



## 27 | The fluidity of rock art

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**Introduction.** The following article focuses on problems concerning reconstructions of prehistoric landscapes. Central for this discussion is how the knowledge about the process of land uplift over the years both caused limitations and prejudices, acceptance and possibilities on the interpretations of the rock art in Bohuslän. There have been more or less proper geological studies on this subject since 1950 which then have been revised and completed through the years (Fries 1951; Persson 1973; Miller & Robertsson 1988; Svedhage 1998; Pässe 2001, 2003). In spite of this accumulation of knowledge, rock-art research has not been able to upgrade, compare, and reflect these results in relation to the prehistoric remains in the landscape (Nordbladh 1980; Bertilsson 1987; Bradley 2000; Winter 2002; Fredell 2003). It seems as if rock art research in Bohuslän is stuck in a “terrestrial” tradition or “paradigm”, which has limited, distorted and separated a priori and symbiotic relationship between the prehistoric man and the sea in Bohuslän.

In opposition to this traditional terrestrial paradigm, I strive to re-emphasize the importance of the presence of the sea in the rock art areas during the prehistoric times in Bohuslän. On the basis of the latest and so far most extensive shoreline study ever made on northern Bohuslän, and new measurement of rock art panels and surrounding

terrain, I will argue for the trend that many rock carvings have been placed on or near the contemporary shore during the Bronze Age.

In order to establish this fact further, analogies are being made with rock art areas in western Norway, where the land up lift has not been so severe and where the rock art is made in accordance with the south Scandinavian tradition. In the following I will also advocate for an alternative, (third) model for the interpretation of rock art, that by no means stands in opposition to the traditional ones, but whose purpose and intention is more to juxtapose these perspectives in a dialectic manner (fig. 8). It is here suggested that the rock art in the investigated area might be traces of different forms of “ambivalent” seasonal interactions, negotiations and interpretations that took place in “a third space” maritime port or passage during the Bronze Age.

It is tempting to see the high frequency of rock art in these areas as a materialised reflection of friction and stress caused by contacts and meetings between a domestic and a non-domestic public with different concepts regarding time and space. However, before entering on these case studies, I intend to give a description of the historical, theoretical and methodological constraints that have traditionally governed and even today govern rock art research in Bohuslän.





**The terrestrial paradigm.** In order to get a wider understanding of why rock art research in Bohuslän traditionally either neglected or only briefly discussed the correlation between the placing of the rock carvings and the Bronze Age shore, we have to turn to some of the earliest attempts. The first elaborate and extensive thesis concerning the rock art in Bohuslän was in fact in favour of this idea, promoted by the early antiquarian George Brunius. Brunius, born and brought up in Tanum, was among the first who observed that many rock art panels were situated at the very same topographical height and that many were heavily affected by corrosion (Brunius 1839: 79, 1868: 151).

“Att en och annan hållristning finnes högt öfver hafsytan kan ingalunda upphäfva vigten av det förhållande, att ingen enda förmärkes på hafvets strandklippor. Det är alltså klart, att hållristningarne, som med få undantag blifvit anbragta å kustklipporna, liksom ganska många namnchiffer, bomärken och årtal blifvit sednare tider inhuggna i Bohuslänska skärgården, måste efter en lång följd af sekler fått närvarande höjd öfver hafsytan. Här får vittringen jemväl åberopas, hvarigenom vidsträckta ristningar blifvit till en sådan ytterlighet förstörda, att ej sällan blotta botten af breda linier är öfrig, hvilket bevisar, att de fordom haft en betydlig fördjupning” (Brunius 1868: 151).

On basis of these observations and by analogies with rock carvings situated by lakes and rivers in Scandinavia and North America, Brunius concluded that many rock carvings may originally have been carved on rocks at the water's edge.

This perspective didn't meet any direct resistance among the contemporary recognized Antiquarians, e.g. Oscar Montelius and Emil Ekhoﬀ, who rather encouraged this viewpoint in accordance to the import and interactions of bronzes. By this time a consensus had also been reached within the antiquarian discourse that the rock art primarily was produced during the Bronze Age (Montelius 1874: 151, 159; Ekhoﬀ 1880).

