and remains, though those found so far are younger (Iron Age).

The location of the mound, which stands on a natural slope, seems to have been chosen for its topography, giving the impression that it is larger than it actually is and making it more impressive, particularly from the southern and coastal sides. According to Almgren’s measurements, the mound rises to a height of 6.25 m from the north and 9.5 m from the south (Almgren 1905:11).

The cremation
A huge fire was built on this sloping ground, which Almgren interprets as the original cremation fire in which the deceased was cremated on a pyre. Most of the charcoal remains are pine, but there were also remains of oak, some hazel and other tree types (Almgren 1905:37). The charcoal level was deposited on the original gravel bottom which has various depths (the exact thickness of the charcoal layer is difficult to estimate given the sloping character of the natural topography). Based on the distribution of the charcoal evidenced by the excavation, Almgren concludes that it is unlikely that the charcoal layer had a wide distribution beyond the excavated area. This suggests a diameter of 7–8 m (Almgren 1905:25, see Figs. 2.5 and 2.6, original Figs. 14–15). He suggests that the cremation pyre was situated in the same place as where the mound was built, or that in any case a huge fire (of pinewood) had burnt there. If this was the cremation pyre, the cremated remains were carefully collected (Almgren 1905:43).
Fig. 4.1. Aerial view of Håga in 1992. Photo: Jan Norrman, RAÄ.

Fig. 4.2. Aerial view of Håga in 1992. Photo: Jan Norrman, RAÄ.
Building a ritual platform?

The next stage in the construction of the mound was the building of the inner cairn, but given the sparse documentation this seems to have been a complicated process involving many consecutive rituals. The cairn seems to have covered the whole bottom of the mound, stretching in all directions to its outskirts. As Almgren points out, the stones in the cairn were seldom too large for one man to carry, except for one huge stone block that was originally not part of the mound. Besides this, none of the stones had a diameter of more than 80 cm (which perhaps indicates the size of stones carried by two men). It was evident that this part of the cairn or layer of stones was not mixed with earth or soil (Almgren 1905:19).

Almgren was puzzled by the large number of half-decayed oak logs found in the cairn’s lower part. Unfortunately, as conservation conditions were not ideal, they were only preserved in short pieces – the largest had a length of about 1 m and a diameter of about 40 cm. According to Almgren, these logs had all been part of a construction, though it was difficult to identify its exact shape or purpose. However, he is confident that the cairn’s lower part was covered in oak logs, mostly oriented in an east-west direction. In both eastern and western directions, the distribution of oak logs stretched to the outskirts of the mound (Almgren 1905:19, 22).

As most of the finds were retrieved from the charcoal layer at the bottom of the mound, Almgren surmises that the artefacts had fallen through the gaps between the stones. This makes sense if they had originally been deposited on a platform, as they would otherwise have been inserted between the stones as part of the funeral. There were also many remains of pinewood and bark chips, some even hanging loose in the gaps between the stones. This bright-yellowish layer of wood and bark chips was clearly different from the dark-brown oak remains. It was also where the sword was found (Almgren 1905:19–23).

In sum, it seems that there was a platform made of oak logs oriented in an east-west direction. A layer of light-coloured pine and bark chips was scattered over this surface. The fact that another structure was built on this – most likely a chamber – supports the notion of a platform, as building straight onto the uneven surface of the stone cairn would have rendered any structure unstable. Based on the profile drawing, the platform was around 1 m above the natural rock surface on the sloping parts; in other places, it would probably have been closer to the surface.
The chamber
The oak-log coffin was oriented in a roughly east-west direction. The grave coffin was placed within a timber structure in which the logs were stacked perpendicularly to protect the coffin from the enormous pressure of the mound that was to be built around it. When the chamber (and perhaps even the platform) deteriorated, it left a considerable empty space at the centre of the mound, which was apparent from the exterior as a depression in the middle of the mound (Almgren 1905:22).

The cairn
The rest of the cairn was built above the chamber and on the platform. Based on the profile drawing, the maximum height of the cairn was around 4–4.5 m. As Almgren points out, it appears to have covered the whole bottom surface of the mound, giving it a diameter of more than 40 m (the mound was not completely circular; Almgren measured a diameter of between 43 and 49 m). The cairn itself was therefore a massive construction.

The mound on top of the cairn
The cairn alone did not complete the funeral monument. An impressive layer of soil, mainly layers of grass turfs, was placed on top of the cairn. Almgren suggests these were cut from clay and sand in the vicinity. Although some Viking Age remains were found in the upper layers, Almgren is convinced that the turf layer was part of the original construction of the mound and not a later or secondary feature of the mound. Indeed, if the cairn had been exposed to weather, rain and oxygen for a long time, the timber would have rapidly deteriorated and rotted. Moreover, the collapse of the chamber under the heavy weight of the cairn and the layers of turf above show that the top layers were deposited before the chamber was crushed. Lastly, the cairn and the mound have a similar content of animal bones and charcoal pits (Almgren 1905:44).

Almgren concludes that there was a single construction phase (Almgren 1905:44). This seems reasonable, though to clarify this question once and for all, one would need to reopen the older shafts, document the stratigraphy and profile walls again, and take new dating samples. Dating the actual sacrificial bone material (humans and animals) in the various layers of the mound is another way of determining the length of the funeral and construction phase.

Almgren's conclusion about a single construction phase should be seen in relation to the Viking brooch that was found in the mound. By ‘a single construction phase’, Almgren means that the turf layer was not built in the Viking Age, 2000 years after the cremation and the construction of the cairn. Instead, he argues that the whole mound was completed as one unit over a certain
period of time. Whether the construction process lasted three months, one
year, ten years or 100 years is still within the overall interpretative framework
of one construction phase.

Six C14 analyses of wood, charcoal and bone were conducted in the 1960s
(Fig. 4.3). The samples ranged from the upper to the lower layers. The dated
bone material comes from different layers of the mound. Five of the samples
gave dates between 2900 and 2750 C14 years before present. The last sam-
ple gave a date that was 350 years younger. When evaluating the results one
must take into account that the C14 dating of bone material was a very new
technique at the time. If the five coherent samples are correlated to calendar
years and an average is calculated, the Håga Mound was built in the time
span 1200–900 BC, calibrated 1 sigma (68,3 %) standard deviation (Johnsen &
Welinder 1993:211–212; cf. Sellstedt, Engstrand & Gejvall 1967). Because of the
uncertainties, it is difficult to interpret these dates individually. The overall
time span could indicate that the mound was constructed during one phase,
which is supported by the stratigraphy, although this single or continuous
construction phase may have taken several centuries.

From a ritual perspective, one can identify at least three different phases in
this grandiose funeral, each of different length and featuring different ritual
participants and spectators.

Fig. 4.3. The C14 dates of Håga
sent to Docent Mats Malmer in
Three major ritual phases

The cremation

The first major ritual would have been the actual cremation of the deceased (Fig. 4.4). As discussed elsewhere, from a technological point of view, a cremation consists of at least three stages. Hertz pointed out the importance of the intermediary period (Hertz 1960:42–43), with three stages in mortuary sequences involving cremation (Oestigaard 1999):

1) The place where the body is cremated.
2) The intermediary period in time and space. This interval is essential to understanding cremation practices. During this period, the bones that were cleaned during cremation may be further treated locally or transported in an urn over long distances.
3) The place where the cremated remains are deposited or buried. This place may be the same site where the body was cremated, but normally the bones are transported (with or without urns) to other places or cemeteries.

In the Häga funeral, the deceased was most likely cremated at the same spot where the cairn and mound were built. Strontium analysis of the cremated remains of the deceased may give clues to his (or her) origin and the person’s travelogue throughout his/her life span, but it is difficult to determine
whether the deceased lived close to the mound or was carried from a distance to this cosmologically important place where two cult houses already existed. Whether the deceased lived near or far from the cremation site at Håga, one may assume that there were lengthy preparatory rites for the deceased. This may have included washing, shaving and clothing the dead body in a new dress or funeral linens (Fig. 4.5). Carrying the corpse in a procession is also a highly ritualised process in which social hierarchies are manifested. This procession could have featured music, drumming and perhaps dancing, while participants probably wore special clothes (Fig. 4.6). The cremation site itself may also have been ritually cleansed before the construction of the pyre, for instance by washing with water, sprinkling with herbs or perfumes, or small purifying fires (there are many remains of small fires and charcoal patches at Håga). But while many important rituals were probably conducted before the

Fig. 4.5. Ritual paraphernalia also used during funerals? Bronze Age horned helmets from Brøns Mose at Viksø (Veksø) on Zealand, Denmark. The National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen. Photo: Simon Burchell, from Wikimedia Commons.
cremation, few of these leave any material traces or archaeological remains (Østigård 2016).

If the funeral pyre was situated where the mound was built, it would have been a spectacular sight. The documented size of the charcoal remains, estimated at 7–8 meter in diameter, indicate a huge and intensive cremation fire. Ethnographic examples may provide insights into how grandiose funerals have been conducted, and as Clifford Geertz said with regards to state ceremonies in Negara – The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali: 'The state cult was not a cult of the state. It was an argument, made over and over again in the insistent vocabulary of ritual, that worldly status has a cosmic base, that hierarchy is the governing principle of the universe, and that the arrangements of human life are but approximations, more close or less, to those of the divine' (Geertz 1980:102). Furthermore: 'A royal cremation was not an echo of a politics taking place somewhere else. It was an intensification of a politics taking place everywhere else' (Geertz 1980:120). There is no doubt that the Håga funeral was unique and had a vital social and cosmological importance in an area far beyond the Uppland region.

A funeral comprises many different sequences, all of which are important. In many cultures, the cremation or burning of the body is the main ceremony, but in the case of Håga it seems the most important rituals came afterward in
the form of animal sacrifices (unless the bone remains fell through the stones of the cairn at a later stage). In the charcoal layer at the bottom of the mound, there are fragments of bones, lower jaws of cattle, including molars and incisors, and a fragment of a rib. On the bare rock surface south of the charcoal layer, there are fragments of sheep, in addition to smaller wild animals. In the soil layer and the cairn (but not in the bottom layer), there are further remains of cattle and sheep (Fig. 4.7), in particular parts of lower jaws and tibia (Almgren 1905:34). Thus, while the cremated human remains were carefully collected, it seems that animal sacrifices were conducted at the cremation site after the fire was extinguished, since these bones were unburnt.

Dramaturgy, burial and the ritual platform

The second major ritual would have been the burial of the deceased in the oak-log coffin in the burial chamber. After the cremation (and before the animal sacrifices?), the human remains were collected and kept somewhere in the vicinity, while the first construction phase took place. The lower part of the cairn was built with stones, presumably creating a flat platform with a height of about 1 m, though the height probably varied to take into account natural slope. A platform of dark oak logs was built on top of these stones and in a layer of yellowish bark chips. The oak-log burial chamber was probably built in the middle of the platform.

It is not clear to what extent the construction was ritualised. The ethnography provides examples ranging from highly ritualised constructions of for
instance Vedic (or Hindu) altars (Staal 2001) to profane building of temples, churches and mosques. In any event, most physical structures used in rituals are initiated and consecrated, often through complicated rites, and nothing would set the scene for elaborate rituals such as a huge platform.

If these assumptions are correct, it must have made for an impressive ritual dramaturgy. Despite the fact that there are few archaeological remains, one can identify some general parameters at a structural level.

Regardless of the reason for choosing cremation – for the sake of convenience to avoid the corpse’s rot and decay or with the aim of institutionalising new traditions by revitalising old practices (see Chapter 6) – the presence of cremated bones in a contemporary container would have enabled numerous ritual scenarios. As the ritual platform was probably built on top of the cremation site, the intermediary period in space was small. However, as the deceased was cremated, the intermediary period in time could have been long.

The unburnt Oseberg burial in Norway, for example, appears to have lasted for half a year at least. When the chamber was built on deck and half the boat was covered by half the mound, the front deck functioned as a ritual platform (Fig. 4.8). Apple blossoms were found in the front of the ship (indicating spring) whereas there were apples in one of the buckets in the chamber. Fifteen horses as well as other animals were sacrificed during the Oseberg funeral (Gansum 2002: 271–282).
The ritual platform at Håga would have enabled lavish sacrificial rituals (see also Chapter 8). Some of the animal remains found in the deeper layers may have fallen through the platform as it decayed over the years. The main motive for the sacrifices (Modéus 2005) may have been to provide food for banquets that were held. The platform would have enhanced the dramaturgy by separating those at the party from others who were excluded from the community. Perhaps theatrical performances with music and fire, including hallucinating substances, were also conducted on certain occasions.

There are also archaeological examples of other intermediary periods including unburnt bodies. The famous Hochdorf ‘princely’ burial mound from the Late Hallstatt in Germany (where they also found a large bronze cauldron of approximately 500 litres) is estimated to have taken years to construct. The funeral chamber was left open for at least one month during the initial construction, and grandiose banquets were held as part of the funeral (Olivier 1999). Death and funeral have always been important for transactions and the renegotiating of social alliances (Oestigaard & Goldhahn 2006). A ritual platform for sacrifices and feasting would have manifested processes of inclusion, seclusion and exclusion. Some were part of the most important social and cosmic rites, others were not. At funerals like Håga, the lengthy intermediary period during which rituals were performed and relations were renegotiated (probably in front of the cremated deceased) would have been a key social component.

During the last ritual involving the cremated deceased, he (or she) was placed in the oak-log coffin in the chamber, whereupon the sword and all the other precious grave gifts were deposited. This probably represented the absolute peak of the ritual dramaturgy and cosmic rites at Håga. Given the opulence of the grave goods – about one-third of all gold finds and fragments from the Swedish Bronze Age were found at Håga – and the massive size of the mound, there is no doubt that the deceased stood at the centre of the most important rituals. In other mounds, the ‘grave part’ or remains of the deceased is not necessarily the most important and may not even be present, like Raknehaugen (Hagen 1997) or Haugar in Tønsberg (Gansum & Oestigaard 2004). However, even in funerals like Håga where the grave goods are opulent and the constructions are impressive, there were also ritual performances and dramaturgy that left no traces at all for archaeologists to interpret. One can only imagine the spectacle of cosmically vibrant rituals conducted on the ritual platform in honour of the deceased, who conducted them and who was sacrificed.

After the rituals were completed and presumably after the chamber had been closed, the construction of the cairn continued. It is difficult to say whether the intermediary period was long or short. The closing and covering
of the chamber in which the deceased – the primary person for whom the funeral had been conducted – had been placed was most likely an important rite de passage. Closing a chamber and building a cairn physically separates the spheres of the living from the dead. But the funeral was far from over, with some of the most important rituals still waiting to be conducted.

Animal and human sacrifices
The third major ritual sequence consisted of elaborate sacrifices, including human sacrifice and cannibalism. It is striking that most of the sacrificial remains were found in the upper turf layers. The woman’s cleaved femur, which has marks of cannibalism, was found in Shaft II near the top of the mound at a depth of 1–1.5 m. This cannibalistic ritual was performed towards the end of the funeral.

Almgren suggests that the animal bones found during the 1902–03 excavation were the remains of meals consumed during the funeral or during the construction of the mound (Fig. 4.9). The other bone remains of these animals were probably discarded outside the mound (where they decayed) or deposited in parts of the mound that were not excavated (1905:35). However, the presence of human bones, which had apparently been treated in the same way as animal bones, was puzzling.
From a sacrificial point of view, three interpretations can be considered, presuming that killing (and consuming) humans as part of a sacrificial rite is not an ordinary ritual. Importantly, human sacrifice cannot be performed for individual benefit, but must have a wider purpose for society as a whole (Valeri 1985:49). This may give important clues about the overall purpose of the Håga funeral for society and cosmos.

First, these extraordinary rituals performed towards the end of the funeral may have concluded a long sequence of multiple mortuary rituals, which started when the main person died and before he or she was cremated at Håga. Second, these sacrifices may represent something completely different since they are not part of or directly associated with the dead and the rites and sacrifices on the platform, the oak-log coffin, the chamber or the cairn. If this is the case, one may assume that different people partook in the various rituals, and that they were ascribed with significant cosmological meanings and purposes. Third, if there were grandiose sacrifices of animals and even humans in the upper layers which were not directly related to the main deceased, one would expect similar or even greater rituals to have been conducted as part of the main funeral. If such rituals did take place, they left no traces. They could have been performed on the platform, in one of the two cult houses or elsewhere. There are few fragments of skulls in the Håga funeral and mound, but many remains of jaws (see Chapter 7), which may indicate that the skulls were used for other purposes in different rituals at other places. The two cult houses are likely sites for the practice of ancestral cults before and after the Håga funeral and the construction of the mound. This leads us to the ritual specialists who orchestrated the whole funeral.

Ritual specialists and public participation

The ritual sequences were complex and dramatic elaborations, involving all or at least a large part of the community. The Håga funeral also reinvented traditions on a large scale – socially, culturally, politically and cosmologically. Here nothing happened by coincidence. It was a well-planned funeral, involving many intricate rituals, reinventing and building on traditions and ancient ‘death myths’ (Kristoffersen & Oestigaard 2006, 2008). One can only speculate as to who had the knowledge and power to orchestrate and arrange such rituals that extended over an longer time period. The ritual specialists or priests (Goldhahn 2007, 2013, Goldhahn & Oestigaard 2008, Oestigaard 2007) who organised this funeral shaped societies for centuries and even millennia (see also Oestigaard 2015a, 2015b). The extraordinary character of this funeral in a local, regional and European context will be elaborated further in Chapters 5 and 6, but here we will address particular aspects.
By changing the focus from the dead to the living (Oestigaard & Goldhahn 2006), an analysis of the ritual stratigraphy also enables one to approach the ritual participants and their religious roles in the funeral. Synnøve des Bouvrie (1990) has argued that the aim of performances was ‘value charging’—to recreate cultural boundaries and institutions (Fig. 4.6). She argues that the ultimate goal of Greek tragedies was not to communicate any ideas for the individual to reflect upon, but to set the audience into different collective motions, and challenge cultural truths (des Bouvrie 1990:116). The whole process and performances were, ‘guiding the community, and prompting its various members to play different voices for a symphony. This metaphor should suggest what might be going on within each culture, though we cannot see the orchestra playing’ (des Bouvrie 1990:117). Although we turn from theatre to funerals, similar perceptual and phenomenological processes may have been at work. On the one hand, a member of the public may have experienced his/her participation as being part of an invisible orchestra, but on the other hand, somebody had to meticulously plan and execute the orchestration: ritual specialists.

Death is an act, which in itself also triggers different actions and rituals (see Modéus 2005). Pierre Bourdieu has stressed that the fundamental importance of life-cycle rituals and rites de passage in general is to separate those who have gone through the rituals from those who have not. The rituals constitute societal hierarchies and legitimise social structures (Bourdieu 1996). Funerals were obviously life-cycle rituals for the deceased (van Gennep 1960) where ‘[t]he structural “invisibility” of liminal personae has a twofold character. They are at once no longer classified and not yet classified’ (Turner 1991:96).

However, it seems that some funerals also served as extreme rites de passage for the descendants; participants’ social and religious status in society and cosmos also changed in death and through rituals. So who were the rituals primarily aimed at: the deceased or the descendants? Some cremations would have been much more challenging than other funeral practices. One may suspect different types of ritual differentiation with subsequent social stratifications, since some rituals were very demanding of the descendants. Some of the ritual practices may also have been extreme life-cycle rituals or initiation rituals for the participants who most actively took part in the funerals. If all rituals had been the same, ultimately they would have lost their purpose and meaning. Death matters, not only for the dead but also for the living, and extreme death rituals would have changed the performers as much as the dead and their audience (Kaliff & Oestigaard 2017, Chapter 8). At Haga, the human vertebrae may indicate such practices (see Chapter 8).

The rituals conducted at the presumed ritual platform may very well have served the function of separating those who partook in the rites from those
who did not. Whatever the rituals were, they were probably performed in the presence of an audience that testified to and legitimised the new social and cosmological structures that were being established.

The Håga funeral thus initiated new traditions by reinventing past traditions for the future (see Chapter 6). The long-term success of the rituals may reveal something about the performances and participation. The ritual specialists orchestrating this funeral could not have anticipated that the traditions they institutionalised would remain in use in varying forms over a period of millennia. The fact that they did may provide insights into the knowledge systems and cosmic role of the rituals.

