A Kragehul type lance head from a Middle Vendel Period grave in Stockholm
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The rich sacrificial finds of Iron Age war booty from bogs in southernmost Scandinavia are a perennial source of fascination for archaeologists. Recent decades have seen intense research in this field, producing among other things some very solid typochronological works (e.g. Ilkjer 1990; Bemmann & Hahne 1994) where the well-preserved bog finds have been studied in conjunction with contemporary grave finds that permit the establishment of a detailed chronological sequence.

One of the many weapon types discerned in the course of these studies is the Kragehul lance head, named after the bog site on Funen (Engelhardt 1867, 1970). Other bog sites with this type are Nydam, Ejsbol and Illerup Adal in Denmark (Vang Petersen 1998, pp. 262–263; Ørnes 1988, Taf. 130:4; Ilkjer 1990, pp. 142–143), and Skedemosse on Öland in southern Sweden (Hagberg 1967, p. 68, F954). Under the generally accepted interpretational model, these finds mark areas that were attacked by raiding parties armed with Kragehul type lances. In graves, the type is most common in southern Norway (Bemmann & Hahne 1994, p. 454) but also known from Lapponia, Medelpad, Småland and Gotland in Sweden (table 1) and from Denmark. The grave finds are believed to mark areas where the type was manufactured. The model comes with the important source-critical caveat that not all groups at the time practised the customs of weapon burial or war booty sacrifice, so both source categories must be treated as incomplete distributions.

Regarding the Kragehul type, Bemmann & Hahne (1994, pp. 429–430) built upon studies by Fabech (1987, p. 32) and Ilkjer (1990, pp. 142–143) and used a sample of 24 lance heads from Norwegian graves and an unspecified number from Danish sacrificial deposits (Bemmann & Hahne 1994, p. 586). They divided the Kragehul type into a long and a short variant and offered the following definition of variant Kragehul-long (my translation): «The lance heads of Kragehul type have a narrow lanceolate blade and a long socket. The ratio of socket length to blade length is generally about 1:1. The cross-section at the socket’s thinnest point is oval or square, the socket is often remarkably thin here. The sockets are often faceted. … [Kragehul-long:] Long lance heads with a lanceolate tapered blade with concave-rhomboid cross-section ... The following measurements describe the span of variation of this variant: total length 27–38 cm, two specimens are longer than 50 cm, blade length 12–30, rarely 33 cm, socket length 10–19 cm, greatest blade width 2.3–3.7 cm, greatest blade thickness 0.5–1.1 cm. The widest point is in the lower third of the blade, 5–7 cm from the blade’s lower end. Socket length / blade length = 0.65–1.35, blade width / blade length 0.1–0.26, length of blade below widest point / total blade length = 0.25–0.38.»

Bemmann & Hahne dated the Kragehul-long type to AD 400–450, which is their shorthand designation for the Early Migration Period (D1). Recent studies (e.g. Lund Hansen 1994, p. 1–2) place the period’s start date at AD 375, reflecting the overlap with the final phase of the Late Roman Period (cf. Bemmann & Hahne 1994, p. 318), the time of the Nydam fibulae. The Kragehul-short type continued to be produced into the Late Migration Period (D2; ibid., p. 430). Judging from the Nydam IV war booty sacrifice (Vang Petersen 1998, p. 262, Abb. 105) the Kragehul-long type also survived into the Late Migration Period. The late date of Nydam IV is evinced by weaponry types belonging to Bemmann & Hahne’s groups Vestly, Øvsthus and Snartemo; and by metalwork decorated in Salin’s Style I. It is, in fact, the latest in date of all known Danish war booty sacrifices (ibid., p. 259), but as Andreas Rau has kindly pointed out (email 12 June 2002) there are also type Snartemo lance heads among those from Skedemosse.

The Swedish finds of Kragehul lance heads are characterised by Bemmann & Hahne (1994,
The Tomteboda grave

John Hamilton of the Swedish National Heritage Board performed developer-funded excavations in 2001 near the great post sorting terminal at Tomteboda on the north-western outskirts of urban Stockholm. He uncovered, among other interesting finds, an unburnt weapon grave. It contained a lance head, a seax sword, a small pair of shears, an awl, two whetstones, two iron carpentry nails or rivets with wood remains, two minuscule iron rivets possibly from a comb, a hoof spike, and teeth of a large herbivore (Hamilton in prep., grave 34). No bones were preserved, but the grave cut was too small to have accommodated an entire horse. The seax sword and shears date the grave to the Vendel Period. A similar grave was excavated at Åby in Västerhaninge psh, Södermanland, in 2000 (Lloyd-Smith et al. 2002).

The Tomteboda sword is of W&G type SAX2 (orig. L c. 460 mm, max blade W 32 mm, tang L 85 mm) which is a diagnostic type of W&G period 3–4, the Middle Vendel Period, roughly AD 600–680. This date has been confirmed by a radiocarbon analysis (KIA-19567) of deer fur found with the sword. The lance head (fig. 1), however, is unlike any known Vendel Period type. Nørgård Jørgensen (W&G p. 129) places a similar one along with a Migration Period javelin head of a local type in the Early Vendel Period of her type scheme for the weapon graves of Gotland, on the strength of an uncertain find combination (SHM 18272).

The lance head from Tomteboda is in fact a specimen of the Kragehul-long type and fits Bemmann & Hahne’s definition except regarding the shape and greatest width of the blade. The blade is widest at the mid-point rather than in the lower third. This trait is also found in otherwise typical Kragehul lance heads from Illerup Adal (Ilkjær’s specimen VOH) and Skedemosse (F954), and should not prompt us to exclude the Tomteboda specimen from the type. The ratio of the blade’s width to its length is 0.31 (cf. Bemmann & Hahne’s interval 0.1–0.26). At 40 mm, the blade’s greatest width exceeds the maximum in Bemmann & Hahne’s sample, 37 mm. These differences are small and have to do with the fact that the Tomteboda lance head is overall an extremely robust specimen of the type.

Other Swedish Kragehul type lance heads of both variants have much more slender di-
Table 1. Kragehul type lance heads (short & long) found in Sweden and provenanced at least to parish. Measurements in millimetres.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ref</th>
<th>L. tot</th>
<th>L blade</th>
<th>L blade / L. tot</th>
<th>Socket L / blade L</th>
<th>Blade max width</th>
<th>Socket max diam</th>
<th>Socket min diam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton in prep.</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rundkvist 2003b, fig 2:1</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VWG 596; Rundkvist 2003a, p. 124</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tillväxten 1927 fig. 17; Rundkvist 2003b, fig. 2:1</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serning 1960, p. 25-46, 127-128, pl. 3</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tillväxten 1962 fig. 10</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ØJG II, p. 181, fig. 16</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hagberg 1967, p. 68</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dimensions, particularly regarding the diameter of the socket (Table 1). This difference may indicate that the Tomteboda specimen was not made at the same time as the majority of the Kragehul-long type lance heads. The find at Tomteboda of a slightly atypical Kragehul-long lance head in a grave of the Middle Vendel Period supports an extension of the type’s use period into the Late Migration Period, as prompted by the Nydam IV find. The lance was clearly an antique when buried, but it need not have been handed down all the way from the Early Migration Period. Bemmann & Hahne’s distinction between a long and a short variant of the Kragehul lance head type, thus, does unfortunately not seem to be a useful chronological tool outside of Norwegian weapon graves.

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References
VWG = Nerman 1935.
OJG II = Hagberg et al. 1991.

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