The later Oscar Almgren did not share this earlier maritime interpretation of the rock art prehistoric location and function in the landscape of Bohuslän. Almgren was strongly influenced by the contemporary settlement centred archaeological research, and its methods and evolutionistic tendencies, partly inspired by Gustaf Kossinna and his “Siedlungs Archaeologie”, primarily enforced by Knut Stjerna seminars in the beginning of the twentieth century at Uppsala university. Inspired by the means and forms of this institution Almgren started his extensive inventory and documentation of rock art in the Tanum area in Bohuslän (see Almgren 1912; Baudou 1997: 124-129). However, the strongest impression on Almgren was probably the power of the contemporary landscape. By the carvings location in the landscape, on the outermost edges of the cliffs that surrounded the clayey lowlands, Almgren made his major conclusion; the rock art reflected an agricultural population's religious believes and rituals that were proceeded and projected into the rocks by the arable land, away from the sea, in the vicinity of the settlements (Almgren 1912, 1927, fig. 1).

“Det är i närheten af sina bostäder, som bronsålderfolket velat se dessa bergstaflor, ej vid stränderna af de havsvikar, som de på sina



skepp before, huru mycket än deras tankar just sysslade med just den sidan af livet” (Almgren 1912 : 562).

Almgren’s theories concerning ritual behaviour, settlement, landscape, utilisation, in the rock art areas during the Bronze Age, was further developed by circular argumentation between him and the other participants in Stjerna’s archaeological settlement seminars (e.g. Ekholm 1921). These early inductions and assumptions regarding the rock art in function in the landscape formed together the terrestrial paradigm cornerstones, and

in general these assumptions have been verified by studies during the twenty century (Almgren 1927; Selinge 1966; Nordbladh 1980; Bertilsson 1987; Vogt 1998; Hygen & Bengtsson 2000; Bradley 2000; Winter 2002; Fredell 2003). Even if Almgren’s religious diffusionistic perspective was criticized during the mid- and later parts of the twenty century, his main theories concerning rock art location and functions in the landscape still remained uncontradicted (ibid.).

In the 1980’s restrictive and rhetoric modifications of the “terrestrial paradigm” were made which resulted in that Almgren’s agrarian har-



Figure 1. Map over the Tanum area in Bohuslän showing the distribution of rock carvings (red dot) and cairns (black dot) (after Almgren 1927: 197, Fig 128).



mony was transformed into pastoral competition, divine communication into social and structural communication (Nordbladh 1980: 44-45).

“The cairns lie on hilltops partly inside the petroglyph area, partly out on the coast. Here one can distinguish a symbolic division of the landscape by the topography, with graves on the heights, far from presumed habitation and presumed agriculture and cattle farming, and then the petroglyphs lying nearer at hand. This also implies that graves are kept apart from the actual area of habitation”.

The significance of the sea and its relation to the rock art was still being regarded as a marginal, passive ahistoric element, that primarily was used as a backdrop for death and utilisation by the Bronze Age groups. Further communicative functions as well as practical as cosmological were not encountered for (Nordbladh 1980; Bertilsson 1987). Strangely enough, many of these earlier attempts relayed on a shoreline assumption made primarily by ocular estimation by the geologist Erik Ljungner, back in 1939 (Ljungner 1939). By this time there had been more proper studies on the subject in Bohuslän, but these were apparently ignored (Fries 1951; Persson 1973; Miller & Robertsson 1988).

Almost a century after Brunius' thesis, Sven-Axel Hallbäck made an attempt, using the shoreline to deduct the maximal age of rock art in Bohuslän (Hallbäck 1944). Hallbäck's inductive conclusion, based only on the lowest locality in each so-called “hundred”, was that “some of the rock carvings must be dated to the Iron Age”, and that “the rock carvings hardly could have been placed at the water's edge” (Bertilsson 1987: 161;

e.g. Hallbäck 1944: 54).