The Oxford Dictionary defines tradition as follows: ‘[Tradition is] the transmission of customs or beliefs from generation to generation, or the fact of being passed on in this way … a long-established custom or belief that has been passed on from one generation to another.’ Moreover, as Goody writes: ‘Since knowledge is held largely in the minds of men, rather than being stored in a book or a computer, the older are inevitably at once the most experienced, and the most privileged communicators, as well as most likely to die, taking their knowledge with them to the world of the ancestors. The dead must therefore know more than the living; the forefathers are also the forbearers, the carriers of “tradition”. And it is in the cult of the ancestors that the dead reveal some of their superior, more comprehensive, “knowledge”’ (Goody 1987:xii). Death matters, and it is clear that a very strong ancestral cult was established at Håga, with a continuity in death (in changing forms) that lasted for more than two millennia.

Long after the funeral was completed, oral traditions and memories were transmitted from generation to generation, creating a continuity in ritual practices. As the cosmic consequences of the funeral were so great for society, one can assume that most inhabitants of the local kingdom partook, but also guests, distant friends and family, and allies from near and far were part of the lengthy rituals. The richness and variety of the grave goods strengthen such an interpretation, as do the elaborate rituals conducted in the upper turf layers.

If this assumption is correct, it may provide indications about the length of the funeral. Without further archaeological excavations and a redating of the stratigraphy, one cannot make any definitive statements about the total duration of the funeral rituals, from the preparation of the ground for the funeral pyre to the closing rituals performed on the turf on top of the 9 m-high mound. Given the overall importance and continuity of the Håga tradition, since the funeral represented a watershed in Swedish history and the Bronze Age, it seems more likely that the whole funeral lasted several years instead

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of several months (bearing in mind that ancestral cults often have no beginning or end, but only continuities, which also seems to be the case at Håga). The longer the ritual lasted and the more participants it involved, the more strongly the monumental manifestation and cosmic consequences would have been institutionalised. Death is doing and the physical act of building the mound and the performance of the rituals and sacrifices would have created continuity in traditions and ancestral cults.

The Håga funeral and the construction of the mound were not isolated events. The rituals and continuities have to be seen in relation to the two cultic houses and the other graves and ritual structures. This leads us to the history of documentation, excavation and interpretation of Håga after Almgren's 1902–03 excavation, particularly the excavation of the cult houses in recent times.
Locating Håga in the Bronze Age valley of Mälaren

In any discussion of Håga, it is important to remember that besides the great mound, the other graves and sites in the vicinity were most likely part of the same cosmological totality and that they were also ritualised to various degrees. There are numerous smaller mounds and graves in the area surrounding the Håga mound, some of them dated to the Viking period through finds from Almgren’s early 20th-century excavations. Almgren also recorded the presence of several stone epitaphs, one of which may have stood on the Håga Mound itself. He also suggests that there was a stone circle (domarring) with a diameter of almost 30 m and a thingsted at Håga. Several rune stones were also found at Håga. However, despite its prominence and richness and its unique location in Northern Europe (see Chapter 6), Håga did not develop in isolation: recent excavations in particular allow us to place Håga in a more complex context.

Apart from Håga as a locality, archaeology in the Mälaren Valley has focused on the important rock art, with the highest concentration in the area of Enköping, approximately 30 km south-west of Håga, that can be seen as the core of the Bronze Age area in the northern Mälaren Valley. In addition to the high concentration of rock art, there are also several huge ritual and occupational sites, such as Nibble in Tillinge Parish, Annelund outside Enköping, and Apalle west of Bålsta, with continuities from the Late Neolithic onwards (Andersson & Hjärthner-Holdar 1988; Ullén et al. 2003; Artursson, Karlenby & Larsson 2011). All of these sites have been excavated as part of contract archaeology and huge areas have been exposed and meticulously documented. These sites are of great value and importance for new understandings of the Bronze Age and the context of Håga in the Mälaren Valley.

Two of the sites have been particularly important for understanding the Scandinavian Bronze Age in general and the Mälaren Valley in particular. To date, Nibble is the largest ritual cult place from the Scandinavian Bronze Age to have been excavated and investigated. Apalle is one of the most spectacular
occupational sites from the same period with few contemporary parallels. Annelund with its well-documented stone cist burial also testifies to the preceding stage during the Late Neolithic period, an expansive period of new settlements.

In the same area, just a few kilometres west of Nibble, lies the classical site of Boda in Bred Parish, which was investigated in 1906. This site was also excavated and studied by Oscar Almgren. For a long time, it was believed to be the only remains of a residential building from the Swedish Bronze Age; today, there are doubts as to whether it is a building at all – most likely it is a heap of fire-cracked stones or, if it is a building, it is a cult house. The structure was an oval-shaped layer of stones and clay, measuring \(9.5 \times 7\) m. The year before the excavation, a fibula or brooch of the so-called Bornholm type was found, yet another testimony of the close connection between Uppland and Southern Scandinavia during Period IV (Almgren 1912:133). Håga’s contact networks with Southern Scandinavia are well known, but many of the major sites in the region also had extensive contact networks to the north, and eastwards to Finland and Russia (Ojala 2014, 2016).

Another rich area in the province of Uppland is the northern part of the region. A rich cairn from the Early Bronze Age (Period II) was excavated in 1909 at Torslunda Farm in Tierp Parish. Despite its extraordinary character, the grave remained in archaeological obscurity until it was recently highlighted by Karin Ojala (2016:44–46). The grave was investigated by Knut Stjerna, the leading archaeologist at Uppsala University at the turn of the century. His unexpected death later that same year while he was excavating the grave meant that he never had a chance to publish his findings. Stjerna’s early death was part of the reason that the place was not given the archaeological attention it deserved.

Gunnar Ekholm (1921) analysed part of the site, which included around half of a 500-m\(^2\) cemetery. A central feature was the presence of a grave interpreted as a woman’s grave from Period II with six hanging ornaments that were clearly of southern origin. This finding was later used to support the overall theory that Bronze-Age women travelled over long distances to enter into marriage alliances. It would indicate that women from Southern Scandinavia/northern Germany moved as far north as northern Uppland already during Bronze Age Period II (Bergerbrant 2005:121).

The relatively wide distribution of rich archaeological areas from Enköping via Häga to Tierp is by no means a coincidence. If one looks at Uppland’s landscape from north to south during the middle Bronze Age, around 1000 BC (Figs. 5.1–5.2), these areas were directly connected to the sea. Häga was strategically located along the route from Uppland’s major Bronze Age sites and places in the south and what formed at that time the northern shores of the inland sea which today represents Lake Mälaren, with further connection
Fig. 5.1. Håga and other Bronze-Age sites located in the seascape 1000 BC. From Artursson, Kaliff & Larsson 2017, Fig. 2.6.

Fig. 5.2. Detail of Håga's location. From Artursson, Kaliff & Larsson 2017, Fig. 2.6.
both to the south and the north. Just north of Håga and Uppsala along the water courses lies Broby in Börje Parish. This parish has the highest concentration of heaps of fire-cracked stones in the whole of Sweden. Broby is most famous for its house construction, which is named after the site (see below).

During recent decades, major contract archaeological projects have been conducted as part of road constructions in the northern part the Uppsala Province. These have revealed spectacular sites, including Ryssgården and Sommaränge skog in Björklinge Parish (Forsman & Victor 2007; Hjärthner-Holdar, Eriksson & Östling 2008) and Skeke and Björkgärden in Rasbo Parish; the latter sites also show clear continuity as cultic places from the Bronze Age to the Late Iron Age (Artursson, Kaliff & Larsson 2017). Skeke and Björkgärden can partly be seen as analogous to Håga, as they have a central strategic location along the water routes that connect inland seas and waterways to the coast. Zooming out on the wider Uppland region, even the sites at Darsgärde (Ambrosiani 1958; 1964) and Hallunda (Janusson 1981) were centrally located along the waterways connecting the hinterland with the regions to the south, north and east. Thus, the strategic location controlling the water highways was a crucial structuring factor (see below and Chapter 6).

The local vicinity of Håga

Apart from the grave mound at Håga, which is truly unique (Fig. 5.3), several other places have a specific cultic and mortuary character that resembles the overall Håga area. The most famous is the Broby site in Börje Parish just 6–7 km north-west of Håga. Broby is famous for the cult houses (see below), but also for the heaps of fire-cracked stone.

Heaps of fire-cracked stone are a specifically Swedish phenomenon. While there are several areas in southern Sweden with high concentrations, the Mälaren Valley has the greatest abundance. In Uppsala County, there are approximately 3,550 heaps of fire-cracked stone, representing about 54% of all known Swedish heaps of fire-cracked stone. In Börje Parish, 370 heaps of fire-cracked stone were recorded, making it the site with the highest concentration of heaps of fire-cracked stone (Jensen 1986:24; Victor 2007:239).

Archaeological interpretations have often found it difficult to get away from the idea that fire-cracked stone is the by-product of a process that is functional in our eyes. Pits and heaps of fire-cracked stones have previously often been explained as part of everyday activities in Bronze Age settlement sites (e.g. Hyenstrand 1968; Jensen 1989), even though they often contain more problematic remains. The cremated human bones found in such heaps have been interpreted as originating from secondary burials (e.g. Rentzhog 1967). It is obvious that fire-cracked stones were commonly used as building material
in stone settings, and also that their occurrence may be connected with cremation places. It has also been suggested that the heaps of fire-cracked stones may be sacrificial cairns (Bellander 1938) or traces of cremation places (Nylén 1958; Kaliff 1994). During recent years, the close association between graves and heaps of fire-cracked stones has also attracted attention, and today ritual contexts are seen as unproblematic interpretations.

Located about 10 km north of Häga, Dragby is another important site along the ancient waterways. This is a cemetery with about 500 stone structures, where cremation burials have been documented from the Bronze Age to the
Early Iron Age. The cemetery was investigated in 1959–61 and is most famous for the huge cairn, which determined the location of all the other graves. The complicated construction was used from the Late Neolithic to the Late Iron Age. The primary grave was a stone cist, which was for a long time used as a burial chamber for unburnt bodies. Each time a new body was buried, the older ones were replaced. Altogether, the remains of 30 individuals were found in the cist. C14 samples from a charcoal layer covering the last burials dated the grave to 1215 BC. After the last burial in the coffin, burials and funerary rituals continued in the cairn and the surrounding area for more than 1000 years (Jaanusson & Silvén 1962; Rydh 1962).

Broby was investigated in the years 1948–50 and 1954–57 (Schönbäck 1952, 1959). Further investigations were carried out in 1968–1970, but these results were not published until recently (Ojala 2016). A special house construction was documented, and heaps of fire-cracked stones were also excavated. The house type has been termed ‘stone-foundation house’ (in Swedish often referred to as ‘Brobyhus’), and another ‘post house’ or ‘small ritual house’ (Victor 2002: 103). The stone-foundation houses are not houses in the literal sense of the word, but rather rectangular stone- and earthen-walled enclosures. These types of structures are mainly dated to the earlier part of the Bronze Age and are connected to ritual complexes with burial mounds or cairns. Some enclosures are also connected to deposits of burnt bones, scattered pottery, grinding stones and fire-cracked stones (Victor 2002: 147). The small ritual houses are dated to the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age and have been documented in several cemeteries/cultic places in Sweden from the late 1980s onwards. They consist of small, almost quadratic structures and are often located in close proximity to bone deposits, hearths, pits and layers of fire-cracked stone. Documented finds and features from the contexts of both the larger enclosures and the small buildings indicate that they are places for complex rituals related to death. This could be where different parts of the funeral and mourning ritual took place or where the deceased were prepared (e.g. Kaliff 1995; 1996; 1997).

The waterways and concentrations of heaps of fire-cracked stones are similar patterns in the vicinity of Håga, and both Broby and Darsgärde have clear and strong eastern influences. Moreover, the cultic and ritual activities that took place at Håga, Broby and Dragby at the same time link these places together in a larger Bronze Age society (Ojala 2016), which also includes the other sites a bit further away, like Ryssgården and Sommaränge skog in Björklinge Parish, Skeke and Björkgården in Rasbo Parish, Nibble in Tillinge Parish, Annelund outside Enköping, and Apalle west of Bålsta. Håga is unique, but its uniqueness must be considered in the comparative local and regional context, from which many similarities emerge.
Recent investigations and excavation around the Håga Mound

The ‘Håga Church’, a cult house dated to Bronze Age Period III but with activities up to Period V–VI, was partially excavated by Almgren in the early 1900s and later re-excavated by Michael Olausson in 1999, with students from Stockholm and Uppsala Universities (Fig. 5.4). Just a few hundred metres to the west of the Håga Mound and Håga Church, another cult house that was used from the Early to Late Bronze Age was excavated by Helena Victor in 2000–2001, in cooperation with one of the authors (Kaliff). It was an educational excavation for students from Uppsala University and at the same time a research excavation that formed an important part of Victor’s PhD work (Fig. 5.5). This thesis included earlier works at Håga, but focused on the interpretation of cult buildings of the type investigated (Victor 2002).

The small cult house was established by the end of Period II or early in Period III. It appears to have been deliberately destroyed by the end of Period III or early in Period IV. Thus, it seems that the activity at Håga was not initiated in the area around the large mound, but around the small cult house a few hundred metres to the west. Intriguingly, next to this ‘stone-foundation
house’ there were remains of a cairn, which seems to have contained a stone cist (Victor 2002). Although difficult to verify, because of damage caused by later activities, it could be analogous to Dragby further north. Bearing in mind that this coffin contained the burial of 30 individuals, one can only imagine the rituals that took place in the small cult house. These rituals and funerals were almost certainly accompanied by music and different forms of trance experiences, since a well-functioning rock gong or lithophone was found in the inner northern wall of the house (Fig. 5.6).

After the small cult house was abandoned, or probably intentionally demolished, the ritual activities seem to have moved to the big cult house or the ‘Håga Church’. It seems that this cult house was established and used from Period IV onwards until the end of the Bronze Age, though it is unclear from dating samples whether the ‘Håga-Church’ was in continuous use. The small cult house may also have been revived during Period V, when several burials were conducted and ceramics were deposited near the house. In 2001–02, heaps of fire-cracked stones were excavated around the cult house. Several cremation burials were also evident through small concentrations of burnt human bones. It is difficult to say whether the two cult houses were used alternately or in parallel, though the ritual function of the small cult house seems to have changed over time (Victor 2002:178–179).

There is no doubt about the cultic character of Håga and the small cult house, particularly considering the setting at the time the house was built. Until the late Bronze Age, the area was an island in the sea. Based on estimates and investigations conducted by the Geological Survey of Sweden (SGU), during Period III, ca. 1300–1100, the shoreline at Håga formed a peninsula, approximately 23 m above today’s sea level. The area changes character from an
island to a peninsula with the shoreline at approximately 23 m above today's sea level. The strategic location was exceptionally good, since Håga lay at the inlet of a long narrow fjord that formed the gateway to the surrounding region. Both Håga and Broby (situated around 6 km to the north-west) were located on the western side of the fjord whereas Dragby was located on the northern shores (Victor 2002:153pp).

Thus, while the Håga area was originally located on an island, the ritual and political function of the site increased as a centre of power (cultural and cosmic) when the area became a peninsula that controlled the waterways and transport routes.

Phosphate analyses have also shown the increase in activities. In the late 1970s, extensive sampling and analyses of phosphate content were carried out on the fields closest to the mound, but also on the sloping fields to the south and west. The highest phosphate concentrations were documented north and west of the mound, particularly in the area surrounding the small cult house (Damell 1977; Victor 2002:157). Increased phosphate concentrations are evidence of high human activity, and usually high phosphate concentrations are seen to indicate living areas, since humans and animals leave a lot of organic material. Obviously, high phosphate levels do not reveal anything about the type of activity – living area, harbour, agricultural cultivation for ritual pur-

Fig. 5.6. Rock gong found in the small cult house, with the Håga Mound in the background.
poses – or a combination of all these and other activities. Given that the areas north and west of the great mound have higher concentrations, it is not unreasonable to connect these with lengthy funeral rites or cyclic and commemorative mortuary rituals throughout the centuries. Such an interpretation is also corroborated by high phosphate concentrations around the small cult house.

The higher phosphate concentrations in the agricultural fields to the south and west can be interpreted in other, non-ritual ways. As mentioned, in its heyday Håga controlled the waterway that connected the inner sea and rivers to the outer sea and contact networks to the south, north and east. Several places to the south and south-west of the ‘Håga Church’ are optimal natural harbours. The phosphate concentrations also testify to increased activity in this area, which makes this an important location for future excavations.

Areas used for domestic purposes were also found close to the mound. This does not necessarily conflict with the religious character of the site: even religious people need food and drink, rest and relaxation. Several investigations were conducted to the west of the mound in the period 1970–1990, including student and research excavations as part of educational courses at Uppsala University and contract archaeological excavations as part of construction work in the area. In 1985, a research excavation was conducted about 100 m west of the mound. It included parts of a heap of fire-cracked stones and also about 70 m² of a living area. Clay from house walls was found, and, besides different types of ceramics, one of the most important finds was part of a continental drinking vessel from the Lausitz culture (Forsberg & Hjärthner-Holdar 1985). The totality of the finds and the dates indicated a very long phase of continuity of use from the Bronze Age to Pre-Roman times. In the heap of fire-cracked stones there were even traces of metallurgy in the form of iron slag, which probably dates to the Bronze Age. The oldest traces of iron production or the introduction of iron to the Mälaren Valley can be dated to Period II (Hjärthner-Holdar 1993:183). Given the extreme richness and the presence of influential European elites at Håga, the early introduction of iron work in the vicinity of the mound is plausible.

Ten years after the 1985 excavation, the Swedish National Heritage Board conducted another excavation beside the previous one. The latter excavation confirmed that the living area had an ever-greater extension, and a couple of years later in 1997, another contract archaeological excavation conducted an excavation about 1 km to the west of the mound. This excavation also identified remains of houses and domestic areas with dates from the Late Bronze Age to the Early Pre-Roman Iron Age (Frölund 1996; Göthberg & Holmström 1999).

The surrounding area in the vicinity of Håga is rich in documented prehistoric sites and activities. Besides the great mound and the other graves, there are cult houses, heaps of fire-cracked stones and domestic areas, as well as 26
registered localities with cup marks (Broström 2000; Victor 2002). Although cup marks are notoriously difficult to date, scholars believe most of them can be dated to the Bronze Age, though some new and old cup marks were also used in the Iron Age. It is surprising that no rock art of any type has been found near Håga or in this part of Uppland. Given the great wealth of Håga and surrounding sites, and the presence of important religious elites around the site, one would expect rock art in the area. Instead only cup marks – considered by researchers to be the poor rural cousins of rock art – have been found.

There are at least two important water connections for further studies. One probable site for finding rock art and perhaps also remains of sacrifices (including humans) is the Kvarnbo Falls (Kvarnboravinen), just a few hundred metres north of Håga. In the Bronze Age, this waterfall brought fresh water from the interior to the sea via a waterfall (Figs. 5.7–5.8). The pioneering work of Christina Fredengren (2002, 2011, 2015) identified flowing waters as hotspots for sacrifices and depositions in the province of Uppland, as she pointed out: ‘Most Late Bronze Age deposition sites have connections with rivers or other waterways’ (Fredengren 2011:113). Based on material around the Lakes Mälaren and Hjälmaren in Sweden, Martin Rundkvist found that almost 90% of the depositions are located in the watery parts of the settled Bronze Age landscape. Moreover, although all wet contexts are significant, it is particularly those water-worlds with features such as river inlets or outlets of lakes, waterfalls or any other types of flowing water that were the prime con-
texts for depositions (sacrifices or hoards) (Rundkvist 2015). Following Joakim Goldhahn (2002), 25 out of about 80 known Neolithic hunter-gatherer rock-engraving sites made between 4000–500 BC in Scandinavia were intentionally related to the ‘sound of water’. Nämforsen and Laxforsen are classical sites. The Kvarnbo Falls are located in Uppsala’s own Grand Canyon (for those not familiar with Uppsala, this a flat plain, in which Kvarnbo Falls stands out as a promising candidate because the waters in the ravine tear up the landscape in otherwise unknown ways, see also Oestigaard 2018).

The other main archaeological site connected to waterways and Håga is the ancient fortification, Predikstolen (‘The Pulpit’), named after the appearance of part of the mountain cliff on which it is built (Figs. 5.9–5.10). It is located about 3 km south of the Håga Mound and built on a marked height along the current-day Håga River valley (see also next chapter). The river was a fairway on the archipelago and probably played an important role for communications during the Bronze Age. The short distance between the fortress and Håga places the fortification in a strategic position in the Håga area, where it may have functioned as the most important control post for Håga.