In his often quoted dissertation of 1987, Ulf Bertilsson is in favour of Hallbäck's analysis. He consequently addressed criticism to Göran Burenhult (1980) and others who advocate that many rock carvings might have been placed near the contemporary coast or at the water's edge during the Bronze Age. However, considering the maps which Bertilsson published in his dissertation, and his assumption concerning the shoreline level during the Bronze Age, it is clear that many sites with carvings in Tanum, Kville, etc., are, in fact, situated on the Bronze Age shore. Consequently, these low situation carvings and the other carvings on higher ground in the vicinity of these plains must then have been deliberately placed adjacent to the sea during the entire Bronze Age. Despite this Bertilsson concluded his analysis with the following statement:

“The analysis of the general pattern of distribution in relation to levels has clearly demonstrated that there exists no direct correlation between rock carvings and the Bronze Age sea shore-line. Instead, it is obvious that, the distribution is correlated to the plain areas with open and arable land, which must have constituted the basis for subsistence economy” (Bertilsson 1987: 167).

Bertilsson's conclusion seems extraordinary considering his own shoreline assumption that the plain areas in Tanum and Kville would in fact have constituted the sea bottom, and this fact contradicts his own general assumption that the majority of sites reflect a pastoral or agricultural activity (fig. 2, see also Bertilsson 1987: Fig. 13, 14, 17).





However, the strongest challenge against the terrestrial paradigm came in connection with the World Heritage project in Tanum. The geologist Krister Svedhage (1997) made a shoreline study on basis of three lakes, using traditional pollen methods combined with  $^{14}\text{C}$  of the lake sediments. His conclusion was that the sea level during the Early Bronze Age was about 25 metres above

the present and had descended to 15 meters during the transition between the Late Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age (Svedhage 1997; Ekman 2001). This study did of course evoke many protests from archaeologists. In a switch the Bronze Age cosmology in Tanum turned from a harmonic settled sedentary landscape to an extreme marine or maritime one - the carvings