Ancient fortifications have traditionally been dated in Swedish archaeology to the Roman Iron Age or the Migration Period. New investigations in recent decades have changed this view, and many have been found to date back to the Bronze Age. Michael Olausson’s study of this fortress showed the oldest phases can be dated to Period III. The structure was destroyed by fire some time during Period V, giving the dates from 1200 BC to 800 BC. However, the
The fortress was also used in later stages, with one phase dated to the Iron Age. Not only does the activity phase fit with Håga, but Olausson also interprets the site primary as a location where ritual and cultic activities took place (Olausson 1995). Although Predikstolen perhaps served mostly as a strategic fortification given its location and closeness to Håga, the latter interpretation fits well with another fortification in the region: Odensala.
As part of Helena Victor’s 2000–02 PhD work mentioned above, the small cult house was excavated and a possible stone cist covered by a smaller cairn and a couple of heaps of fire-cracked stones were also investigated. In parallel, a few years later, other heaps of fire-cracked stones were excavated with other activity layers in an era 300–400 m south of the mound in the sloping agricultural fields, which is one of the candidates for a Bronze Age harbour.

The status of eastern connections today

Despite the uniqueness and richness of Håga and its location in the Bronze Age landscape of Uppland, the site has with a few exceptions remained in the shadows of the more well-studied Bronze Age sites in Southern Scandinavia, as well as the iconic exponents of the Vendel and Viking period in its vicinity: Vendel, Valsgärde and Old Uppsala. However, there is a growing interest in the Bronze Age landscapes of the Mälaren Valley, not only through the major contract archaeological excavations conducted over recent years, but also thanks to the studies that highlight new aspects of Håga.

Karin Ojala has studied the Mälaren Valley’s contacts and networks eastward in the Bronze Age. Not only are there contacts to Gotland, Finland and the Baltic areas, but even further eastwards to Russia and the great river cultures in the Volga-Kama region (Ojala 2016). Although eastern contacts had been discussed previously (e.g. Nerman 1957), different ideologies emphasising contacts have coloured the interpretations. The eastern contacts were primarily considered to be about the distribution of objects and artefacts without cultural significance. The European and Southern Scandinavian influence on the other hand has been interpreted as significant for the spread of culture, ideology, technology: a connection that fundamentally changed the world view of people and societies (Ojala 2016). Hans Bolin (2005) also pointed to the tendency of favouring southern and western interpretations over eastern contacts and influences. This interpretative bias is changing today, and many researchers emphasise the different regional variations and developments, and how they interact with each other in Bronze Age Scandinavia (e.g. Thedéen 2004; Ling 2012). Further studies of the eastern connections are surely among the most promising areas for new knowledge, but there are also many others, which include empirical and theoretical studies of death and sacrifices (see Chapters 6–8).

There is no doubt that Håga combined different circles of contacts and networks to the north, the east and the south. Its location along the watery highways may have enabled different contact networks that turned it into a regional hub. Where other local and regional centres traded and kept close contact with other centres in one or two regions, Håga mastered and was the
master of at least three. The Danish influences were definitely important: Almgren (1905) suggested that the most important artefacts were produced there. Although Olderberg (1933) also argued in favour of Danish connections, he thought that the spectacle-shaped gilt brooch could have been locally inspired by the décor on the magnificent sword.

From Europe's elite to Stockholm's gutter

If Håga once defined Europe's elite, elements of its former glory ended up in Stockholm's gutter. The most spectacular finds, including most of the gold found during the 1902–03 excavation, are now at display in the 'Gold Room' at the Museum of National Antiquities in Stockholm.

Unfortunately, all that glitters is not gold. The spectacle-shaped gilt bronze brooch was gold-plated, which deceived a thief in February 1986. The brooch was stolen from the showcase at the museum and it was believed to have been lost for eternity. After the theft, it was widely agreed that this was a contracted robbery and that the brooch was now in the possession of a dishonest collector who had ordered and paid for the theft. The precious artefact was widely publicised in newspapers and on radio and TV, but the brooch did not turn up. Then on 15 July, after the winter's snow had melted, one of the museum's technicians, Monica Fjaestad, found the brooch in the gutter. The thief thought it was made of pure gold, but when he realised that it was only gilt, he tore the gold apart and threw the brooch away. A metal detector search helped find another piece of the brooch. After four months in the gutter, and with traffic passing nearby, the brooch was heavily damaged (Lamm 1989).

While the damage allowed a previously impossible technical investigation of the décor beneath the gilding to be carried out, it was a small consolation – the brooch was damaged beyond repair. The museum made an exact copy of the brooch to be displayed to the general audience. Silversmith Ralf Ohlsson from the museum at Uppsala University was commissioned to the task (Zachrisson, Ohlsson & Martner 1989). Thus, as the original brooch was probably made in the province Uppsala, its copy was also manufactured close to Håga. Whether locally produced or imported from distant areas, it also points to another aspect of this age-old debate in archaeology. Elites and those who are perceived as being the best are not always somewhere and somebody else; they are everywhere and at all times specifically located in time and space, although obviously moving and interacting throughout large areas and with numerous people. From this perspective, the question is not only about Håga's relationship with the rest of the elites in Europe, but also how Håga defined and was part of establishing and maintaining elites.
Håga in its Scandinavian context

In Southern Scandinavia and Denmark, the Early Bronze Age is characterised by burial mounds or cairns. The sites feature large, monumental burial mounds with one or sometimes several individual burials, but not in the form of the collective graves that appeared earlier in megalithic graves and cists. In Denmark, mainly in Jutland, about 20,000 such mounds are still preserved, though there may originally have been four times as many. The Danish burial mounds have provided important inputs to Bronze Age society and the individuals who lived then, given the exceptional preservation conditions in the graves. Similar mounds are also found in northern Germany and Southern Scandinavia, particularly in the Swedish provinces of Skåne and Halland. There are also similar mounds in Rogaland in Norway and Östergötland in Sweden. The area south of Lake Tåkern in the province of Östergötland is the northernmost area with a concentration of burial mounds of the Southern Scandinavian type. These mounds are located in a geographical area very similar to the plains in southern Sweden, Denmark and northern Germany.

Håga is in many respects unique (Figs. 6.1–6.2). It is the northernmost of all these Southern Scandinavian Bronze-Age mounds. Cairns are very common on Sweden’s eastern and northern coasts, as well as in the coastal areas of Finland. Unfortunately, preservation conditions in cairns are significantly worse than in mounds: over time oxygen and seeping water destroy all organic materials and corrode metal objects. One could surmise that people living on approximately the same northern latitudes shared basic religious and ideological values, if for no other reason than that they probably lived in the same society during the reign of the presumed Håga king (assuming that the main deceased was a man and not a woman). The rituals were similar yet different, but in any event the king’s (or queen’s) funeral was not like that of commoners.

Moreover, the burial customs on the mainland of what is today central Sweden are to a large extent different from those in the south. This raises the question of how to interpret similarities and variations in death; 1) different preparations and modes of depositions of the corpse’s flesh, 2) absence and presence of grave goods, and 3) differences in mortuary monuments. Archaeologists constantly face the challenge of assessing the extent to which these parameters reflect different religions or simply varying beliefs that are ritualised in practice within an overall shared cosmology that leaves distinct material traces. Håga exemplifies all these challenges – and many more (Ojala 2016).

Apart from the fact that the Håga Mound burial is the northernmost documented oak-coffin burial from the European Bronze Age, this funeral also took place several centuries after the majority of the unburnt Danish princely graves with similar coffins. Furthermore, the Håga Mound contains a cremation grave and not an inhumation. The burnt bones were placed in the oak coffin after the cremation, in a manner reminiscent of an inhumation, though this was not established with certainty due to conservation conditions and weather circumstances during the excavation. The coffin was enclosed in a timber chamber that had been covered by a cairn, which in turn had been covered with turfs to shape the mound. The grave goods in Håga were exceptionally rich and rivalled those found in the Danish graves. Gold is rare
in the Swedish Bronze Age, which is why it is astonishing that a third of all gold artefacts and fragments from this period come from the Håga Mound (Eriksson 2008). The dead person’s grave goods included a bronze sword with gold-coated bracket, a gold-coated mantle buckle decorated with concentric circles, a gold-coated razor and a fibula.

There is little doubt that the individuals buried in the Danish burial mounds during Bronze Age Period II were special, although their specific role in society is debatable. The same applies for the mound in Håga, which was built at a later date during Period IV. About 75% of those buried in the excavated Bronze Age mounds were male, which suggests a patriarchal society (Fig. 6.3). It should be noted, however, that the women, who comprised about 25% of these burials, received similarly lavish artefacts or rituals. Ordinary people were not buried in this way, regardless of gender. Spread over a few hundred years, there are few graves per generation, and it is reasonable to assume that only people with a special social status were buried in this way, and that they represented the highest level of the ruling elite. There are also features indicating that they held specific ritual positions in society, which probably also raised their social status. Whether they were secular or sacred

Fig. 6.2. Topographical map of Håga. Riksantikvarieämbetet Uppdragsverksamheten, 1982. Source: ATA Stockholm.
leaders in life, or a combination of both, they certainly had fundamental roles in the society’s cosmology in death; at least that is how their descendants used them. Moreover, some of the material objects in the Danish graves point to their role in religion and cosmology, and this also applies to some of the objects in the Håga Mound.

However, it can be difficult to determine whether an object has a ritual function or is a functional object whose design links it to a ritual mindset. It is likely that many objects had this double function – sacred/profane or mythological/practical – and we as archaeologists separate these functions. It is clear, however, that the artefacts that accompanied the deceased, both in the Danish graves from the Early Bronze Age and in the Håga Mound, were not everyday garments or objects.

The most common interpretation is that a man was buried in the Håga Mound, but this is not based on osteological analyses of bone material and can therefore not be confirmed with certainty. Some of the objects in the grave, especially the sword and the razor, are considered typically male, but other-
wise it is difficult to determine the gender of the deceased. It has also been suggested that the mound was constructed for two persons, perhaps a man and a woman. This scenario includes an interpretation of some of the gold spirals found in the grave. These were part of a lavish skirt of strings similar to the one found at Egtved, the most famous Danish Bronze-Age mound, though this one is at least 300 years older than the burial in the Håga Mound.

Håga in its European context

The most famous and iconic grave from the Danish Bronze Age is the woman’s grave from Egtved in Jutland, dated with dendrochronology to 1370 BC. The grave was originally investigated in 1921, but has attracted a renewed interest in recent years, with strontium analyses shedding light on the geographical origin of the deceased. The young woman in the grave was probably 16–18 years old. She lay on an oxhide and was covered by a woollen blanket. By the girl’s feet was a bundle of wool fabric encasing burnt bones of an eight- or nine-year-old child. The girl wore a shirt with half-length sleeves, a special short string skirt, and a belt that featured a belt plate decorated with spiral ornaments (Fig. 6.4). The skeleton itself was dissolved due to the acidic environment. However, the skin, hair, nails and teeth were preserved alongside the clothing and objects. All the finds together highlight that this was a very special outfit, which probably had religious significance and thus indicates her social and religious status. Other archaeological finds from Denmark and further away have provided comparative parallels to Egtved. At Grevensvænge in Zealand, Denmark, bronze statuettes were found that were roughly contemporary with Egtved. One of these statuettes featured a similar skirt and belt plate to the one found in the Egtved grave.

The statuette depicts a person in the middle of an acrobatic dance, just after completing a back-flip. Such back-flipping figures were also found in rock
carvings elsewhere. Back-flipping ritual dancers also feature in Greek Bronze Age imagery in Minoan Crete, suggesting that this kind of ritual dance was widespread among the religious and social elite in Bronze Age Europe.

The teeth, hair and nails of the Egtved girl reveal much about her life. Strontium isotopes from one of her molars show that she was not born in Denmark, but in an area that is today located in southern Sweden, England or – most probably – southern Germany. Several elements suggest that she was of southern German origin, more specifically from the Black Forest area near what is today the French border. Strontium analysis shows that even the wool from her blouse and the oxhide she lay on in the grave originated in this region. Moreover, the burnt bones of the child at her feet also came from there.

The girl’s hair and nails provide further details about the last years of her life. Hair and nails grow continuously and gradually encapsulate substances so that they can provide information about where she ate and drank. Her long hair and teeth therefore act as a travelogue of the last two years of her life. Two years before her death, the girl’s hair had the same strontium signature as her tooth enamel, indicating that she was in her home area in the Black Forest region. She then spent about nine months in Denmark, before returning to southern Germany and finally going back to Egtved again. This means that during the last two years of her life, she twice went back and forth to Denmark from Germany. She apparently died around a month after returning from her last trip (Frei et al. 2015).

The gold threads found in the Håga Mound indicate a type of short skirt similar to the one found in Egtved. Still, the chronological gap between Egtved (Period II) and Håga (Period IV) makes direct comparison difficult, as all societies obviously develop over the centuries. Nevertheless, there are other parallels between the Danish and northern German area from Bronze Age Period IV (10th–11th centuries BC). These later monuments are of a slightly different kind than those from Period II and like Håga they contained cremation burials. One of the closest contemporary parallels to Håga is the Korshøj Mound in southern Funen. The large amount of gold present in the Håga burial also corresponds to the graves of the Oder Valley on the border of present-day Germany and Poland. Two other exclusive graves that have been compared with Håga are the magnificent burial mounds from Luschoj on Funen in Denmark and Seddin in north-western Brandenburg (e.g. Harding 2000). Still, Håga is perhaps the most remarkable because the monument is located so far north and is far removed from what appears to be the core area for this type of graves.

The Korshøj Mound was excavated in 1858. Korshøj contained a rich cremation burial. The grave gifts included a Central European bronze vessel, two swords, including one with a gold-coated bracket, a bronze knife, two
razors (one gold-plated and stored in a wooden case), two tweezers of gold and bronze, as well as buttons and other items. Dated to about 800 BC, Lusehøj is even younger than Håga. The mound was examined in 1861, but unfortunately not professionally according to today’s standards. It was originally 36 m in diameter and 8 m high. The objects in the grave are of high quality and included an imported bronze vessel containing burnt bones wrapped in a fabric woven from the fibres of a nettle plant. The vessel also contained other personal items, such as a golden bracelet, razor and buttons of bronze and gold. All these objects had been wrapped in cloth and in an oxhide in a way reminiscent of the older burial mounds with non-cremated burials like Egtved. Lusehøj also contained three small bronze bowls, one axe and pieces of amber. A new survey undertaken in 1973–75 documented another grave under the mound from the same era in which a dead man had been burnt on the site. The excavation also revealed that the mound was superimposed onto four smaller and slightly older burial mounds from the Bronze Age Period IV.

Strontium analysis of the nettle-fibre fabric found in Lusehøj shows that the fibres most likely originated from areas in current-day Austria (Bergfjord et al. 2012). The bronze vessel containing the bones and grave gifts derives from the same area. Thus, this is another example of long-distance connections as in the older grave at Egtved. One plausible interpretation is that the man buried in Lusehøj had influence over important bronze trade routes, which led to that particular area in Austria during this period. The man may have died on a trip and been cremated abroad, after which the cremated remains were brought back to Funen for burial. A similar interpretation could be made of the cremated bones of the child in the Egtved grave. The Egtved girl herself obviously travelled back to Denmark alive, but the child may have died in the south and been cremated there, after which the girl brought the remains back with her. Shortly after her return to Denmark, she died and they were buried together.

The Egtved girl is too young (16–18 years) to be the mother of the child (8–9 years), but they could have been relatives. In any event, everything points to intensive long-distance interaction and relations across Northern and Central Europe. Those buried in these mounds were part of the ruling European elite at the time.

Lusehøj is probably the richest grave from the Late Nordic Bronze Age to have been examined to date. Together with Håga, it belongs to a category of extraordinarily rich graves. It is located in an area that originally featured at least 25 burial mounds, though only four are preserved. The large burial mound Buskehøj lies near Lusehøj. With a diameter of more than 60 m and a height of 8 m, it is the largest Bronze-Age mound on Funen. It has not been excavated, but test drilling has detected a core cairn of stones, which is a fea-
ture we recognise from Håga. Dated around the same time as Lusehøj, there are also rich graves on the west coast of Holstein, with a group of mounds that also excels in size and content compared to other graves in the surrounding area. Unfortunately, they were improperly excavated in earlier times and not dated with any more certainty than Late Bronze Age. Some of them could be reused older mounds, although this is considered less likely (see Menke 1972:63; Thrane 1984:169).

Another close parallel to Håga is the so-called ‘Royal Mound of Seddin’ to the south-east of Håga on the border between Mecklenburg and Brandenburg in northern Germany (Fig. 6.5). It is located in an area with several hundred mounds of various sizes. The huge Seddin monument, a mound with a diameter of 90 m and a height of 11 m, contained a covered stone chamber where the cremation burial had been arranged.

The walls of the chamber were covered with painted red clay, apparently originally decorated with, among other motifs, a meandering pattern. This sort of decoration is otherwise unknown in Europe north of the Alps. An imported bronze vessel contained the burnt bones of a 30–40-year-old man. Among the objects in the chamber were additional bowls, a hatchet, a knife, razor, tweezers and a lance tip. According to the documentation, a bronze sword was driven into the floor of the burial chamber.

By all accounts Seddin and the area around Lusehøj on Funen were important centres during the North European Bronze Age. While Håga is geographically distant and forms the northernmost outpost, the grave shares

Fig. 6.5. Excavation of the so-called Royal Mound of Seddin in September 1899. Source: Archiv, Stiftung Stadtmuseum Berlin.
many similarities with its southern counterparts. Through history, but also during the Bronze Age, rivers and seas were the highways of transport and communication. It was much easier and in many cases much safer to travel over water than over land (despite bad weather, it was easier to carry heavy loads on water and there were less chances of robbery). Håga was therefore more accessible than the map may indicate today. Moreover, its far northern location also provided a huge hinterland to the north with rich resources. These sites, and probably several others that are yet to be identified, may therefore be examples of how elites maintained long-distance relationships and had continuous exchanges, not only between the Danish area and Central Europe, but also northward.

The European parallels to Håga place the latter in a wider perspective and both Seddin and Lusehøj show clear links to the southern Alpine region. After all, it would probably only have taken a few days by boat from Denmark along the Swedish coast to Håga compared to the long and arduous journey over land (or over the rivers) further south on the continent. This means that Håga is only one ‘station’ from the Central European Bronze Age, and we cannot rule out that contacts southward were even more direct. In fact, the route to Poland is shorter than the one to Funen, although the former involves crossing more open sea. However, as evidenced during the Viking period, good sailors could cover vast distances on the open sea. Bronze-Age rock art shows large boats (Fig. 6.6); the Danish boat Hjortspring, dated to 400–300 BC, was 21 m
long. Travelling long distances over sea was most likely not a problem, even though the voyages could be arduous. At the same time though, the voyagers’ social status probably rose upon their return.

The image of the Bronze Age as a period of extensive contacts is long established in archaeology (Kristiansen 1993; 1998; Kristiansen & Larsson 2005; Kristiansen & Suchowska-Ducke 2015). This applies particularly to the earlier part of the period, though it is also relevant to the later parts, even if routes and contact nodes changed. In the heyday of the early Scandinavian Bronze Age (ca.1500–1200 BC), there was an extensive network of contacts for trade and other exchanges between different European regions. Trade networks established direct communication between parts of Central Europe, particularly current-day southern Germany, and the eastern Mediterranean region. Other areas of Northern Europe, specifically current-day Denmark, also had direct contacts with southern Germany, which was a sort of hub, where people and impulses from more remote areas came into direct contact with each other. The close communication between very distant regions is intriguing not only with regards to exchange of material goods, but also other exchanges like cultural impulses and religious beliefs.

Obviously, people needed to communicate and understand their counterparts – with or without interpreters – in order for an exchange of goods to take place. Although the details of such exchanges and communication are largely unknown, it is during this period that key similarities in languages across the continent emerged. Furthermore, the spread of many of the beliefs and ideas that are today known as Indo-European is likely to have occurred during the early Bronze Age. Recent analyses of ancient DNA have further strengthened interpretations of intimate contacts across the continent (Allentoft et al. 2015; Haak et al. 2015; Olalde et al. 2018). These studies support the theory that regular contact and exchanges between the different populations created a shared cultural or cosmological sphere in the Bronze Age, even if significant local and regional variations persisted.

This kind of interaction continued during the later parts of the Bronze Age and provided a fertile ground for exchange of technical know-how and ideas. However, the routes, nodes and interfaces, as well as the mechanisms of interaction changed over time. From around 1200 BC, the intensity of contact decreased, particularly between the western and eastern parts of Central Europe. The same applies to Greece and the Eastern Mediterranean, where major changes occurred. This epoch coincides with the chronological (and cultural?) change in Scandinavian archaeology between the early and late Bronze Age around 1100 BC. New networks were established, but during the transition period there was a marked decline in contacts and a discontinuity in old networks. Gradually, however, new communication routes developed
and new centres emerged. This was the era of Håga: the last of the past and
the first of the future – continuing the previous tradition but reinventing and
establishing new traditions which were perpetrated for two millennia.

This was also a time when larger chiefdoms emerged, social inequality increased and a more specialised society evolved. The military probably evolved as part of this, with the rise of professional warriors and larger military units (Kristiansen & Suchowska-Ducke 2015), no longer made up of dozens of warriors, but instead hundreds or even thousands. This coincides with the rise of the Urnfield culture (ca. 1300–700 BC).

Larger military units maintained large fortifications in various Central European locations, such as Bernstorf in southern Germany, which was later burnt down and destroyed by enemies. The establishment and maintenance of such large bases required sophisticated organisational structures, not to mention an extensive land area and a large population in the vicinity that was able to equip and support them. Another outstanding example is Cornesti-Iarcuri in Transylvania in current-day Romania. This huge fortified settlement covered an area of more than 1,700 hectares with four defence lines (Szentmiklos et al. 2011). Nothing on this scale existed anywhere else in Central Europe until historic times.

The settlement flourished during a period of conflicts and wars and when it was abandoned around 1100 BC, the Central European region had already been transformed: agriculture had become more intensive, replacing earlier societies that had mainly been based on pastoral life and animal husbandry. The new economy allowed for population growth, which in itself spurred population movements and social changes in other areas (Kristiansen & Suchowska-Ducke 2015:383).

These events and changing lifestyles also affected Scandinavia in the following centuries. Since Scandinavia had been in close contact with Central Europe, it was not only influenced by the developments in the south, but probably also played an active part in the changes. Håga fits into this overall European picture as the first of the future and the last of the past tradition. Extraordinary burials like Lusehøj and several large Danish grave mounds were built in the following centuries.

Moreover, there are several indications that fortifications were smaller than the ones discussed above. The ancient fortification at Håga known as ‘The Pulpit’ (Fig. 6.7, see Chapter 5) is also an interesting example in this respect. The context of the fortification suggests an organised defence structure protecting the central place and its surroundings. In this respect, it could be considered a northern variant of the same patterns that developed on the continent during the early Urnfield Period, with fortified centres and settlements. It consists of a 4.5-hectare ‘main fortress’ and a 1.5-hectare ‘annex fortress’ just 50 m to
The Predikstolen fortress was, as indicated, built around 1200 BC and used until around 800 BC, with one or more possible interruptions and periods of reconstruction.

Traces of cannibalism and cosmology in the Håga Mound

As previously mentioned, only a small part of the main archaeological area at Håga has been investigated and many questions remain about the site. It is particularly important to study the site’s role as a ritual and political centre in relation to other contemporary ritual sites that have been excavated and documented in recent years in the same region. Previously discussed sites like Nibble, Skeke, Sommarängeskog and Odenslunda are all located in the same geographical area in central Sweden, namely the region of northern Mälardalen in the province of Uppland. During the Bronze Age, this area was located on the coast with well-established sea routes to the continent. The relation between these cultic sites is important as a basis for interpreting the Håga complex. One may assume that the people using these sites shared the same
overall cosmological conceptions and mythologies, though they all had different ritual practices. Moreover, studies from completely different geographical areas, notably in Denmark, are also of great relevance for the analysis of a burial mound like Håga.

A number of studies have examined the complex construction of 14th-century-BC Danish burial mounds similar to the Håga Mound. In the Danish contexts, including the Egtved burial, the bodies of the deceased were placed in coffins made of hollowed-out oak trunks with grave goods, often on a cow- or ox-skin. The oak-log coffin was surrounded by an inner cairn of stone, which in turn was covered by a mound built of many layers of turf. The extremely favourable preservation conditions in some of these graves can be explained by the presence of a crust of iron compounds in the layers around the grave, which enclosed the central part of the mound and the actual burial in a capsule-like structure. This was the result of a natural process of reduction of iron and manganese that took place in the layers of the mound when the interior was soaked with large quantities of water during the construction phase. Parallel to the excavation of the burial mound at Skelhøj in 2002–04, experiments were conducted in order to understand the reduction process that took place during the construction of the mound. The excavation revealed that the ground on which the mound was built had first been burnt. The mound was composed of a mixture of grass sward and heath peat that was sourced from different places in the surrounding area. Inside the mound there were structural details of various stone levels, clearly demonstrating that the building of the mound was a complicated process involving several stages. The watering of the interior of the mound as part of the construction process preserved the deceased in the oak-log coffin in a ‘time capsule’ (Breuning-Madsen et al. 2001; Holst et al. 2001; Holst et al. 2004; Kyvik 2005).

The combination of different fundamental elements – fire, air, earth and water – probably had a strong cosmological significance. However, it seems unlikely that the chemical processes triggered by the watering of the turf were known or intended by the Bronze Age builders of the mound. It is more plausible that the use of different elements was based on specific cosmological conceptions that shaped the actual performance of the ritual, and that the favourable preservation conditions were a fortunate (at least for archaeologists), but completely unintentional, side-effect. The result was a humid, oxygen-free and slightly acidic environment, which preserved most of the organic materials like skin, hair, fabrics, wood, etc. The unburnt bones, on the other hand, dissolved. The special conditions for conservation in such mounds are similar to the natural conditions in a peat bog.

The Håga Mound was built in a similar, but not identical, way. Although the mound’s outer casing was built of turf, which was very well preserved
according to the excavation report, the preservation conditions in the inner part of the burial mound were not the same as in the Danish examples. Only fragments of the Håga coffin and timbered burial chamber were preserved. There are several probable reasons for the less favourable preservation conditions. Firstly, the inner stone cairn was relatively large compared to the older Danish monuments. Moreover, the Håga Mound had a burial chamber, which probably allowed for the circulation of significantly more oxygen in addition to improved drainage of water. In other words, there was more space for natural decaying processes to take hold. Still, the material from Håga that has been documented and preserved is of outstanding quality and forms an invaluable resource for the interpretation of ritual processes. Not only does it help us understand the ritual stratigraphy, how the mound was built and the successive rituals as part of the construction (Gansum & Oestigaard 2004); it is also one of the most clear-cut examples of ritual cannibalism in Scandinavian archaeology, as documented during the 1902–03 excavations.

Besides the cremated person in the main burial, remains of three other deceased persons were found in various stratigraphical layers of the grave. There is an ongoing debate as to how the presence of the other deceased should be interpreted. Different suggestions have been put forward: while they may not have been sacrificed and killed as part of the funeral, people seldom die at the same time in traditional societies – except during plagues or other catastrophes. Rituali, it therefore seems likely that humans were sacrificed as part of the funeral in the Håga Mound. Several human bones were found close to the remains of the coffin, suggesting that they were buried as part of the main ceremony. It therefore appears that the bones of the three other individuals were part of the ritual that took place when the cremated person was buried in the oak-log coffin and the mound was constructed. The internal chronology and time span of the construction of the mound remains unclear; future investigations may bring new findings to light. However, already during the excavation, the researchers’ attention was drawn to one highly unusual bone fragment: the long femur of a woman, which had been deliberately cleaved in the middle with a clear cut. Almgren argued that descendants had done this to get to the bone marrow (Almgren 1905:36).

While cut marks on bones may suggest different defleshing practices, cleaving a bone in two and exposing the bone marrow inevitably suggests ritual cannibalism. Not only was the cleaving a deliberate act; its sole aim seems to have been to expose the bone marrow. Like the brain, bone marrow is not just any part of the body; it is frequently considered to be highly potent and invested with particular cosmological meaning and importance. It is of course impossible to say how the bone marrow was used and by whom, but it underscores the qualities of human flesh. To avoid a discussion about
cannibalism, one may suggest that the bone marrow was offered to divinities through fire or water. This is a reasonable interpretation, though it does involve using human bodies as a means of connecting this world and humans to cosmic flows or divine processes. Another likely – although not necessarily likeable – interpretation is that the bone marrow was part of a ritual meal – a cosmic meal. This could be offered solely to the divinities, but if there was a notion that divinities could devour humans and use them as part of cosmic interaction between this world and the otherworld, the relation would have been strengthened if humans partook in the meal.

The cleaved femur found in the Håga Mound is in many ways remarkable, but it seems that similar practices may have been more common than archaeologists have previously acknowledged. There are other examples from approximately the same period, including material excavated in the 1950s in a burial mound in Vreta Parish in the province of Östergötland. These finds have been related to similar burial rituals on the continent, more specifically to Lusatian culture where human sacrifices and ritual cannibalism possibly occurred (Silvén 1958).

As discussed in *Cremation, Corpses and Cannibalism* (Kaliff & Oestigaard 2017), sacrifice and funerals are closely linked. This is because both the contents of these rituals and the way they are designed and conducted are based on creation-myth cosmologies, which makes them fundamental to ritual practice.

The reason why archaeological finds from prehistoric Scandinavia have not been interpreted in terms of human sacrifices is probably that scholars have been reluctant to do so, rather than a shortage of empirical evidence enabling such interpretations. Animal and human bones often occur in the same contexts and while interpreting the animal bones as sacrifices is generally unproblematic, it is more difficult with human bones. Human remains are interpreted by definition either as burials, as remains of a cremation site, as bones used secondarily as offerings in buildings, and so on, or they are left without interpretation as ‘enigmatic’ scattered bones. On the other hand, just as parts of the sacrificial victim can be returned to tribe members and to a specific place to mark kinship, this could also be the case for the remains of the dead. It may have been considered essential for the survival of the collective that the funeral ritual be performed at a certain place and for the remains of the body to be divided and deposited according to the cosmic flows within a given cosmology. Through these rituals, the deceased was restored to his or her basic elements and at the same time incorporated in all the places and contexts important for the identity of the collective and the future.

With its central location in the Bronze Age landscape in east-central Sweden, with its rich archaeological environment and magnificent monuments,
Håga is a good candidate to have served as a place for such important collective rituals. The mere fact that a woman's femur was cleaved and the bone marrow used in the rituals suggests that this funeral involved more than just the future of the cremated deceased in the oak-log coffin. Human sacrifices and ritual cannibalism are cosmogonic acts for society at large, and the very rationale for conducting such rituals is that the bodies are parts of the flows of cosmic forces linking humans to divinities.

Before analysing human and animal sacrifices more in depth in Chapter 8, we will proceed with a peculiar aspect of sacrifices found in many ritual and funeral contexts, namely the high percentage of lower jaws compared to other bones and bodily remains.
CHAPTER 7

Funerals and Sacrificial Lower Jaws

Contrasting comparisons

The main person in the funeral was cremated and for the time being it is impossible to say anything with certainty about other specific body treatments. Whether they were placed there intentionally or not, remains of burnt jaws were present and central to determining the age of the cremated deceased. A larger fragment of the lower jaw indicated a small or at best middle-sized skull of a middle-aged individual (Almgren 1905:31).

With regards to the other human remains, Almgren was puzzled by the fact that parts of the unburnt humans were scattered in the same way as the animal bones (Almgren 1905:35). He concluded that humans had been sacrificed like animals (Almgren 1905:44). Most of the human remains from the unburnt skeletons were long bones like femurs or forearms, but in Shaft V (depth ca. 2.5–3 m) a human molar from a lower jaw (left side) was found. Otherwise the remains of human jaws and teeth were underrepresented compared to the animal remains. Among the many finds of dog bones, for instance, there is a high presence of lower-jaw fragments (Almgren 1905:34). The remains of pig jaws are mainly from the upper part (Fig. 7.1), but otherwise most of the jaw remains are from lower jaws. Intriguingly, the lower jaw remains cover all types of animals: small and large, domesticated and wild, including cattle, deer, dog, sheep and even squirrel.

Finding jaw remains from sacrificial rites is quite common, with numerous archaeological examples including finds from Old Uppsala (John Ljungkvist pers. com.). Few ethnographic accounts explain the role of sacrificial jaws in general and lower jaws in particular. However, as Valeri says, there is often ‘a partial overlapping between animal and human head if we take into account that the lower jaw of the animal is treated in a way that is reminiscent of the way the human head is treated’ (Valeri 1994: 129). Thus, there is an association between the head and the jaw, even if only because the jaw is part of the head. The archaeological challenge is to move ahead.

This brings us directly to the age-old debate about the analogies and the relationship between archaeology and anthropology (or history for that matter).
Since Binford’s statement that ‘archaeology is anthropology or it is nothing’ (Binford 1962) and Clarke’s equally well-known statement that ‘archaeology is archaeology is archaeology’ (Clarke 1968:13), ethno-archaeology has given rise to both the processual and post-processual paradigm (Tilley 1989). Nowadays, both these paradigms are out of use, but the use of analogies prevails because there are few other options, even if providing a pure methodological approach to the uses of analogies in archaeology has proved difficult (see for instance Oestigaard 2004a, 2004b).

In practice, most archaeology follows Ian Hodder’s outline of reasoning presented in *The Present Past* (Hodder 1982). ‘All archaeology is based on analogy and the process of analogical reasoning can be explicit or rigorous. But we cannot strictly test the analogies and hypotheses, which result from their use. Archaeologists cannot prove or falsify their hypotheses on independent data. All they can achieve is a demonstration that one hypothesis or analogy is better or worse than another, both theoretically and in relation to data’ (Hodder 1982:9). Moreover, as he said, relational analogies ‘demonstrate that similarities between past and present situations are relevant to the “unknowns” that are being interpreted, whereas the differences that can be observed do not really matter; they are not relevant because there is little link between what is different and what is suggested as being the same’ (Hodder 1982:19).

The challenge in interpreting sacrificial lower jaws is the lack of ethnography around which to spin webs of significance (though we may not be aware of certain studies that could have enhanced our knowledge and be useful to our interpretations). Fredrik Fahlander described archaeology from another perspective as science fiction, because analysing the past is not simply a study of the Other, but rather a study of the unknown. He argues that it is preferable to pursue an interpretative approach based on fictions rather than contemporary data. While the ethnographic record can be a source of inspiration, it cannot provide a framework for interpretation (Fahlander 2001:41). From a methodological point of view, it does not matter from where one draws inspiration; the problem with science fiction is that one becomes restricted by a contemporary Western (and futuristic!) frame of understanding (like Steven Spielberg’s 1975 Hollywood thriller *Jaws*).

The main task is to broaden one’s horizon of understanding and get on the right track of reasoning. All too often, archaeological finds and distribution patterns hardly provide any meaning, and ethnography rarely helps to understand the myriad of overlapping post-holes in the ground that apparently do not stem from houses.

Moreover, analogies would be redundant if the archaeological and ethnographic process and source material were the same. But that is not the case, though ethnography can be an invaluable source of inspiration. The scientific
approach in archaeology (as in all disciplines) is a specific form of reasoning leading to certain conclusions. As Stephen J. Gould said: ‘Science, in its most fundamental definition, is a fruitful mode of inquiry, not a list of enticing conclusions. The conclusions are the consequence, not the essence’ (Gould 1987[1985]:417).

Hence, ethnography may play a central role in archaeology to provide comparative and contrastive examples. It may illustrate the reasoning process and may broaden the horizon of interpretation for other scholars (Østigård 2016). In the following discussion, the ethnographic example is explicitly used as an intellectual sparring partner because the case is different and not identical to the actual remains found in Håga (Fig. 7.1).
John Roscoe (1861–1931) was an Anglican missionary to East Africa who came to Uganda in 1884. In 1911, he published his main monograph *The Baganda. An Account of Their Native Customs and Beliefs*, which is based on ethnographic studies from the late 19th and early 20th century. In this impressive monograph, he also devotes a few pages to the treatment and importance of the king’s lower jaw. One can immediately point to some of the many differences: 19th-century Uganda is not Bronze Age Håga. Not only are they separated by 3,000 years and located in different cultures and continents; in Uganda, the king’s lower jaw was certainly the focus of ceremonies, whereas at Håga we cannot be sure about the role of the king’s (or queen’s) jaw. Roscoe did not discuss or document the jaws of sacrificial animals in Uganda, but animal jaws are the main sacrificial body parts discussed here. Thus, precisely because the contexts are different, it is possible to use ethnography as an intellectual sparring partner. Ethnography may open up horizons for new understanding, which may enable interpretations of unique archaeological contexts without any parallels in the present, or even in the past.

Such an approach may be criticised though. Chris Gosden claims that ‘all archaeology today is postcolonial’ (Gosden 2001:241), and even states that ‘ethnoarchaeology is immoral, in that we have no justification for using the present of one society simply to interpret the past of another’ (Gosden 1999:9; see also Gosselain 2016; Roux 2017). This claim is problematic and even absurd in its extreme form. Apart from the fact that all ethnographic studies have prime value as studies in their own right that are never conducted simply to interpret the past of other societies, following Shanks and Tilley, all interpretations and archaeology contain a fourfold hermeneutics where one has to understand the relation between the past and the present, other societies and cultures, contemporary societies and the communities of archaeologists conducting interpretations (Shanks & Tilley 1987). Hence, our contemporary horizon of (Western) understanding is also a kind of ethnography used to interpret the past. It is never simply a means to understand other societies, but always and inevitably part of archaeological interpretations.

On the other hand, Hammersley & Atkinson believe ‘that the most effective strategies for pursuing research should be adopted unless there is clear evidence that these are ethically unacceptable. In other words, indeterminacy and uncertainty should for the most part be resolved by ethnographers in favour of the interest of research, since that is their primary task’ (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995:285). Positively, if a book published more than a century ago about societies on a different continent can still inspire other studies in different disciplines, this adds value to the original study – a valuable achievement for any academic study. The relevant comparison or source for reasoning will depend on context. In this chapter, African ethnography may broaden our
horizon of understanding. In the next chapter, it is ancient Hindu and Indian texts and romantic Hollywood movies.

The king’s lower jaw

As part of an in-depth ethnographic description among the Buganda Kingdom in Uganda, Roscoe describes a royal custom involving the king’s lower jawbone after death (Fig. 7.2). This ancient custom will be referred to in some length, since it may enable us to discuss certain aspects of enigmatic lower jawbones found at Håga. Roscoe writes that after the king’s death:

‘The skull was taken back to Busiro, after the lower jawbone had been removed from it, and was buried with honour near the tomb… Some old people state that the head was not severed, but that only the jawbone was worked out in the manner described. The jawbone, after it had been cleansed, was taken to Masangazi, where it was again washed in milk and beer, and the chiefs of the late King… drank the mixture. It went through two or three further washings before it was considered to be perfectly clean; it was then wrapped in a fine piece of barkcloth
which had been rubbed with butter, and was decorated with beads and cowry-shells which had been collected during the King's lifetime from people succeeding to chieftainships. In explanation of this we may mention that it was the custom for each chief who inherited a chieftainship to pay one cowry-shell and a bead, when he came to thank the King after being installed into the chieftainship; these beads and cowry-shells were preserved for the decoration of the jawbone, and were called “The King's Wealth” (Roscoe 1911:110).

Comment: The old people's statement that the head was not severed also implies the perception that the lower jaw represented the head, or *pars pro toto* (Lat.), in which a part represents the totality. From a very functional and pragmatic point of view, if parts of the skull represent its whole and are used in rituals, the lower jaw is the most accessible, as the upper jaw and teeth are part of the under-surface of the cranium. Thus, removing the upper jaw would require much greater effort than breaking off the lower part. While it is possible to remove the upper jaw, cranial parts would most likely follow. Pigs form an exception to this (as shown in Håga) as a larger concentration of upper jaws were found. However, as they have a pointed mouth, parts of the upper jaw can easily be chopped off from the cranium. In the Ugandan case, the skull seems to have been less significant, though it was honourably buried. However, throughout prehistory, different forms of ancestral cult have involved all or parts of the skull. If the skull or parts of it were intended for use in funeral rituals or ancestral rites, functionally there would have been no need to detach the lower jaw from the cranium. If, on the other hand, the lower jaws represent the skull, this enables more elaborate (and double?) rituals since the jaws can be used in the actual funeral and the rest of the skull can serve in other ancestral rites.