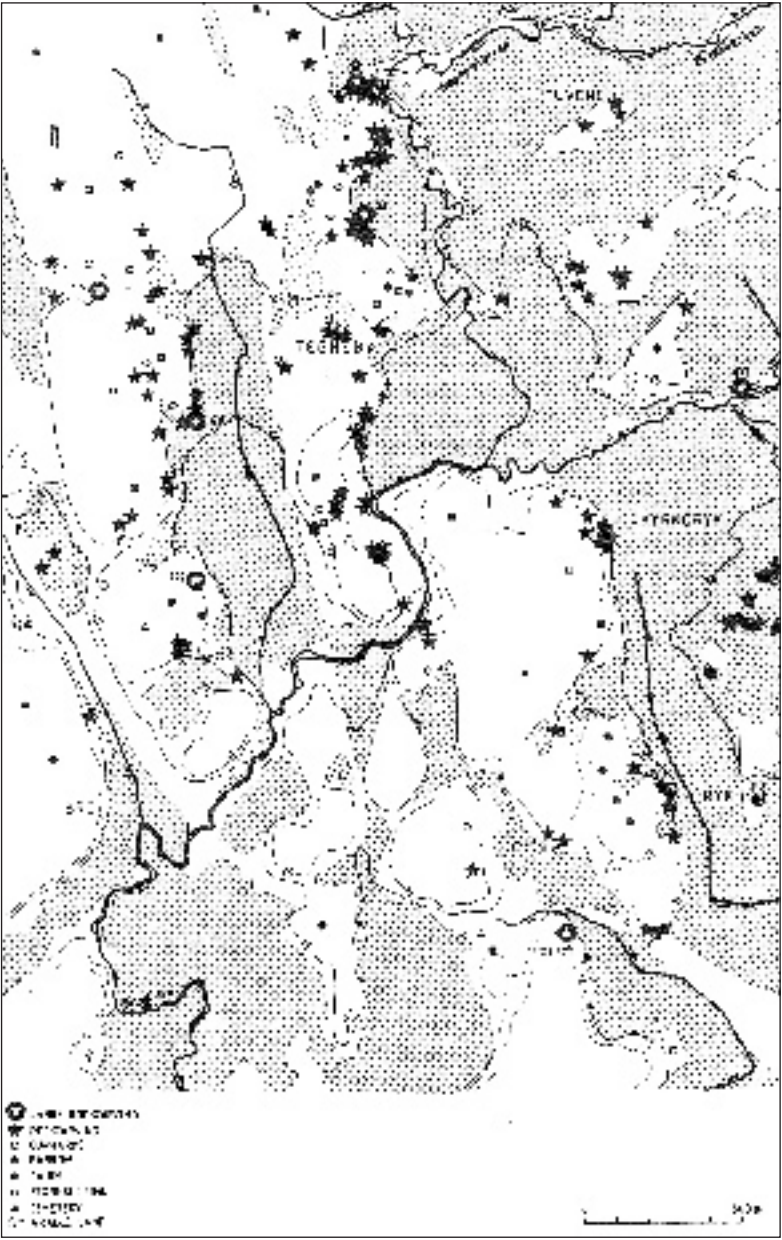


Figure 2. Bertilssons figure 11, showing the rock carving in Ryk and Tegneby in Tanum and their latitude over m.a.s.l. (reworked after Bertilsson 1987).



primarily not produced in the Bronze Age, but instead in The Iron Age. The archaeologist Lasse Bengtsson (2000) criticized Svedhage's assumption by analysing three different panels in Tanum with typologically datable, ship motifs from the Early Bronze Age. Bengtsson compared different ship chronologies with Svedhage's result, and concluded that these panels would be 5-10 metres under the water, according to Svedhage's shoreline assumption (Bengtsson 2000)!

Thus, on many scientific grounds this study showed its "inaccuracy". Thereby "the terrestrial paradigm" succeeded to survive even this crisis phase. The carvings remained above the water and the metaphoric ships continued to dwell in the mystic boggy areas of Tanum.

Another more implicit critique of the terrestrial paradigm came with the results from the settlement centred archaeological surveys made in the so called Tanum project. The conception of finding concrete and extensive settlements from the Bronze Age did not live up to these expectations. On the contrary, these projects have rather shown a lack of proof of settlement or agriculture activity dated to the Bronze Age in connection with the rock art panels. The outcome of this was that the participants of this project, progressive enough, asked for a broader discussion and conception concerning, rock art landscape and settlement means in northern Bohuslän (Algots-son & Swedberg 1997; Aulin & Gustafsson 2002; Bengtsson 2004).

Recently Kristian Kristiansen has contributed with a perspective concerning the rock art significance and function in South Scandinavia that both could be regarded as innovative as well as traditional (Kristiansen 2002: 68). By identifying ship motifs with universal form and utterance

on different places in South Scandinavia, Kristiansen sees rock art as one of the many means and mediums of the interacting socio-political transmission, transformation and institutionalisation of religious and ideological power during the Bronze Age. Moreover, Kristiansen emphasizes rock art as a direct medium of a mobile marine identity in connection to journey across the South Scandinavian seaways during the Bronze Age. In general this is a very interesting and innovative analysis but the weakness with this attempt is the assumption that the rock art primarily was used as a medium by the travelling chiefs.

"Long distance travels can be documented through the appearance of "foreign" ships on local rock panel. Traveling chiefs were in this way documenting their visit, sometimes along with other motifs" (Kristiansen 2002: 68).

By this way Kristiansen reduces a complex utterance to signify one specific social group's mark or identity. It would be more fruitful to assume that some of the ship symbols may have conveyed the whole identity of a travelling ship crew. Among those who argue and advocate successfully for this viewpoint is the Norwegian Frode Kvalø (2000). But, even if rock art had been sited in communication strategic places it also shows upon a very local or translocal character and only a few motifs may hold for this kind of universal mobile, regional or transregional interpretation.

**Summing up.** It is obvious that rock art research in Bohuslän, traditionally but also today is governed by this terrestrial paradigm caused by a complex mixture of socio-historical, socio-sci-





tific and methodological constraints (Kuhn 1970; Fleck 1997). Thus, two major trends have been emphasized in rock art research over the years: An earlier school which stressed the close relation of rock art and the sea, claiming this to be a reflection of marine identity, activity, interactions of bronzes and long-distance contacts and trade. A later school, which has had the greatest impact on contemporary research, “the terrestrial paradigm”, that accentuates the close correlation of rock art and agriculture and settlements through the features in the contemporary landscape.