However, the skull, cranium or brain is the part of the body (Fig. 7.3) that is invested with the most meaning (in the literal sense). Therefore, any functional perspective cannot sufficiently explain the ritual practices and religious beliefs (see below). The quote above mentions the cleansing of the jaw, but also how the chiefs drink the remaining mixture of milk and beer. Jaws inevitably place an emphasis on digestion and consumption, providing endless possibilities for ritual repertoires in practice (e.g. Oestigaard 2000, 2013 Kaliff & Oestigaard 2004, 2013, 2017). Elsewhere in Uganda, in the kingdoms of Bunyoro and Tooro, the body of the deceased king was dried on a slow fire with a pot placed below the corpse and the pyre to collect the liquids from the dead body. These liquids were mixed with food and presented during the new king's ascension ceremony so that both the new king and the people could partake in the dead king and be said to have 'eaten their king' (Behrend 2011: 22). The king's body was part of and represented the body politics of the kingdom; it was a metonym of the entire cosmos, and the king's health and
prosperity ensured the health and prosperity of the kingdom and its inhabitants (Behrend 2011: 34). In a similar vein, the decorated jawbone was called ‘The King’s Wealth’, symbolising and unifying the kingdom. In short, rituals centred on jaws seem to focus on consumption, which is a social activity, and are therefore closely associated with communality and social relations in the reconstitution of society. Moreover, the incorporative identities of communal consumption are being and becoming, not only socially and individually, but also cosmologically. This is evident in the following description of the rituals associated with the king’s lower jaws.

‘The decorated jawbone was put in a wooden vessel... the umbilical cord was brought [forward...] and they were put side by side... A site was chosen, and the whole country supplied labour for building a temple to receive the jawbone and the umbilical cord of the King, and also the umbilical cord of the ex-Queen, and the various officers to the late King were appointed. Those who had held important posts during his lifetime took the more important sites near the temple, and retained their old titles. They were given sufficient land on which to live and support themselves’ (Roscoe 1911:110–111).

Comment: The umbilical cord used in the ritual is a very potent and life-giving symbol. In the archaeological record, all remains of such soft tissues decayed a long time ago, but, as this ethnographic example shows, preserved archaeological material is only part of a wider ritual repertoire of materialities. The act of preserving an organ such as the umbilical cord throughout the lifetime of the royals connected generations and provided continuity. In a northern context like Häga, the temple in which the jaw and umbilical cord would have been buried would have been the great grave mound. The statement that the whole country supplied labour for the building seems rea-
sonable for most major monuments in the past. Lastly, the funeral itself was a religiously sanctified ritual where privileges, status and land were given, reconfirmed and displayed. Death was also about transactions and social renegotiations (see Oestigaard & Goldhahn 2006).

‘The ghost of the King soon took possession of some man, who was sent to the temple to be the medium; and from that time onward it was possible to hold converse with the late King, and to hold receptions in his temple… When the reigning King died, the tomb of his predecessor lost much of its importance, though it was kept up in a less magnificent style; indeed, no temple was allowed to disappear altogether’ (Roscoe 1911:111–112).

Comment: Whether discussing Håga or other funerals from the past, one cannot make any definitive statements about how the deceased’s soul reacted during the rituals and before it eventually was transferred to another realm among ancestors or divinities. Monotheistic world religions, such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam, generally maintain a hard boundary between the living and the dead, giving descendants limited or no possibilities to influence the fate of the deceased. Even in the royal funeral of the deceased kings in Nepal, the soul of the departed king was embodied in a ritual priest who was fundamental in the auspicious transfer of the soul and the associated gifts to heaven (Oestigaard 2004c, 2005, 2015a, Kaliff & Oestigaard 2008). In most other ethnographic contexts, there are evidences of various soul transfers involving shamans, healers or other ritual specialists. Death and funeral rituals form the connection between this world and other worlds, making them the most important rites from a social and cosmological point of view.

‘Crowds of people followed the monarch, and thronged to see the ceremony; the umbilical cords were on view, and the jawbone of his father was prominent. One of the old men explained everything to the King, and handed him the decorated cords to examine, and the medium foretold his future. On his return the King suddenly gave the word to the guard, and hundreds of people were caught, taken to the sacrificial place and put to death, to join the ghost of the dead King… The King stood in great awe of his father’s ghost, and consequently made offerings to him’ (Roscoe 1911:112).

Comment: Great sacrifices as part of royal funerals have been quite common throughout history. Sacrificial hierarchies culminate with human sacrifice (e.g. Hubert & Mauss 1964, Valeri 1985, Modéus 2005). In this case, the human sacrifices were part of the jaw- and umbilical cord ceremonies. With regards to Håga, at least three persons were buried as part of the funeral, and it seems likely that they were sacrificed as part of the overall rituals. This is difficult to prove as bodily remains and bones from previous burials could
have been incorporated into later funerals and ancestral rites. In any case, as the above-mentioned example emphasises, the current ruler stood in great awe of the ancestors. Future cosmic legitimacy was rooted in mythological pasts within the domains of divinities and descendants.

‘The noted King Mutesa changed the burial-custums by telling his people that he did not wish to have his jawbone removed, nor his body embalmed. The reason which is given for the removal of the King’s jawbone is that Kalimera, the son of King Cwa, was once sent by his father to Bunyoro, to collect money for the payment of a fine which his father had imposed upon him. While in Bunyoro, he committed adultery with one of the wives of the King in Bunyoro, and fled the country to escape his wrath. On the way back to Uganda Kalimera died; his followers did not know what to do with the body, but as they would have to prove that he was dead, they beheaded him, and took his lower jawbone back to Uganda as the principle part to be saved. From that time onwards Kings and important persons have had their jawbones removed and persevered’ (Roscoe 1911:112).

Comment: It seems unlikely that the original meaning of the ritual had been forgotten. However, numerous ethnographic accounts describe rituals that are performed because this is what is ‘done’, but without participants knowing why or grasping the meaning of all the symbols and ritual sequences. Rituals teach people to believe in cultural principles by creating experiences in which they can be apprehended. Therefore, rituals produce social order by producing conceptual order (Valeri 1985:x–xi). As Caroline Humphrey and James Laidlaw say: ‘Ritualization itself tends to undermine the link between the purposes for which an action is performed and the form the action takes. In performing an act in ritualized form, as a ritual act, you perform it as you do, and not some other way, just because it is so prescribed, and not because it makes sense to do so, or because you have reasons for doing so’ (Humphrey & Laidlaw 1994:167). However, it seems unreasonable that such an important ritual should have its origin in and derive its cosmological meaning from such a commonplace event. After all, this king committed adultery and his followers could have brought the head back as proof – indeed, a jaw does not prove much of the deceased’s identity. Roscoe then gives another, more likely cosmological reason, explaining the importance of the jaws in general and the lower jaws in particular.

‘Though this story is interesting as a tradition, and though it supplies a reason for this practice of removing the jawbone, there seems to be undeniable proof that the custom was of earlier date, and that it prevailed before Kintu [principle and origin god] came into the country. The conception that the ghost attaches itself to the jawbone dates from very early times; there are jawbones still in existence which
are said to be those chiefs whom King Kintu found in the land when he came, and whom he left in possession of their property. The Kings’ ghosts did not give advice about ordinary cases of illness, and were not consulted by the common people; they held receptions every three or four days, and from time to time sent the King important messages about matters of state or warned him of invasions which were being planned’ (Roscoe 1911:112–113).

Comment: When Roscoe refers to the King’s ghost, he clearly means the life force or ancestral spirit of the deceased. ‘The conception that the ghost attaches itself to the jawbone’ is an idea that may be relevant for prehistoric interpretations, but from here onwards the ethnographic analogies fell short, since they cannot explain why the souls should be attached to jawbones in general and lower jawbones in particular.

Based on the archaeological material and the osteological remains from Håga, it is evident that lower jaws were given a particularly important ritual or cosmological meaning. Otherwise, one would not have anticipated the deposition of such a large number of jaws compared to other bodily parts of the sacrificial animals. Based on the broader horizon of understanding that the ethnographic description and discussion have provided, one may use this as a framework to conceptualise and spin further webs of significance (Geertz 1973) around sacrificial jaws in funerals, with particular relevance for interpretations of Håga, but also jaws found in other archaeological contexts.

The soul and the lower jawbone

There are certain structural qualities that are the same for humans and animals when it comes to jaws, since homo sapiens is also a biological species. The curious presence of jawbones from animals throughout the whole range of sizes, various types of domestications and role in sustenance farming – from cattle and deer to squirrels – suggests that they were considered to be more than just animals. The term ‘animism’ has been widely used, discussed and criticised since it was introduced by Tylor (1871). Different forms of spirit embodiments in living beings as well as in objects and elements in nature exist. As Hocart emphasised long ago, this is not ‘nature worship’. The divine may embody and materialise within a stone, statue, tree or water, but the stone, statue, tree or water has no soul as such; it is the mere presence of the divinity that is venerated (Hocart 1954: 30). If squirrels, cattle and presumably also humans (though few positive remains of human jaws were found besides some teeth) were treated in the same way in the Håga funeral, there must be some common denominators across the species, including humans. In the Iron Age, transformations between the realms and shifting shapes were associated with the god Odin. The prehistoric Bronze Age probably did not share our concep-
tions of the uniqueness of humanity and differences between ourselves and the wider world in this realm and beyond, which were inhabited by humans, animals and divinities alike, including the numerous forms of benevolent or malignant spirits, ghosts and various ancestors and so on.

If one takes as a point of departure for interpretative reasoning that the soul or the ancestor attaches itself to the jawbone in one way or another, one may spin strings of associative connotations at a structural level around jawbones. Why jawbones, and in particular the lower jawbones? Part of the reason, as mentioned above, is probably the fact that the upper jawbones are difficult to separate from the cranium. The specific focus on the lower jawbones allows one to identify some general structural parameters and processes. Jaws are unique in many ways, precisely because they allow different senses to work – functionally and spiritually (Fig. 7.4):

Breathing: Breathing represents the essence of being alive. The nostrils are important, but the jaws open the mouth allowing for more extensive and intensive breathing. From the classical philosophers in antiquity throughout most cultures and religions, including the Norse cosmology, breathing has always been attributed with special meaning. In cold climates, breath is even more spectacular as it becomes visible in the form of exhaled air that forms a cloud of vapour during the winter. The jaws are the gates to the inner steam – or soul – and they connect the outer life-giving air to the inner vital organs of the body.

Producing sound: Like with breathing, it is through the mouth and by opening the jaws that we produce sound. Small sounds can be produced through a
closed mouth, but loud outcries require the opening of the jaw. Animals communicate – wolves and bears are perhaps the best examples – but all animals, from horses to cattle and squirrels, communicate sounds through the mouth. Humans not only make sounds, but words, with entire oral communities based on the magical movements of the jaw in combination with the tongue.

**Chewing and eating:** Neither animals nor humans would survive without jaws. The capacity to chew is a survival skill; without chewing, humans can survive on different types of liquids, but otherwise chewing is nonetheless essential for survival. For animals like wolves and wild dogs, the jaws are also the tools for hunting and killing. While humans do not have very strong bites, some animals have enormous power in their jaws. The force in the jaws of crocodiles, hippopotamuses and lions are not relevant in the Nordic areas, but the jaws of wolves, bears and other mammals are. Thus, jaws are not only fundamental for living and surviving, but they are also dangerous to others. Claws, horns and antlers may kill or injure, but in the wild, the jaws of large animals often represent lethal weapons.

**Drinking:** While chewing is fundamental for processing solid food, liquids are even more essential to survival. Humans can live without food for weeks, but will only survive a few days without water. The consumption of liquids necessitates the opening of the mouth, once again underscoring the importance of the lower jaw. The life-giving qualities of water have been essential to humans in all cultures and religions throughout history, but in the water worlds there are also other fluids. Thus specific negative and positive meanings have been ascribed to blood (human or animal).

**Moving:** Although most body parts like the arms and legs are moveable they are still different from the jaws. The jaws are important in a more profound way, compared to other body parts that move, simply because they enable so many different processes and functions that are vital to the survival for both humans and animals. The lower jaw is the part that moves; as part of the cranium, the upper jaw is fixed. Thus, the lower jaw is more alive and active.

**Activating and thinking:** Being alive means being able to be active (compared to a stiff corpse). Except for when we are asleep, the body is always in motion: we walk, sit, gesticulate etc. Although most of these activities take place at an unconscious level, including the movements of the jaws, at least among humans there is an implicit perception that the mouth and jaws are not only physically but also intellectually and spiritually closer to the brain and the being (compared to, for instance, the liver). In other words, more than any
other part of the body, the mouth and the jaw form an extension of the brain, thinking and being. It is not only directly controlled by the brain, but life is communicated and consummated through the mouth, directing the attention to perhaps the most important aspect of jaws.

**Entering and exiting the body:** The jaws also represent an entrance and exit, connecting the inner part of the body to the exterior and outer world. The boundaries between personhood and external livelihood – ‘I’ and the other – become liminal and in many cases dangerous. Toxic air and poisonous food or drinks threaten life and well-being, but the permanent closure of these boundaries also represents death (not breathing, eating or drinking). Moving from the physical aspects, the soul is commonly believed to reside primarily in the regions of the brain or the heart. In both cases, notions of the ‘vital breath’ (e.g. Parry 1994) is connected to breathing, while the absence of breath signifies death. Thus, there are common beliefs in many cultures that the soul leaves the body together with the last breath after which the person is dead. Whatever one calls it when discussing this spiritual essence of humans and animals in prehistory – soul, spirit, mana etc. – it maintains life and when it leaves the carnal body for whatever reason, it signifies death. This is what triggers the need for funeral rites, and in the case of Håga, extremely elaborate and extravagant rituals.

**Feasting and funerals**

The discussion of the ethnographic description of the king’s lower jawbone rituals and its significance in Uganda may have opened up a space for new interpretations of the archaeological remains found in the turf layers in the Håga Mound. If the assumptions about processes and phenomena associated with jaws are valid, the remains may make sense if one extends the notion of souls or ancestors being attached to jawbones to include the life force or mana of animals. Whether human or animal jaws, they are all associated with breathing, producing sound, chewing and eating, drinking, moving, activating and thinking, and entering and exiting the body. Jaws may not only represent, but also embody multiple life-giving processes. Therefore the souls of deceased and sacrificed animals form part of the funeral and the rituals related to the construction of the mound.

With a focus on human consumption and jaws, it is possible to interpret cannibalism as a ritual practice from a different perspective. As Almgren pointed out, the woman’s femur was intentionally cleaved to extract the bone marrow. Besides the brain and the heart, bone marrow is often thought to represent a person’s life. Given the presence of numerous jawbones of many
animals in the mound’s layers, there seems to have been a ritualistic focus on flows and consumptive forces in cosmos embodied in jaws and the souls attached to them. When including the bone marrow from the cleaved femur, it is as though the souls were somehow feeding souls. The spirits or souls of various animals and humans were integrated into a huge ceremonial feasting, involving not only the deceased and descendants, but also innumerable other semi-divine spirits or forces. From this perspective, it seems clear that many more spirits were involved in the Håga funeral than just those of the three unburnt persons and the main cremated person in the oak-log coffin. If all the jaws represented spirits of living beings, then the funeral and the mound were not merely a sepulchre for the deceased who was cremated, but it was truly a living cemetery of souls, spirits and ghosts inhabiting Håga. It was a cosmic epicentre of deceased, deities and divinities, with the cremated at its centre. All of them seem to have been united in cosmic meals where the difference between eating and being eaten was blurred or even synonymous. Perhaps it was the communality of participating and consuming – being and becoming part of the funeral party and what was consumed – that legitimised the future cosmic order. This leads us to consider human and animal sacrifices from other perspectives.
CHAPTER 8

Human and Animal Sacrifices in Håga
– A Comparative Perspective

Burials and sacrifices
Like other sacred places, graves are shaped according to specific symbolic patterns, which depict life, death and rebirth or represent cosmological beliefs. The grave also functions as a place of communication between the dead and the living, or between gods and mortals, which closely links it to the place of sacrifice as a phenomenon. One cannot assume that all mounds, cairns and stone settings primarily functioned or were perceived as what we today associate with the concept of a grave. Even if both present-day and prehistoric ‘graves’ correspond in that they often contain remains of the deceased, the underlying reason and function of the bones in the ground may differ considerably. Today we tend to view the grave as a resting place for the remains of a dead person, which is a permanent and static place. Yet there is no reason to believe that this has always been the case in all cultures – rather the contrary. The grave could just as well be perceived as the site of a continuous process of exchange between the worlds of the dead and the living (cf. Kaliff 1998, 2007).

As mentioned, grave rituals and sacrificial rituals are often closely related and this is reflected in numerous religious traditions. Nevertheless, there has been a general reluctance within archaeology to define sites as sacrificial places instead of for instance cemeteries. Why? The answer probably lies in our modern culture rather than in the distant past that archaeologists aim to interpret. Our cultural perception of the dead and funeral rites colours our archaeological interpretations, unconsciously guiding what an archaeologist considers to be a reasonable interpretation. Specific forms of graves and funeral rites still exist in modern Western society, making them easy to imagine and unnecessary to problematise. It is quite different for religious sacrifices. Many Western archaeologists will find these alienating or intimidating, as they probably were to prehistoric people (see Kaliff & Oestigaard 2017, Chapter 7). This is probably why, sites are more commonly interpreted as graves and cemeteries rather than sacrificial places, even if they often served both functions.

Several ancient cultures reveal the close link between graves and sacrificial altars. In classical Greece and Rome and India’s Vedic culture, the altar could
take the shape of a burial mound, originally as part of an ancestor cult (Edsman 1987:223). The complicated altar constructions built in connection with significant Vedic sacrificial rituals included bones from humans and animals, in real or symbolic form, as described by Fritz Staal in his famous depiction of the Vedic fire sacrifice (Staal 2001:128). The Purushamedha – the legendary and controversial Vedic human sacrifice – could be performed either in a holy place of worship or in a cemetery. We will return to this ritual in more detail below.

For a long time, archaeologists have remarked that besides their role as resting places for the deceased, certain prehistoric Scandinavian graves functioned as cult sites (e.g. Kaliff 1997, 2007; Widholm 1998, 2006). Evert Baudou discussed barrows from the Roman Iron Age as graves of special individuals which simultaneously functioned as places for an ancestor cult located close to the farmsteads (Baudou 1989:16 ff.). A close relationship between funeral rituals and thoughts about fertility and sacrifice is common in many traditional agricultural communities, including Norse societies (Fig. 8.1). Just as the seed corn fertilises the soil, the bones of the dead can be associated with the power to restore the earth. In an analogy with the way the seed corn from last year’s harvest gives new crops, there may have been a conception that by being united with the earth, the deceased was embarking on a new existence tied to the farm and its land. Dismemberment, or fragmentation, is the same as the death of the body, while the parts are simultaneously the basis for new life.

Fig. 8.1. The sacrifice of King Domalde at the Old Uppsala cemetery in which the throat was slit and the blood collected in a cauldron. Domalde was sacrificed by his chieftains after the harvest failed for the third year. Source: Snorre (1995:25).
Human rituals are thus necessary to help the gods maintain and constantly restore the cosmos.

In Scandinavian contexts, there is ample testimony from historical times about worship and sacrifice being performed on barrows beside farms. There is also good reason to assume that a cult associated with the dead was part of pre-Christian Scandinavian religions (e.g. de Vries 1956–57; Sundqvist 2002). This opens up a broader interpretative perspective regarding features found in burial places (although not necessarily cemeteries), which have not primarily been interpreted as graves in the normal sense. Offerings may have been made on cairns and stone settings, and ritual meals may have been cooked in fireplaces beside the graves. The Norwegian historian of religion Emil Birkeli believed that in pre-Christian times the grave was actually the most important cult site, and partly functioned as an altar. Well into the 19th century, it was customary in parts of Scandinavia to make offerings of milk, butter, beer and porridge on the farm’s burial mound. Even animals could be sacrificed (Birkeli 1938:183 ff.; Olrik & Ellekilde 1926–51:196–244).

Originally, the first person to settle on the site would have been regarded as the farm’s protective spirit who became the object of a cult. This pattern fits well into the Håga context, where the great Bronze Age mound served both as a grave and a cultic place for a person who most certainly was powerful during his lifetime, and who over time became a mythic character. This may have been manifested in different ways, through the place name itself, which indicates the meaning of the mound, or later graves in the immediate area, but also through recurring rituals on the mound and in its close vicinity. Even if the deposition of votive gifts took place at memorial ceremonies long after the death and cremation or burial of the person, the descendants may have believed that the burial monument functioned as a passage through which one could later offer gifts to the departed or to any divinity that the mound and the burial were considered to represent.

Although mentioned in relatively late written sources, namely the Old Norse saga material, there are also indications that rulers and kings could be worshipped as divine beings after their death. An interesting reference is the story from Ynglinga Saga about the king of Vestfold, Olaf Gudrødsson, who was buried in a mound on the farm Geirstad. The story says that after his burial he became a ghost – draugr – who haunted his own grave mound and became known as Olaf the Geirstad-alf (Old Norse: Ólaf Geirstaða Álfr, meaning the ‘elf of Geirstad’). After his death, he was worshipped as a deity who could bring a good harvest and prosperity. An unproven story identifies Geirstad with Gjerstad near the famous Gokstad Mound, linking Olaf’s burial with the Gokstad Ship. According to certain scholars of religion, the álfar (elves’) were closely connected with the dead in general, and sometimes even
identified with dead ancestors. Later offerings to álfar on grave mounds are also an indication of this connection (de Vries 1956–57:286–87; Turville-Petre 1964:231 ff.; Schjødt 1991:305–06).

Although concrete evidence of this belief is vague, it is interesting in relation to a place like Håga. Seen from a current-day cultural perspective, the place most likely had a double role – as both a burial ground and cultic place. In general, there is a clear connection between the graves of the dead and the cult that occurred on the graves. The long tradition of sacrifice on burial mounds, which can be seen in the surviving folk tradition and folklore, indicates how strong the cult continuity may have been. Despite centuries of opposition from Christian society, first by Catholics and then Lutherans, such traditions have remained a vital part of life almost into modern times. As mentioned, it generally applied to burial mounds in rural areas of Scandinavia, and is probably a remnant of an important and common cult in the ancient pre-Christian community. As a natural consequence of such a ritual tradition, even greater importance was attached to a ruler’s grave. In Håga, it is reasonable to consider the great mound from Period IV as the resting place of an important dynastic founder, perhaps for the ruling dynasty in the area. Over time, this ruler, like the grave, became increasingly mythologised, but its importance hardly diminished, since the mythology continued until our times. This could have happened in a similar manner to the cult of the first farmer of a ‘common’ farm, who after his death became a divine creature who received sacrifices for good harvest and prosperity. Thus, the long-lasting cult continuity of Håga for two millennia fits into an overall ritual pattern with evidence from a wide range of sources besides the written evidence of the Sagas (see also Chapter 9).

Interpreting sacrifices

The late remnants from folk traditions are invaluable to help us understand some of the pre-Christian cultic traditions. However, as we have seen above, they only give a glimpse of specific aspects, while many clues have disappeared, been mixed up in other traditions, or blurred over time. How can we therefore understand the sacrificial rituals performed at a cultic site like Håga?

It is difficult to find ideal analogies for Scandinavian Bronze Age and Iron Age society. Historical-ethnographic analogies can nevertheless provide new ways of addressing specific questions, not least concerning burials, sacrificial customs and the cult of the dead (e.g. Tiesler 1991:345 ff.; Scarre 1994:75 ff.; Tsigaridas G & Melheim 2016:87–88). As briefly discussed in Chapter 7, an analogy can form a starting point for interpretations, even if it is not ideal in
every respect. It can still serve as an illustration of the link between beliefs and rituals from a general comparative perspective as the analysis and narrative proceeds.

For instance, the occurrence of human sacrifice in connection with harvest and farming in different cultures can be related to ideas about death and generative power in many religious traditions. The sacrifice releases energy and creative force through the parts of the body, which are transformed into growth and harvest, just like the seed corn – parts of the old year’s ‘dead body’. Such sacrificial rituals signify that life is recharged with power and energy. This power may also have been associated with the remains of those who had already died a natural death. In this way, the funeral ritual itself can be understood as a sacrifice, which occurs in the ancient Vedic tradition (e.g. Olivelle 1987:389).

With its ancient roots in Vedic tradition stretching all the way back to the Bronze Age (the Vedic period in India is commonly dated to c. 1500–600 BC), Hindu tradition (Fig. 8.2) forms a rewarding starting point for analogies, not only to help understand sacrifices and other ritual practices. As an analogy to interpretations of ancient Scandinavian ritual, the Vedic ritual tradition has until recently attracted little attention in Scandinavian archaeology. An early exception, however, was Viktor Rydberg’s Undersökningsar i germanisk mythologi (Investigations into Germanic Mythology), a two-volume work published in 1886 and 1889. One reason for this neglect is probably a lack of knowledge about the subject among most archaeologists studying pre-Chris-

Fig. 8.2. The three-headed rakshasa Trishiras facing a fire altar. From Wikimedia Commons.
tian Scandinavia, combined with the incorrect view that such a comparison would lead to unnecessary exoticisation. In addition, there has for a long time been profound scepticism about comparative Indo-European studies, which has often been regarded as identical to the historical abuse of the concept. This has changed in recent years, particularly after research of ancient DNA (aDNA) yielded convincing results about the early contacts between people of Indo-European cultural heritage (Allentoft et al. 2015; Haak et al. 2015; Kristiansen et al. 2017). Before this, certain archaeologists already considered this analogy useful for understanding and interpreting Scandinavian prehistory (cf. Kaliff 2007, Kristiansen 2011).

The general cosmological and mythological similarities linked to the common Proto-Indo-European background make this comparison particularly interesting. Vedic and Old Iranian religions, Germanic and Celtic religions, and Ancient Greek and Roman religion are variants that developed against a common background. The similarities with other Indo-European traditions regarding cosmology, the perception of death and even certain divinities mentioned in ancient Scandinavian sources are often striking (cf. de Vries 1956–1957; Ström 1975; Lincoln 1986).

Explaining the similarities between Indo-European cultural traditions is a research field in itself, and this question will not be examined in depth here. However, it is important to point out that the attitude to comparative Indo-European research has changed considerably in recent years, also in Scandinavian archaeology. The theory that existed long before the new DNA research claims that Indo-European language and culture were spread from an original home on the steppes of Eastern Europe and Western Asia through migration: eastwards to India, southwards to Iran and westwards to Europe. Sedentary people with an advanced civilisation, with whom the Indo-Europeans eventually were integrated, previously inhabited some of the areas that would be affected, including parts of the Near East and India. Indo-European languages – most probably also linked to other important cultural features – became established in the conquered areas and ended up dominating cultures in Europe, Iran and India (for a summary see Mallory 1989; Anthony 2007). Today, findings from DNA research, linguistics and archaeology point to two-way Indo-European immigration: a western route to Europe starting around 3000 BC, and an eastern route to Central Asia and from there to north-western India around 2000 BC.

Using Vedic ritual as an analogy and starting point for a theoretical discussion about ritual in general and ancient Scandinavian rituals in particular can, and probably will, still attract criticism. However, this analogy may be very relevant, not just because of the probable common origin and roughly shared timeframe, but also because it provides a detailed description of sacrifices in
general. Regarding an apparent criticism that such a comparison is far-fetched and too exotic, a quote from the famous specialist on Vedic ritual, Frits Staal, is worth recalling: ‘Perhaps Vedic ritual is too sophisticated, highly developed, and intellectual. This may be so – I could not tell without undertaking a major comparative survey of rituals. However, I suspect that such criticism is on par with saying that it does not matter that a certain theory of language does not apply to Sanskrit or English, because Sanskrit or English are too sophisticated, highly developed, and intellectual’ (Staal 2001:16). The period referred to as Vedic in India should not be directly associated with today’s Hinduism, as this would create a misleading picture. Hinduism is derived from the Vedic religion, but has greatly evolved over time (cf. Flood 1998:23–50; Staal 2001:60). It is important to bear this in mind in order to gain a clear understanding of how Vedic ritual can be used as an analogy for understanding ancient Scandinavian religion.

The cosmological background

Which ideas and myths are most relevant for the comparison of grave rituals and sacrifices in Vedic and ancient Scandinavian traditions? The creation myth – how the world, cosmos and human life are believed to have developed – is one of the most fundamental stories that also forms the starting point for important rituals. Across different cultures, funeral rituals and sacrifices are usually designed with reference to creation myths. Interestingly, there are strong parallels in the creation myths of different Indo-European traditions, which demonstrates the strong significance of these beliefs.

According to Old Norse mythology, the first living creature, Ymir, contained the potential for everything in the cosmos. Ymir’s violent death sets the creation in motion, in which the universe is made from the parts of his body and inhabited by humans and other creatures. The myth has close equivalents in other Indo-European religious traditions. Variants on this theme occur, but a common feature is that a primordial being is killed and cut into pieces, after which the cosmos and the different aspects of life are fashioned from the parts of his body. Either the universe is created as a totality or alternatively just the part of the world inhabited by the people embraced by the myth. The Old Norse variant is told in the Eddic poem Grímnismál (40–41), which describes how the cosmos is created from parts of Ymir’s body. It is also retold in Gylfaginning (6–8) by Snorri Sturluson. A mythical story similar to that about Ymir is Purusasūkta – ‘The Hymn of Purusa’ – from the Rigveda (10.90). In this version too, the world was created when the gods cut up a cosmic giant, Purusa. This narrative is the archetype for the Vedic offering, as well as for the death rituals (Lincoln 1986:1ff).
The identification of different elements in the cosmos with the body parts of a sacrificed primordial being seems to be a fundamental cosmological idea. Meat and earth, for example, are believed to be of the same material substance and thus one can change into the other. In the same way, the bones, the hard part in the soft meat, are equated with stones and rocks, while hair is associated with plants. Meat and earth can be seen as alternative forms in a continuous process, with one form being constantly transmuted into another. According to the historian of religion, Bruce Lincoln, a well-known researcher of Indo-European religion, identifying different cosmic phenomena with different parts of the human body formed an important part of the creation mythology embraced by virtually all those who spoke an Indo-European language (Lincoln 1986:5–20).

Just as creation is assembled from the constituent elements according to the origin myth, the process can be repeated through reversal in the form of sacrifices, where people cut up the body of an animal or human in order to restore the elements to creation. This is fundamental to the meaning of the Indo-European sacrifice, but also for funeral rituals, which are considered to be the last sacrifice of the deceased persons. Through sacrifice, in which the body is divided into constituent parts, the creation process can be repeated, or humans can help to maintain creation. The Indo-European cosmological origin myth may therefore be a very important source for understanding ritual practices also in pre-Christian Scandinavia.

The myth of a ritual death and dismembering of a body is a narrative that is easily transferred to sacrifice. According to Lincoln, sacrifice is the most prominent of all Indo-European rituals, with great variation in the modes of expression (Figs. 8.3a and 8.3b). Animal sacrifices have included various domesticated animals, though there were probably also human victims. When it comes to animal and human sacrifices, the link to the cosmological creation myth is obvious. Ritual manuals accompany the hymns of the Rigveda to ensure that the rites can be performed properly. In the most important of these, Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, there is an exact description of how the victim is cut up, corresponding directly to the creation myth in the Rigveda (10:90:13–14). Thus, the Vedic sacrifice is performed as a repetition of creation. It also has clear parallels with other Indo-European contexts, including the Germanic tribes, as described by Tacitus (Germania 39) in the sacrificial customs of the Semnones. This description includes the oldest written account of a pre-Christian Germanic sacrifice, probably based directly on Germanic informants, possibly a king of the Semnones who visited Rome in 81–96 AD. Tacitus describes a sacrificial act involving the dismemberment of a human body. Further details are not provided, though Tacitus described the process as ‘barbaric’ (barbari ritus). Elsewhere, however, he mentions human sacrifices without using that
adjective. No information is given regarding the remains; perhaps they were distributed to those present or scattered in the surroundings. An important part of Tacitus’ account of the Semnones’ sacrifice lies in his description of the significance of the origin and kinship of the tribe (Lincoln 1986:50–59).

If the kind of human sacrifice that Tacitus describes among the Semnones also occurred among Scandinavian tribes, it ought to be possible to detect it archaeologically. It is quite possible that such traces have been found, but have not been interpreted as sacrifices. Contexts which cannot be regarded as well-defined graves often have remains of human as well as animal bones. Ancient Scandinavian archaeological finds have probably not been interpreted in terms of human sacrifices because scholars have been reluctant to do so, not because of a shortage of empirical evidence that could justify such an interpretation. Human remains are by definition interpreted as burials, remains of a cremation site, bone used secondarily as building offerings, etc. or they are interpreted and described as ‘enigmatic’ scattered bones. One can discuss the interpretation of human remains of ‘normal’ deaths from a similar perspective as sacrifices, since they may have been treated based on the same cosmological ideas.

Figs. 8.3a and 8.3b. Sacrifices of buffaloes in Western Nepal. They are decapitated with one stroke.
This is a likely scenario if the funeral ritual was performed according to the cosmological myth of the dismemberment of the primordial body and regarded as the last sacrifice of the deceased (as is the case in Vedic tradition). The remains of the dead can be returned to a specific place, as with the parts of the sacrificial victim. It may have been considered essential for the survival of the collective that the funeral ritual was performed at a certain place and that the remains of the body were divided and deposited in agreement with the cosmology. Through these rituals, the deceased is restored to his or her basic elements, while simultaneously being incorporated in places and contexts that were important for collective identity.

The Hindu human sacrifice – Purushamedha

As we have seen in the findings of the Håga Mound and other archaeological sites, there are also traces of more direct human sacrifices. The comparison with the Vedic tradition is very rewarding here. Although it is sometimes difficult to interpret whether these sacrifices were actually performed, there are detailed descriptions of Vedic human sacrifices along with much better-documented animal sacrifices of different kinds.

Purushamedha is an ancient Vedic ritual of human sacrifice, closely related to the better-documented Vedic horse sacrifice, the Ashvamedha. Purushamedha literally means 'human sacrifice' (Purusha' means man and 'Medha' means sacrifice). Another term, Naramedha, is also used for same type of sacrifice (in which 'Nara' also means man). Whether human sacrifice really took place in Vedic and later Hindu religion has been a subject of debate ever since the British orientalist and mathematician Henry Thomas Colebrook (1765–1837) first brought attention to the issue. Colebrook regarded human sacrifice as mostly symbolic, relating to the Vedic cosmological creation act, but he never ruled out the historical existence of human sacrifice in the medieval period and earlier. The so-called Kalika Purana, composed in the 11th century AD, is notable for its discussion of human sacrifice, stating that it could only be performed before a war or in times of great danger. Human as well as animal sacrifice became less common over time, as non-violence (ahimsa) became an important part of Hinduism. Despite this, the notion that Purushamedha was a purely symbolic ritual has a strong research tradition. Many of these researchers rely on what they believe is the lack of concrete evidence that any sacrifice was performed in the manner prescribed by Purushamedha (Knipe 2015:237; cf. Parpola 2007).

As mentioned, the Vedic horse sacrifice, Ashwamedha, is better documented and well researched. It was used by ancient Indian kings in order to acquire power and glory, sovereignty over more land, and to seek general prosperity.
for the kingdom. The ritual was also considered to enable good and remove committed sins. Only a powerful and victorious king, a rājā, could conduct the Ashvamedha, and the sacrificial horse had to be a stallion. At first, the horse was set loose to roam around freely for one year according to the annual path of the Sun. During the horse’s absence and after its return, an uninterrupted series of ceremonies was performed. The horse was then yoked to a gilded chariot and driven into the water and bathed. After this, the queen anointed it with ghee – sacred butter – and the horse’s head, neck, and tail were decorated with golden ornaments. Then, the horse accompanied by several other animals of different species, according to some sources more than 600 in total, were bound to stakes and sacrificed. After this, the queen walked around the dead horse reciting mantras, and then spent a night with the dead horse (whether this nightly stay involved any fertility or sexual acts by the queen is highly debated in Indian contexts). In the morning, a priest cut the horse’s body apart, according to the pattern of the creation myths, while other priests started reciting the verses of Vedas to seek healing and regeneration for the horse (Talbott 2005:111–123; Glucklich 2008:112).

It is well known that horse sacrifices were also important in other Indo-European traditions, and many Indo-European branches show evidence of this type of sacrifice. Following comparative mythology, it is likely that the tradition has deep historical roots and derives from a Proto-Indo-European ritual. The Ashvamedha is the clearest evidence preserved, but vestiges in Latin and Celtic traditions speak of similar rituals, and there are yet other traces in Iranian, Greek, Germanic and Armenian traditions (Talbott 2005: 142). According to Julius Caesar’s first-hand account of the Gallic Wars, Commentarii de Bello Gallico (VI:16–19), the Celts practised extensive human sacrifice. Humans were burnt as offerings during funerary rites, and Caesar describes the so-called wicker figures, filled with humans, who were burnt alive (Fig. 8.4). Also, in Bronze Age China, particularly during the Chang Dynasty, exclusive horse sacrifices and elaborate horse burials are well documented.
The Old Norse ritual of horse sacrifice is described in the *Hervarar Saga*, in which King Björn at Håga is mentioned (see Chapter 9). According to the saga, this sacrifice was undertaken as part of the inauguration of the last pagan king of Sweden, Blot-Svein or Blot-Sven (literary: ‘Svein, the performer of sacrifice’). The ritual is described as a bloody sacrifice in which the body of the horse is dismembered before being eaten. It also mentions that the blood of the sacrificed animal was sprinkled on the sacred tree at the cultic place in Uppsala (see below).

The presence of horse bones in sacrificial finds is well documented in many archaeological contexts in Scandinavia, and, as we have seen, such materials are also present in Håga. There are clear finds of horse sacrifice dated to the Migration period (400–550 AD) from places in Southern Scandinavia, including Sösdala in Skåne and Vikhem, near Lund in Skåne. On the latter site, horse skulls were found neatly placed alongside the animal’s extremities in a way clearly showing a ritual disruption of the body. They have been interpreted as depositions after ritual sacrificial meals, during which some parts were given to the gods (Magnell, lecture, November 2017). As previously mentioned, 15 horses were sacrificed during the Oseberg funeral.

The Old Vedic Purushamedha is described as a very expensive ritual, in which human sacrifice was estimated to be worth 100 or even 1,000 cows or horses. The Purushamedha was an even more exclusive royal ritual than the Ashvamedha. The person who was going to be sacrificed was sometimes let loose before the sacrifice, in the same manner as the horse in the Ashvamedha ritual. The victim was then tied to a pole, also in the same manner as the horse. Purushamedha was performed by the ruler in order to gain prestige, prosperity and power and as an atonement of sins.

It is not clear from the ancient sacred texts whether human sacrifice actually took place. This may be because the texts were written later, when the tradition had become increasingly symbolic. From a historic perspective, there are different ways to describe the cosmological significance of Purushamedha, which can give different impressions of whether the ritual was performed. For instance, the *Chandogya Upanishad* (3.16) states that the Purushamedha is a metaphor for life itself, and not a sacrificial ritual (Bailey 2001:437). Although several researchers agree that Purushamedha is essentially a symbol and not a true sacrificial ritual, there are influential exceptions. Indologist Asko Parpola has argued that human sacrifice did take place in Indian tradition (2007:157–78). He discusses specific textual references in the Vedas, and says he is ‘hoping to establish beyond reasonable doubt that Vedic texts do indeed attest to real human sacrifices’ (Parpola 2007:161). In his view, the Purushamedha mirrors a genuine tradition in the Vedic texts, which became less common over time. The importance of bloody offerings had already decreased in the
so-called Brahmana texts, a collection of commentaries on the hymns of the Vedas. The dating of the Brahmanas is debated, but they are often placed in the period 900–700 BC (Flood 1996:35–37; Klostermaier 2007:49).