In accordance with this paradigm, areas that used to constitute sea bottoms during the Bronze Age have primarily been regarded as pastureland or presumptive settlement units and as an effect the sea has been reduced from an organic, complex, multifunctional and communicative being to an absent, lifeless, static line or polygon. In this context, the dominating ship motif has primarily been regarded as an icon for religion or a metaphor of cosmology, not as a symbol for pragmatic or ritual maritime actions or interactions.

As a consequence the Bronze Age settlement groups in Bohuslän have been treated as sea-absent, passive, sedentary and immobile fractions who, in awaiting for external acculturation, projected their cosmological anguish by chopping in transcendent ships on the panels adjacent to the arable land. Only rarely has the discussion, including the functional, ideological and cosmological perspectives, stressed the aspects of coastal activity, mobility and identity when it came to the interpretations of rock art context in the prehistoric landscape (Algotsson & Svedberg 1997; Bradley 1999; Hygen & Bengtsson 1999; Winter 2002; cf. Helskog 1999). Moreover, and as a convention previous attempts have had a tendency to treat the

Bronze Age shoreline as a static, ahistorical phenomenon, situated somewhere between 10 and 15 metres above the sea, considering the whole of Bohuslän (Nordbladh 1980; Bertilsson 1987; Bradley 2000; Winter 2002; Fredell 2003).

In the following discussion, I intend to focus primarily on another area and research tradition in southern Scandinavia.

**The tradition and prerequisites of the west Norwegian rock art.** In the west of Norway there are totally different physical prerequisites to interpret rock art in comparison to many other areas, south and south-east of this area in Scandinavia. The reason for this is a very moderate land up-lift in these areas, which means that the relationship between rock art and sea in the Bronze Age, are more comparable to our contemporary landscape (fig. 3). First of all, we are about to examine two major clusters of rock art in Askvoll, situated just east of the great Sognefjord (see Wrigglesworth this volume). At the localities Unneset and Lervåg, there is a complex of rock art panels together with several cairns, of different shapes and forms, situated just a couple of metres above the current shoreline (fig. 4a/b). The altitude of these remains ranges in general from about 3- 5 metres above the current shore line (Mandt 1993; Wrigglesworth 2000; Sognnes 2003). This is rather interesting because some scholars claim that the sea level during the beginning of the Bronze Age was about 5 metres above the present and by the end of the period it had descended to 3 meters. If these postulations are true all these remains had originally been placed just at the water's edge. However, even if the lands up lift had been less, or slightly nothing, the presence of the sea by the remains is very obvious.





“At Lerivåg in Askvoll it is observed that splashes from the sea – even in the highest tide- may reach the petroglyphs, which are situated at least 4,75 m above the present shoreline” (Sogness 2003: 193).

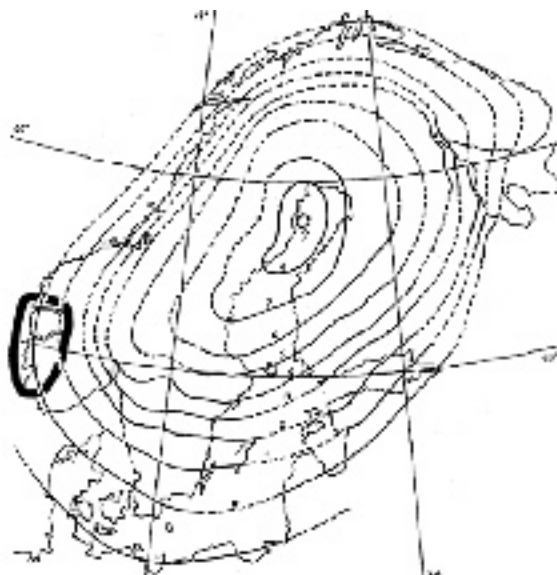
Thus, these remains mutually outline a liminal structure between land and sea. The close spatial correspondence between the rock art and the cairns is indeed remarkable, especially from a Bohuslänian point of view, but in this landscape it makes sense. The sea is everywhere and there is no doubt that the sea has been the major device for the placement of all these remains which used to mirror and reflect all different ritual activity. Different kinds of rock art research have been made on the material in the area for almost two centuries. During the last decade two major studies have been made on the Bronze Age remains in the area. Both of these studies are in

favour of a social or cognitive landscape analysis or interpretation of the Bronze Age remains in this landscape.