Human sacrifice is reputed to have been performed much later as well, though according to one view, the tradition had ‘gone underground’ and become invisible, especially during the British colonial era. One late example is from the Hatimura Temple in Assam, built in 1667. The shrine is dedicated to Shakti, a mother goddess related to Durga, who is in turn a form of the Kali, the goddess of death. It is believed that human sacrifices were carried out in connection with the worship of Shakti until the early modern period, and in some cases probably into the 19th century. The practice was not part of mainstream Hinduism, but certain sects, particularly the esoteric Tantric cults continued to perform human sacrifice until the early 19th century (Lipner 1994:185, 236). When the authors performed field work in the Kathmandu Valley in Nepal, we had the opportunity to hear about more recent human sacrifices to Kali. The Dakshin Kali Temple (Fig. 8.5), 22 km south of Kath-
mandu, is the site of extensive animal sacrifices, but people are said to have been sacrificed to the goddess as late as the 1970s. This data is unconfirmed, but regardless of whether it was true, there was clearly a living memory of such a tradition (2002). There are indications that such activities may have been practiced in India until even later. Even in the 21st century, Indian media has reported on incidents of human sacrifice, especially to the goddess Kali (e.g. McDougall 2006; Miller 2013; Henderson, 2015).

Overall, even if one considers the arguments of most sceptical researchers, there is little reason to doubt of that human sacrifice was practiced in the past, especially during earlier periods. In India, archaeological evidence attests to the practice of human sacrifice: ‘There is, however, in addition to the textual references to human sacrifice, also physical evidence of its performance, such as archaeological remains of human skulls and other human bones at the site of fire-altars, together with the bones of other animals, both wild and tame…’ (Doninger 2014:217).

Having established that human sacrifice was practiced in many ancient cultures (Fig. 8.6), one may question why many Western researchers are reluctant to acknowledge its occurrence and study the practice. As Klaus K. Klostermaier reminds scholars in the introduction to the third edition of his work, A survey of Hinduism (2007:3): ‘We must remind ourselves, however, that Hinduism was not primarily created by its sages and saints to provide material

Fig. 8.6. Sacrificial scene from the Gundestrup cauldron. Photo: Claude Valette, from Wikimedia Commons.
for doctoral dissertations for European and American scholars or to enable anthropologists and sociologists to do their obligatory field work but for the physical and spiritual sustenance of its population: it interprets the world to Hindus, makes life meaningful to them, provides them with a theoretical and practical framework for their individual and corporate existence, educates them intellectually and morally, and finally, fulfils their aspirations for transcendent freedom and salvation."

For a comparative discussion of the significance of the presence of human bones at Håga, the question of whether Purushamedha was actually performed in the Vedic tradition is secondary. More important are the fundamental analogies in the cosmological background that is deeply rooted in early Indo-European ritual tradition. A fundamental starting point for the sacrificial rituals is the creation myth and the killing of the primeval being Purusha. Creation proceeds from the original body, but this process can also be reversed. Through sacrifice, in which the victim's body is divided into its constituent parts, the creation process is repeated. The same can apply to burial customs, which is evident in the Vedic tradition.

As mentioned above, in the Vedic tradition there is a close link between graves and sacrifices. This may be directly transferable to the pre-Christian Scandinavian scene, especially to a place like Håga. With regards to Purushamedha, certain texts such as the +/-10th-century AD Kalika Purana (Sanskrit: Kālikā Purāṇa), a work dedicated to the worship of the goddess Kali in her manifold forms (Dowson 1928:143–144) indicate a direct link between sacrifice and the cemetery. The relation between sacrifice and cemetery is eloquently described in this quotation from an early English translation, published in 1800 by Thomas Maurice (p. 645):

‘Let a human victim be sacrificed at a place of holy worship, or at a cemetery where dead bodies are buried. Let the oblation be performed in the part of the cemetery called Heruca, which has been already described, or at a temple of Camachya, or on a mountain. Now attend to the mode. The cemetery represents me, and is called Bhairava, it has also a part called Tantaranga; the cemetery must be divided into these two divisions, and a third called Heruca. The human victim is to be immolated in the east division which is sacred to Bhairava, the head is to be presented in the south division…and the blood is to be presented in the west division, which is denominated Heruca. Having immolated a human victim, with all the requisite ceremonies at a cemetery or holy place, let the sacrificer be cautious not to cast eyes upon the victim.’
Thoracic vertebrae nos. 4–9

Moving away from comparative and textual parallels, it is time to return to Häga (Fig. 8.7). The cleaved female femur that indicates the cultic practice of cannibalism was discussed in Chapter 6, but there are also other indications of human sacrifices. If these assumptions and interpretations are correct, aspects of these ritual practices appear to have no ethnographic parallels in past or present societies. It is important to stress that the following interpretation is a hypothesis based on scarce material remains, but given that these bodily parts are very special and difficult to access from a practical point of view, they are worth a closer look.

One particular category of human bone material may indicate the practice of extreme rituals and sacrifices in Scandinavian prehistory. This focuses specifically on how the descendants and their divinities used the deceased. In Shaft V, western end at a depth of ca. 2 m a thoracic vertebra (vertebra thoracica no. 8 or 9) of a fully grown, probably male individual of below average size was found. In Shaft VI, at +4.50 m level and below, a thoracic vertebra (no. 4 or 5) of a fully grown below-average-size individual was found in the shaft’s south-western corner (Almgren 1905:35). It may be a coincidence that these
thoracic vertebrae were deposited in the mound, but given the very selective and sparse finds of human remains, it seems rather unlikely. If the bones were intentionally placed in the mound it has several implications.

Assuming the bones were deliberately placed there, the first and most obvious observation is that it is not easy to extract them from a body. An arm or a leg are relatively easy to chop off, as is the lower jaw (see Chapter 7), but thoracic vertebrae are some of the most difficult bones to retrieve from the body. Not only are they surrounded by flesh and soft tissue, but there is also the thorax with the ribs (unless the deceased is placed front down and the vertebrae are broken off from the spinal cord). Regardless of how the deceased was positioned, the presence of thoracic vertebrae in the range between no. 4 and no. 9 may suggest that the descendants aimed to access the heart. If the deceased was lying face up, the thorax and ribs had to be removed first, followed by the heart, before the thoracic vertebrae were accessible. If the deceased was facing down when the thoracic vertebrae nos. 4–9 were removed, the heart was exposed.

This is speculative reasoning, as the only physical evidence is the presence of thoracic vertebrae nos. 4–9. If rituals involving the heart were conducted, source criticism renders it almost impossible to verify. Written sources are most often documented by others who have particular ideological reasons to portray certain practices as ‘barbaric’ (e.g. Ibn Fadlan or Adam of Bremen). Iconographic evidence (portraits, paintings, vases, pottery, etc.) may represent myths rather than realities. Also, the human heart is bloody and if used in rituals, it leaves no archaeological traces. The presence of thoracic vertebrae nos. 4–9 is the closest one can probably get to obtaining any prehistoric empirical evidence that important rituals focused on the area of the heart.

Romantic Hollywood movies tell us that giving your heart to someone is a sign of true love. Similarly, betrayal is described as piercing a dagger into one’s heart. Thus, to receive another’s heart can fill (pun intended) one’s body with the most extraordinary – positive or negative – feelings. Häga was certainly not Hollywood. If hearts were given, it was not because of love, but awe.

The remains of the thoracic vertebrae were found in the mound’s upper turf layers, which contain the remains of rituals conducted after the main deceased was cremated and his grave closed. If such heart-breaking events took place at all, one may assume that similar rituals were performed on the platform as well (see Chapter 4; the ritual stratigraphy of the mound). Human sacrifices in which the heart is cut out are not uncommon (for instance in Meso-American cultures), but the apparent emphasis on the vertebrae is unusual – unless the heart was nevertheless the focus and the vertebrae are all that remain in the archaeological record.
A continuous tradition for more than 2000 years?

The ritual activities at Håga cover a long chronological phase from the early Bronze Age to the Viking Period, in total at least 2500 years. Was ritual continuity really preserved throughout this time right up to the end of the pre-Christian era? Or should we assume that there were different traditions, where people returned to the same geographical place during different periods, but without any real cultural continuity? There are different interpretations and theoretical-empirical approaches to this question. The ancient Scandinavians used the term ‘custom’ (Old Norse: siðr) for what we often define as religion. Religion and cosmology, like the ritual traditions that built on these, were parts of both collective and individual identities, and formed the core of societies and world views. Combined with continuities in oral narratives and ritual practices, one can assume a certain continuity in ritual traditions from the Bronze Age to the Viking Age in a place like Håga. At the same time, all rituals and social practices must change over the centuries if they are to remain relevant and provide answers to new questions in new cultural and social environments.

Although it is difficult to prove a long cult continuity in Old Norse society, both the archaeological material and the written sources such as the Eddic poems and other Skaldic verses attest to continuities in time and space. Several aspects of the Håga site itself indicate a long cultural continuity. Firstly, there is the time depth of the ritual activities in the area, based on the 14C datings. Secondly, the name Håga itself: the fact that the name, which refers to the great burial mound, developed as a place name for the entire site and indeed the whole village, is a strong indication of continuities and developments of social and historic memories (Fig. 8.8).

The story of King Björn at Håga is another aspect, as is the fact that it reached at least as far as Iceland and was documented in the Hervarar Saga (see Chapter 9). Håga was clearly central to a chieftain in the area around 1000 BC. 1800 years later a new tradition was established when a Viking King named Björn apparently built a farm by the mound, because the place was already famous. Following Peringskiöld, this happened in the year 818 AD. As discussed in the introduction and in the next chapter, this local tradition seems to have existed independently of the scholarly debate at Uppsala University at the turn of the 18th century. No precise dates are given in the Hervarar Saga.

While archaeologists have long been reluctant to make religious analogies with the Vedas, the above-mentioned horse sacrifice and Norse sources themselves, it is clear that the Hervarar Saga has shaped perceptions of Håga through the centuries. One obvious fact is that we still call the Bronze Age...
mound King Björn’s Mound when it is clearly not Viking Age and certainly not the grave of a Viking king. Perhaps the most relevant source for understanding the animal sacrifices at Håga can be found in the *Hervarar Saga*.

As indicated in the Vedic analogy, human and animal sacrifices are sometimes complimentary and may happen at the same time. It is clear that rituals involving human bodies were conducted at Håga, though it remains unclear whether the woman was killed as part of the ritual or died a natural death and was integrated into the aristocratic funeral. While the former is more likely, one can never be absolutely certain. Also, the descendants may have collected *thoracic vertebrae* from nearby graves, but assuming the rituals had great social and cosmological significance, collecting vertebrae from other graves would have affected the meaning of the ritual. It is therefore unlikely that vertebrae of corpses buried elsewhere were collected. From a ritual perspective, sacrificing an individual, taking out the heart and collecting fresh vertebrae has a much more dramatic impact. Håga was the site of dramatic rituals, including animal sacrifices.

Discussing the Håga material in a 1993 article, Barbro Johnsen and Stig Welinder focus on animal finds and sacrificial practices. Several hundred animal bones were found and classified per species as follows (Johnsen & Welinder 1993:216):

Fig. 8.8. *Håga River.*
Species | Presence (%)  
---|---  
Cattle | 67  
Sheep/goat | 19  
Horse | +  
Dog | 3  
Pig | 9  
Squirrel | +  
Goose | +  
Pike | +  

Besides the wild animals (fox, hare, water vole and toad) that may have entered the mound of their own accord, the other species were brought to the site and most likely consumed there. Although building a mound like Håga would have been a tough job, the ritual deposition and composition of the bone material preclude a profane interpretation – i.e. that the remains represent what is left of the workers’ meals. The bone remains are too uniform and selective in the context. The fact that roughly the same remains were found of humans and squirrels (lower jaws and long bones) strengthens the ritual and sacrificial scenarios. Moreover, as Johnsen & Welinder emphasise, there are remains of 6–7 cattle, 1–2 pigs and 5–6 sheep. Together with the human remains, the charcoal and traces of fires, they are most likely remnants of ceremonies cult activities linked to the funeral and the building of the mound (1993:226–227).

In the deeper layers of Shaft VIII remains of a horse, and more specifically the first toe phalanx of the front leg (Almgren 1905:33), were found. This is positive evidence of a horse in the Håga Mound, which was probably sacrificed. The relation between horse and cattle is intriguing, since there are fewer horse remains. According to the analysis above, 6–7 cattle and at least one horse were killed, either on the mound or elsewhere. It is not clear whether this means that horse sacrifices were more valuable and cosmologically important. The presence of just a small piece of a bone may suggest that the animal was killed elsewhere as one would expect more bone remains from such a large animal. Still, as shown in Chapter 7, the post-depositional processes were very selective and the remains that were deposited in the mound apparently did not end up there by coincidence.

Regardless of a historic continuity in sacrificial and cult practices at Håga, it is worth referring to the great horse sacrifice mentioned in the *Hervarar Saga*. The saga refers to King Björn, but also to the Swedish King Svein or Svein the Sacrificer. According to local tradition, King Björn came to Håga in 818, and introduced Christianity to the region and Sweden as a whole. Svein’s great horse sacrifice had political and religious motives and consequences: he
became king and reintroduced the old religion and tradition. Thus, while it belonged to a different cultural-religious tradition than for instance the Vedic horse sacrifice, the great horse sacrifice in the Norse tradition was a political ritual that affected the whole state, the constitution of society – even cosmos and all the gods.

The historicity of the story is irrelevant in this case. What makes it significant is the fact that the cosmic role and importance of the horse sacrifice was described in this way and believed to hold this power so late in history. This living memory of an ancient royal horse sacrifice may have very long continuities going back in prehistory. It is likely that such rituals took place in the Bronze Age, and very unlikely that they were staged in late 11th- and early 12th-century Christian Sweden. The sacrifice is described as follows (Tolkien 1960:63):

‘Svein, king’s kinsman, remained behind at that assembly, and he offered to make sacrifice for the Swedes if they would grant him the kingdom; all agreed to Svein’s offer, and he was accepted as king over all the Swedish realm. Then a horse was led forth to the assembly, hewn in pieces, and divided up for eating,1 and the sacrificial tree was reddened with its blood. Thereafter all the Swedes cast off the Christian faith, and sacrifices were instituted, and they drove the King Ingi away; he departed into western Gautland. For three years Svein the Sacrificer was king over the Swedes.’

King Ingi was not satisfied with the sacrifice and the loss of the throne, and early one morning he attacked Svein (Tolkien 1960:63):

‘They seized the house over their heads and set it on fire, and burnt all the company who were inside...Svein came out and was cut down. And so Ingi took the kingship of the Swedes anew, and restored the Christian faith; he ruled the realm till the day of his death, and died of a sickness.2 King Steinkel had a son called Hallstein, and he was king together with King Ingi and his brother. The sons of Hallstein were Phillip and Ingi,3 who inherited the throne of Sweden after King Ingi the Old. Philip married Ingigerd, the daughter of King Harald the son of Sigurd, and he was only a short time king.’

These are the last words of the Hervarar Saga according to one of the preserved manuscripts. In the following chapter, we will discuss the saga in more depth: its history and its role in shaping the history of ideas and interpretations of Håga.

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1 The Germanic people probably only ate horse flesh during sacrifices (Tolkien 1960:63, fn. 2).
2 Following Tolkien’s interpretation, King Ingi died around 1110 (Tolkien 1960:63, fn. 2).
3 Ingi Hallsteinsson died in 1125 (ibid.).
CHAPTER 9

The *Hervarar Saga* or the *Saga of King Heidrek the Wise* – Texts and Contexts

Introduction

Christopher Tolkien’s translation of the *Hervarar Saga* or the *Saga of King Heidrek the Wise* (1960) is generally accepted as the best. Christopher Tolkien was the third and youngest son of J.R.R. Tolkien, who is famously known for *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*. In this epic work, Middle-earth is to a large extent inspired by this saga. Christopher Tolkien even drew the original maps of Middle-earth in his father’s *The Lord of the Rings*. The heroic narrative presented in the *Hervarar Saga* can easily be retraced in the great mythology of *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*, including the magical and malignant powers of the Ring (which is the sword in the *Hervarar Saga*) and Gollum’s riddle contest in *The Hobbit*. Moreover, there are warriors similar to the Rohirrim, brave shield maidens, haunted barrows, and, in one of the *Hervarar* manuscripts, the dwarves who made the cursed sword were named Dvalin and Durin (World Heritage Encyclopedia, Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks). The saga tells that King Björn built a farm at Hága just outside Uppsala.

According to Tolkien: ‘The *Hervarar Saga* stands out among the Heroic Sagas in its extraordinary diversity and wealth of material. Many things, of various age and atmosphere, have been sewn together to form a single narrative, not always with skill. [T]he virtue of the work lies indeed not in its structural coherence but in its memorable scenes’ (Tolkien 1956:xi).

This concluding chapter will provide a brief introduction to the different manuscripts of the *Hervarar Saga*, present the saga and main narrative and discuss the section in which Hága and King Björn are mentioned. The aim is not to engage in a lengthy and critical discourse about the historicity of the sagas in general or the *Hervarar Saga* in particular, but to present the context in which the authenticity and historicity of Hága have been interpreted.

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1 www.worldheritage.org/articles/Hervarar_saga_ok_Heiðreks (Accessed 11 September 2017)
Manuscripts and dates

There have been many translations and editions of the *Hervarar Saga* (Fig. 9.1). These are the most important (Tolkien 1960:xxxiii):

- *Hervarar saga på Gammal Götska med Olai Verelii uttolkning ock notis*, Uppsala 1672 (Based on U; with Swedish translation).
- *Hervarar saga ok Heidreks kongs*, ed. Stefán Björnson, Copenhagen 1785. (Based on A.M. 345, a manuscript of the R tradition, with Latin translation).
- *Hervarar saga ok Heidreks konungs*, edited by N.N. Petersen, Copenhagen 1847 (Nordiske Oldskrifter III). (H supplemented by R; with Danish translation).
- In *Antiquités Russes* I, Copenhagen 1850, 115 ff. (H and A.M. 345; with Latin translation).
- In *Norröne Skrifter af sagnhistorisk Indhold*, edited by Sophus Bugge, Christiania 1873. (H and R. A great advance of the previous editions and the standard for many years).

Different manuscripts are labelled R, H and U versions. There are numerous manuscripts and fragments of this saga, but only six are of value to establish the text. These are called the R, H and U versions. The six versions represent distinct and strikingly different forms of the saga (Tolkien 1956:xvii)

The first interpretation and understanding of *Björn at Haugi* comes from Professor Olof Verelius’ version of *Hervarar Saga* published in Uppsala in 1672. Following Almgren (1905:47), this version of the *Hervarar Saga* became known in Sweden in 1658 in the form of a late handwritten document (Cod. Ups. R:715), which is part of the collection of the University Library at Uppsala University. It was brought from Iceland by the young Icelander Jonas Rugman. His ship, which was on its way to Copenhagen, was burnt by the Swedes during the war, whereupon he joined the Swedish army (Almgren 1905:47).

The name Jonas Rugman sounds more Swedish than Icelandic; his original name was probably Jón Rugman or Rughman. In the Latin version, he is named Rugman Islandus. Born in 1636 at Rugstadir in Holum, Iceland, he was trained as a philologist and died in Uppsala in 1679. As part of his life and career in Uppsala, he was also tasked with assisting Olof Verelius in his work on Norse literature. The Antikvitetskollegium (The College of Antiquities) was
established in 1667 and Rugman was employed there as an Icelandic translator. Information about Rugman is documented under the entry Jón Rugman in *Nordisk familjebok* bd. 23 (2:a uppl. 1916).

The Uppsala version is called the U-version of the *Hervarar Saga*. The Uppsala manuscript was written by one Páll Hallsson in Eyjafjödur (Tolkien 1960:xxix). Unfortunately, the Uppsala U-version (R:715) is badly written and corrupted: in some places the verses do not make sense at all, and the text is full of marginal entries and corrections (Tolkien 1960:xxix).

Another part of this U-version can be found in AM 203 fol. at the University Library in Copenhagen. The Copenhagen fragment was written by Síra Jón Erlendson of Villingaholt (died in 1672). Síra Jón Erlendson had several manuscripts of the saga in front of him when he wrote the saga; one was the R-type, another possibly the *Hauksbók* itself (see below), and the last was a manuscript descending from the original U-version (Tolkien 1956:xvii–xviii).

The R-version is perceived as the most authentic and is part of the collection of the Royal Library in Copenhagen. This text was written in the late 14th or early 15th century, but there is a large lacuna in the text, including the end of the saga. The H-version is found in *Hauksbók* (AM 544, 4to) and written by Haukr Erlendsson, who died in 1334. The end is also missing in this version. The apparent pedigree of the saga and the different versions are presented in

Fig. 9.1. *Hervarar saga ok Heidreks konungs* from 1847. Edited by N.N. Petersen and translated by G. Thorarensen.
Fig. 9.2, and while version R contains alterations and errors, it is definitely the closest to the original (Tolkien 1960:xxx).