The first major attempt was put forward by Gro Mandt. By analysing all the different Bronze Age remains in the greater area of Sogn, by the premises that the material culture elements are symbolic means of expression, she concludes that the archaeological material, implicit or explicit, reveals an intentional and horizontal subdivision of the landscape during the Bronze Age (Mandt 1993: 39). This symbolic subdivision of the landscape reflects different activity but also identity and cosmology. It is manifested by the rock art and the cairns setting on an outer zone, by the islands and isthmuses, and an inner and middle zone with settlements finds and stray finds. By this interpretation Mandt concludes that the settlements were primarily located to the inner and the middle zone while the outer zone may have reproduced seasonal activity of economic, socio-politic and socio-religious character (Mandt 1993: 39).

The last attempt is presented by Melanie Wrigglesworth. She is in favour of Mandt's general interpretation but she also works with a more specific framework of landscapes analyses and she is thereby able to discuss different levels of the ritual behaviour, as manifested by the close spatial connection between the rock art, the cairns and the sea. Her major conclusion is that the complexes of rock art and cairns symbolize public arenas or axis mundis for reproduction of identity and cosmology primarily manifested then by grave rituals.

We now leave the area of Sogn and Fjordane to go further south, about 200 km to the Stavanger area. The greatest difference between these



*Figure 3. Different rate of the land uplift in different parts of Scandinavia, with the western part of Norway marked out.*







Figure 4a-d. A - Rock art panel at Stavenäset; B - Rock art panel at Lerivåg; C - Rock art panel at Åmøy in Stavnager; D - Reworked ship at Åmøy in Stavanger. Photo A, B by Johan Ling; C, D by Joakim Goldhahn.

two areas is the topography. The high mountains and dramatic archipelago of Sogn and Fjordarna are here replaced by a considerable flatter and greener landscape, remarkable like many parts in most southern parts of Sweden or Denmark. The Stavanger area is famous for its frequent remains from the Bronze Age (Myhre 1998; Kvalø 2000). Besides the rock art and the many barrows and bronzes it also has one of southern Scandinavia's greatest number of flint daggers from the transition between late Neolithic to Bronze Age. Outstanding in a Scandinavian context are also the frequent finds of rock arts slabs from graves

(Syvertsen 2002). Thus, all these finds show the great importance of this area during the Late Neolithic - Bronze Age era.

Almost all of the complex rock art sites are situated on a maritime location in the landscape, on the islands, isthmuses and the straits (fig. 4c). The ship is the most dominating feature but other motifs are also frequently represented. The most famous and numerous complex of rock-art in the area is the one at the island of Åmøy. The ships found at the different sites at Åmøy are typical for the South Scandinavian tradition, ships with typical Early Bronze Age features as well as ships

from Later Bronze Age (Myhre 1998; Kvalø 2000; Syvertsen 2002).

It is fascinating to see that so many ships from the Early Bronze Age seem to have been re-carved, altered, and added with different depths and techniques to fit the aesthetic norms that seem to have prevailed the Late Bronze Age (fig. 4d). It might reflect a process of upgrading the ship symbolism to contemporary ideological norms. Similar observations of this phenomenon have been made on many ship carvings in different places in South Scandinavia. Thus, in the whole of the Stavanger area, the complex rock-art panels

with ships were primarily placed by the shore. The parameters concerning the land uplift also reveals that a majority of the carvings seems to have been placed deliberately just at the water's edge. Towards the higher ground, a bit away from the maritime zone, the settlement finds and the graves from the Bronze Age are to be located, but also the simpler carvings. Similar norms seem to have governed the subdivision, horizontal and vertical, of the landscape in western Norway by the use of rock art and other Bronze Age remains