As Tolkien says: ‘The concluding section of the saga as it now stands is concerned with the history of Sweden down to the early twelfth century, and has every appearance of being a quite separate work. It is only found, of course, in the seventeenth-century copies, and it cannot be said therefore when it was added on’ (Tolkien 1960:xxviii). It is indeed a very strange historical coincidence that one of the versions of the saga featuring Swedish history and the genealogy of the kings ended up in Sweden in 1658. It is even more surprising that the manuscript ended up at Uppsala University next to the royal mounds at Old Uppsala where one of the kings mentioned in the saga lived and had a farm. According to the saga, the other king named Björn built his farm at Häga. Moreover, Verelius published his edition of the *Hervarar Saga* (Fig. 9.3) in the same year, 1672, that And. Pehrsson reported on the antiquities and mounds including Häga (Almgren 1905: 47). While there may be some circular reasoning, it is clear that there was already some knowledge of a King Björn in the Uppsala region before the discovery of the *Hervarar Saga*, indicating an older indigenous tradition.

The fact that traditions about Häga were actuated at this particular time does not necessarily depend on any direct effect of the saga text. However, indirectly, there may be a connection. The translation of the *Hervarar Saga* may well have actualised the possibility of collecting information about Häga specifically, also from the living folk tradition.

Verelius did not publish the *Hervarar Saga* on its own, but also used the work to discuss Old Uppsala, the heathen temple mentioned by Adam of Bremen and the location of the church (Fig. 9.4). Verelius argues that the pagan temple was located at Old Uppsala, and he even used Olof Rudbeck as a reference. Rudbeck had documented no less than 665 grave mounds around
Fig. 9.3. Verelius’ handwritten publication of the Hervarar Saga, published in Uppsala in 1672 (Hervarar Saga på gammal götska med Olai Verelj uttolkning och notis. Up­salae anno 1672). Source: Alvin database, Uppsala University Library.
Old Uppsala, claiming they were at least 3700 years old (Eriksson 2002:271–273). As mentioned (Chapter 2), Olof Rudbeck made a map of the Uppsala area for Verelius' publication, but this map does not show Håga (Fig. 9.5). It therefore seems that the connection between Björn in the *Hervarar Saga* and the historic Håga outside Uppsala was not established among the leading scholars of the time. However, as mentioned, there may have been a local tradition at Håga predating the awareness of the *Hervarar Saga* among contemporary scholars, and the connection between Björn and the mound. In any event, the *Hervarar Saga* had an enormous importance for the scholarly development and history of Sweden, as Rudbeck points out in the foreword to the first part of his *Atlantica* (printing of the first band started in 1677, with final print of the never fully published fourth band in 1702). Not only did the *Hervarar Saga* direct Rudbeck's attention to ancient history, but because of this saga he wanted to compile and understand the whole history of Sweden (Eriksson 2002:258), starting with the Old Testament stories and the myth of Atlantis.
Here begins the Saga of King Heidrek the Wise

The saga opens with these words. The reader is introduced to the sword, made by the dwarfs Dvalin and Durin according to the U-version (Tolkien 1960:2):

‘Sigrlami was the name of a king who ruled over Gardariki... This king had obtained from dwarves the sword called Tyrfing, the keenest of all blades; every time it was drawn a light shone from it like a ray of the sun. It could never be unsheathed being the death of a man, and it had always to be sheathed with blood still warm upon it. There was no living thing, neither man nor neat, that could live to see another day if it were wounded by Tyrfing, whether the wound were big or little; never had it failed in a stroke or been stayed before it plunged into the earth, and the man who bore it in battle would always be victorious, if blows were struck with it. This sword is renowned in all ancient tales.’
Tolkien’s translation uses the R version, but the lacuna is filled up with U and, at the end, also U/203 (Tolkien 1960:xxxii). Another translation of the qualities of the sword Tyrfing (cf. SnE. 154) reads: ‘Now I have drawn Dáinsleif which the dwarfs made, which must cause a man’s death every time it is bared, and which never fails in its stroke; and the wound never heals, if one is scratched with it.’ (Tolkien 1960:2). The saga then follows the life of the sword and the deaths that follow. In summary, it tells the following:

Sigrlami gave the sword to the great berserker Arngrim, who married Sigrlami’s daughter. Arngrim was a great Viking and had a son Angantýr, who inherited the sword. Angantýr died in a battle against the Swedish hero Hjalmar on Samsø. In a prophesy, it was said: ‘We shall be this evening under Odin’s roof’. This and similar phrases like ‘to be Odin’s guest’ mean ‘to die in battle’ (Tolkien 1960:6, 87).

The reason for this battle was that Angantýr wanted to marry the King of Uppsala’s daughter, who instead had promised her hand to Hjalmar. In the saga, Angantýr enters the royal hall in Uppsala. If the Hervarar Saga contains a certain measure of truth about places and dates, the remains of this royal hall may have been recently uncovered as part of extensive investigations in Old Uppsala (Ljungkvist in press).

Angantýr’s friend Odd buried Angantýr and his brothers in a mound on Samsø with all their weapons, including the cursed sword Tyrfing. After Angantýr’s death, Hervar or Hervör (or Hervor) enters the scene. She was a shield maiden and the daughter of Angantýr, but ‘she did more often harm than good’. Once Hervör mistreated some slaves, one of them said: ‘Your only wish is to do evil, Hervör, and evil is expected from you; the jarl forbids everyone to speak to you of your parentage, because he is ashamed that you should know of it – for the basest serf lay with his daughter, and you are their child.’ Hervör was of course enraged by these words and went to the jarl asking: ‘I thought I had a hero for father, but now I am told he tended the swine!’ (Tolkien 1960:10). The jarl could assure her (Tolkien 1960:11):

A lie has been told you
with little substance:
high among heroes
men held your father;
Angantýr hall
with earth sprinkled
stands on Sámsey’s
southern border.
Hervör spoke:

Foster-father,
I am filled with longing
to seek them out,
my slain kinsmen,
for store of wealth
they surely own;
to me shall pass
if I perish not!

Hervör then prepares to regain her father’s fame and glory, and his most precious possession: the sword. She equips herself with the gear and weapons of a man, and even calls herself Hervard when looking like a man. When arriving on Samsø (Fig. 9.6), ‘she demanded to be allowed to go up on the island, saying that there would be promise of treasure in the burial-mound; but all the men of the company spoke against it, saying that such creatures of evil walked there both by day and by night that it was worse there in daylight than in many other places in the dark’ (Tolkien 1960:12). Eventually, however, she got her way, and went on the island alone to the graves. Hervör saw that on the island the fire of the barrows was burning (a fire burning over treasures hidden in burial mounds, ‘metal fire,’ ‘hovering fire’). Hervör made her way into these fires until she came to the barrow of the berserkers (Tolkien 1960:14–15):

Then she spoke:

Wake, Angantýr,  
wakes you Hervör,  
Sváfa’s offspring,  
your only daughter;  
the keen-edged blade  
from the barrow give me,  
the swords dwarf-smithied  
for Sigrlami [...]  

Then Angantýr answered her:

Why do you hail me,  
Hervör, daughter?  
To your doom you are faring  
filled with evil!  
Mad you are now,  
your mind darkened,  
when with wits wandering  
you wake the dead  

No father or kinsman  
in cairn laid me;  
they kept Tyrfing,  
the two survivors –  
one alone did  
wield it after  

Hervör answered:

You give me a lie!  
May the god let you  
rest whole in your howe  
if you’re holding not  
Tyrfing with you;  
unwilling you are  
to give the heirloom  
to your only child.
The barrow opened and it was as though the mound was on fire (Fig. 9.7). Angantýr spoke about how Hell’s gate had been opened and why she needed to flee to her ships. But Hervör was not afraid (Tolkien 1960:16–18).

She answered:

No blaze can you light,  
burning in darkness,  
that your funeral fires  
should with fear daunt me;  
unmoved shall remain  
the maiden’s spirit,  
though she gaze on a ghost  
in the grave-door standing.

Then Angantýr said:

I tell you, Hervör –  
hear my words out! –  
what shall come to pass,  
prince’s daughter:
trust what I tell you,
Tyrfing, daughter,
shall be ruin and end
of all your family.

You shall bear offspring
who in after days
shall wield Tyrfing
and trust his strength;
by the name Heidrek
known to his people,
born the strongest
beneath the sun’s curtain […]

Fool you are, Hervör,
in your heart’s daring,
with eyes open
to enter the fire!
The blade from the barrow
I will bring, rather;
O young maiden,
I may not refuse you.

Hervör answered:

Son of warriors,
you do well in this,
the blade to me
from barrow yielding;
king, to keep it
I count it dearer
than were all Norway
beneath my hand.

Again, Angantýr accused Hervör of being cursed and a woman of evil, and said that Tyrfing would bring ruin to all her family. Hervör said that she would go back to the wave horses (‘sea-horse’ or ship) and that she did not care what would happen to her family.

Hervör married Höfund, the son of King Gudmund, and they had two sons; the elder was named Angantýr and the younger Heidrek. Both were stronger than other men and had beautiful faces, and they were also wiser than other
men. ‘But as much good as Angantýr did, so much more mischief than any other man did Heidrek do; and it was him that Hervör loved the more. Höfund sent Heidrek away to be fostered by Gizur, wisest of men, and with him Heidrek was brought up’ (Tolkien 1960:21). Heidrek was bent on evil. During a quarrel when Heidrek had been drinking, he started abusing other men, and eventually his father Höfund asked him to leave the house. He did so reluctantly, but in the courtyard ‘it came into his heart that he had not yet done enough harm, and turning back towards the hall he took up a great stone and hurled it in the direction from which he heard men talking together in the darkness’ (Tolkien 1960:21). The stone hit its target and when he came back he saw a dead man lying on the ground: his brother Angantýr.

Höfund, the father and king, expelled Heidrek and told him never to come into his sight again. Hervör the queen said: ‘My son, you have now so done for yourself that you will not be thinking of coming back, and I can do little to help you. But here is a mark of gold and a sword, which I will give you; the sword is called Tyrfing, which your mother’s father, Angantýr the beserk, owned...’ (Tolkien 1960:22).

Eventually King Heidrek became the king of Reidgotaland and extended his kingdom in many ways. As the story unfolds, the once wicked grows wise, and becomes a man of many friends. Then Odin enters the scene as Gestumblindi (Fig. 9.8) – Gestr inn blinbi, ‘the blind stranger’. Odin was often disguised as an old man wandering around with one eye and a hat drawn down covering his face (the hat covering the face resembles another character of an old man in the Lord of the Rings). Gestumblindi was a powerful man and an enemy of King Heidrek. The King sent him words to come and be reconciled if he cared for his life, and late one night a stranger knocked on the door. The next morning Gestumblindi went to the king and greeted him, and said that he wished to be reconciled with the king. ‘Will you submit to the judgement of my wise men?’ asked the king, to which Gestumblindi said: ‘Are there no other ways of redeeming myself?’ ‘There are others,’ the king said, ‘if you think yourself able to propound riddles.’ Gestumblindi replied: ‘I have no great skill in that, but the other seems very hard.’ Then the riddle contest between Gestumblindi and King Heidrik starts, parts of which are cited below (Tolkien 1960:32, 33, 37, 44).
Then said Gestumblindi:

From home I journeyed
and from home faring
I looked on a way of ways;
a way there was under
and a way over,
and on all sides ways there were.
This riddle ponder,
O prince Heidrek!

‘Your riddle is good, Gestumblindi,’ said the king; ‘I have guessed it. You went across a bridge over a river, and the way of the river was beneath you, but birds flew over your head and on either side of you, and that was their way.’ […]

Then said Gestumblindi:

A dweller in the soil
I saw passing,
a corpse on a corpse there sat;
blind upon blind one
to the billows riding,
on a steed without breath it was borne.
This riddle ponder,
O prince Heidrek!

‘Your riddle is good, Gestumblindi,’ said the king; ‘I have guessed it. You came upon a dead horse on an ice floe, and on the horse a dead snake, and they all floated together down the river.’ […]the riddles go on and on…

Then said Gestumblindi, ‘Tell me this then last of all, if you are wiser than any other king’:

What said Odin
in the ear of Balder
before he was borne to the fire?

‘You alone know that, vile creature!’ cried King Heidrek, and he drew Tyrfing and slashed at Odin, but he changed himself into the shape of a hawk and flew away; yet the king, striking after him, took off his tailfeathers, and that is why the hawk has been so short-tailed ever since.
Then Odin said: ‘For this, King Heidrek, that you have attacked me, and would slay me without offence, the basest slaves shall be the death of you.’ And after that they parted.

King Heidrek had nine slaves, and, as predicted, one night they slew the king and all who were with him, and took the sword Tyrfing. The story then continues when Heidrek’s son, Angantýr, killed all the slaves and regained the sword. Then the saga proceeds with The Battle of the Goths and the Huns.

The history of Sweden

The last part of the saga, which is probably a later addition, starts thus: ‘Angantýr was long king in Reidgotaland; he was mighty, and a great warrior, and lines of kings are sprung from him. His son was Heidrek Wolfskin…’ and then the genealogy continues (Tolkien 1960:59). As Tolkien says: ‘The history of Sweden described in this last section of the saga is for the most extremely obscure…’ (Tolkien 1960:58). Moreover, while the former and major part of the saga is dramatic and narrative, the latter part is descriptive – essentially a genealogical list of kings and dynasties. It is in this part that Björn appears as a historic figure.

‘[…] The sons of King Ragnar subjected to themselves the realms of the Swedes, but after the death of King Ragnar his son Björn Ironside took the Swedish throne, Sigurd the Danish, Hvítserk the eastern kingdom, and Ívar the Boneless England’ (Tolkien 1960:60).

Following Ragnars Saga, Chapter 7, Ragnar Lodbrók broke the three nights of abstinence after the wedding that his wife demanded, and as a consequence their son Ívar was born without bones but with gristle. Despite his physical handicap, he was the most famous of the original leaders of the Danish, attacking England during the reign of Æthelred. Björn Ironside, another of the sons, was one of the leaders on a Viking voyage to the Mediterranean in 859–62 (Tolkien 1960:60).

‘The sons of Björn Ironside were Eirík and Refil; Refil was a war-lord and a sea-king, but King Eirík ruled Sweden after his father, and he lived only a little while. Then Eirík the son of Refil inherited the kingdom; he was a great warrior and a very mighty king. The sons of Eirík son of Björn were Önund of Uppsala and King Björn, and in those days Sweden again came to be divided between brothers; they had the kingdom after Eirík the son of Refil’ (Tolkien 1960:61).
Thus, according to the saga, Ragnar Lodbrok is King Björn's great-grandfather. However, the accession to the throne is unclear and if this genealogy has any historicity, there must have been infights between the successors. Björn Ironside was the son of Ragnar Lodbrok. He had two sons: Eirík and Refil. For reasons that remain unclear, Eirík ruled only a short period and was succeeded by his brother's son, also named Eirík. The saga does not explain why Refil son of Björn Ironside did not reign; nor why the sons of Eirík son of Björn did not inherit the throne when their father died after reigning only a short period. Perhaps his two sons were too young at the time. In any event, according to the saga, the two sons eventually got Sweden's throne, but the kingdom was divided between the brothers.

'The Björn built the place called Barrow, and he was called Björn of the Barrow; Bragi the skald dwelt with him. The son of King Önund was named Eirík, who succeeded his father on the throne at Uppsala; he was a mighty king. In his days Harald the Fair-haired raised himself to the throne in Norway, first of his kindred to bring Norway under the rule of one king. The son of King Eirík at Uppsala was named Björn, who possessed the kingdom after his father, and ruled it for long' (Tolkien 1960:61).

Tolkien comments upon Björn of the Barrow: 'In 829 a king of the Swedes called Bernues (Björn) invited the Emperor Louis the Pious to send Christian missionaries into Sweden, an invitation that led to the founding of the church at Birka on lake Mälaren by St. Anskar.' As he points out, it was generally accepted that King Björn of the Barrow was King Bernus. Tolkien also comments on Harald the Fair-Haired who united Norway after the battle of Hafrsfjord, which now is dated to around 885–90 (Tolkien 1960: 61, fn. 1, 3).

In any event, there is a great uncertainty about the historicity of King Björn and there are even different genealogies of the royal rulers. The exact translation and chronology of the genealogy seem to differ between authors and translators, despite the fact that they apparently used the same manuscript. According to Almgren, who refers to Peringskiöld (who builds on Verelius), Erik Refilsson's sons were Emund in Uppsala and King Björn. Sweden once again became divided by two brothers, since they took the kingdom after King

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2 It is debated who King Björn refers to. As Tolkien also points out, one theory focuses on a king named Björn who invited Ansgar to Birka. According to Rimbert's chronicle *Vita Ans garii*, he was called Bern or Bernus. If this is the person mentioned in the saga, the date is around 830. Other, more prevalent theories link King Björn with the grave mound Adelsö, which is situated across the Birka. The person named Anund/Emund, who is also mentioned by Rimbert, does not really fit with Uppsala-Anund, who is seen as a replaced king living as a refugee in Denmark (see for instance Sune Lindqvist's discussion about 'Björn' in Svenskt biografiskt lexikon, bd 4 (1924). If there is yet another Björn, it may fit better with a historical reference to the era Harald Hårfagre (Fairhair). In any event, historical figures in the sagas may not correspond to historic figures. Mythological narratives are not historic chronicles.
Erik Refilsson. In yet another translation from 1847, another Björn complicates the picture. According to Petersen’s 1847 version, as mentioned above, Björn Ironside had two sons, Erik and Refil; the latter was a warlord and a sea king, but Erik became the king in Sweden after his father, though he lived only for a short while. Then Erik, the son of Refil, took the throne; he was a great warrior and a mighty king. ‘Björn’s sons were Erik Uppsali and King Björn’ and hence Sweden was once again divided between brothers when Björn and Erik inherited the throne after Erik Refil’s son (Petersen 1847:57). Petersen writes that Björn took the place Haug and was therefore called Björn by the Mound. In this translation, King Önund (Anund) is not the brother of King Björn at Häga, but King Erik at Uppsala’s son was named Önund (Petersen 1847:57).

Conclusion

The Hervarar Saga belongs to the fornaldrasogur or the Sagas of the Ancient Times. Its historicity has been challenged and indeed tales of legendary heroes were also popularly used as oral entertainment. It is said about King Sverre of Norway (d. 1202) that the fictitious works or ‘lying tales’ were the most amusing (Tolkien 1960:vii–viii). It is easy to see how passages may have provoked amusement, like when it came to Heidrek’s ‘heart that he had not yet done enough harm’ and threw a stone back towards the hall and killed his brother. One should therefore not expect a strict chronology in terms of factual genealogy (descent from fathers to sons) and actual years (ruling and reigns).

As shown, the Hervarar Saga is a rich saga composed of different mythological narratives of various lengths, time depths, dates and places of origins. Moreover, the U-version includes the list of Swedish kings at the end of the saga. This was clearly not originally part of the saga. Still, regardless of whether the chronology of the genealogy of kings was real or fictitious, the Hervarar Saga has played a fundamental role in shaping scholarly and public perception of Häga and the great grave mound. In this regard, the memory of King Björn has lived on through the centuries, in a similar vein to the famous words documented in Hávamál: ‘Cattle die, kinsmen die, you yourself die; I know one thing which never dies: the judgment of a dead man’s life.’ Hávamál is part of the wisdom literature and even the Hervarar Saga contains many words of wisdom. If the whole saga is the story of the cursed sword Tyrfing, how it killed through history, and human wickedness and cruelty, the saga ends (before the Swedish history is added) with words of wisdom about the failed fruits of war. Another king named Angantyr searched among the slain after a great battle against the Huns and found his brother Hlöd. Angantyr said (Tolkien 1960:58):
Treasures uncounted,  
kinsman, I offered you,  
wealth and cattle  
well to content you;  
but for war’s reward  
you have won neither  
realm more spacious  
nor rings glittering.

And then he said:

We are cursed, kinsman,  
your killer am I!  
It will be never forgotten;  
the Norns’ doom is evil.
Oscar Almgren in the museum's collections. ATA Stockholm.
Portrait of Oscar Almgren at the Department of Archaeology and Ancient History, Uppsala University.
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