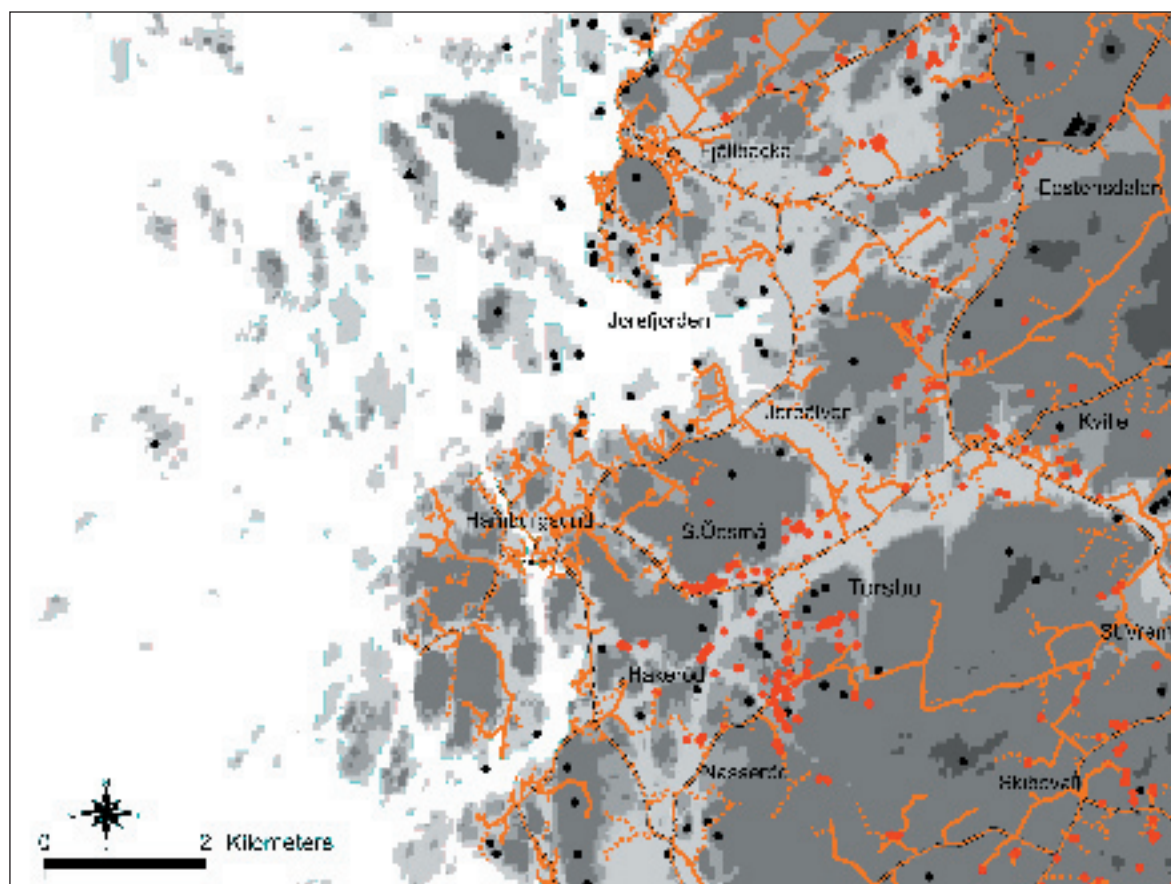


Figure 5. The contemporary landscape in Kivle. Black dots represent cairns localities, red dots rock carving sites. Present roads has been marked out as yellow lines.

**Summing up.** In order to concretize how rock art originally has been sited and located in areas that have been subjected of a severe land uplift process, as for Bohuslän, I have used two examples or analogies from Western Norway where the rock art more or less is situated in an original landscape context. In concluding the setting of rock art in Western Norway it seems as if the more complex localities were situated toward the maritime zones while the simplest motifs were associated with settlements areas.

Some of these observations and interpretations may partly contribute to explain some of the features behind the settings of the rock art in Bohuslän.

**The case study of the rock art in Kville.** In this chapter I will move further, towards the primary aim of this article and give an account of the results gained through new field observations made by measuring of rock art and the surrounding terrain in Bohuslän. By applying the results from the first, extensive, shoreline study of the Bohuslän area, on the rock art and comparing these with the results of Flemming Kaul's analysis of ships on bronzes and ships on rocks, two independent methods may be deduced from the same material. The project was subsequently focused on and conducted by digital measurement of low-situation rock art with typologically datable, ship motifs and the surrounding terrain. The aim was to be able to discuss more specific chronological, spatial and communicative issues about the social, ritual and mental use of rock art (for more detailed information concerning this project see Ling 2004). According to earlier studies and to the recent economic map, Kville parish in northern Bohuslän has numerous low-

situation rock carvings with typologically datable motifs (fig. 5, compare Nordbladh 1978, 1980; 1981a; Bertilsson 1987).

The landscape of the south-western part of Kville is characterized by a fissure valley with rather dramatic formations of granite ridges and with clayey lowland. The Jore river with its branches cuts through the clayey lowland and has its outlet in the north-eastern parts of Jorefjorden. The archaeological remains show a continuity from the Mesolithic era to the Iron Age. A few Mesolithic dwelling sites are located in the area, but there are also a few settlement finds from the Neolithic era and two gallery graves that indicate activity from the Late Neolithic or Early Bronze Age. On some of the hilltops, monumental cairns and stone-settings are situated. At present, no settlements from the Bronze Age have been recorded in the area, but stray finds of flint daggers and bronzes together with the graves and the topography indicate that some settlements were probably located here during the Bronze Age. An interesting fact is that more settlement finds from the Bronze Age have been made just outside this area (Nordbladh 1980; Algotsson & Swedberg 1997). Thus, if we compare the settlement finds, the bronze finds and the graves (gallery graves, cairns and stone-settings) with the high frequency of rock art in the area there is an obvious discrepancy.

The concrete and presumptive settlement remains from the Bronze Age in the area are scarce in comparison with the rock art sites (Fig. 5). This area is practically oversupplied with carvings and therefore it has engaged rock art research for more than two centuries (Ekhoff 1880; Fredsjö 1943; Nordbladh 1971, 1978, 1980, 1981a/b; Bertilsson 1987; Hedengran 1993; Fredell 2003).



Åke Fredsjö's elaborate and extensive documentation of the rock art in the parish has provided a vital foundation of information for later academic research and interpretation. For example, Nordbladh's deduction of structuralism and semiotics on rock-art material in Kville has had a great impact on the current interpretative and communicative, rock-art discourse (Nordbladh 1971, 1980, 1981a/b; Bradley 1997, 2000; Tilley 1992, 1999; Vogt 1998; Goldhahn 1999; Hauptman Wahlgren 2002; Fredell 2003).

In the south-western part of Kville there are approximately 102 rock art panels. Thirty-two of these contain only cup-marks, 65 contain both cup-marks and other motifs and 5 ones have only figure motifs (Nordbladh & Rosvall 1981b). The predominant motif on these panels is the ship. Almost 25 % of the panels are situated between 15 and 20 metres above the present sea-level fig. 6a/b). The predominant motifs on the rock art panels in Kville derive from period I-II and periods IV-V and the predominant time

is period, IV-V ; almost 60 % of the panels contain ships or other features that may be derived from these periods (Nordbladh & Rosvall 1981b; Hedengran 1993).

It is worth mentioning that the bronze finds in the area also derive from period I and periods IV-V. A striking similarity between the Kville area and the areas with rock art in western Norway is the setting of complex versus simple localities of rock art in the terrain. The majority of complex carvings with ships are situated towards lower grounds while localities with cup marks only regularly on higher grounds. Although these areas were considerable distance apart it seems as if similar norms have governed the settings of the carvings in these landscapes. The most famous and numerous rock art complex in the area is the one in the Torsbo area and consists of 20 engraved panels (Bertilsson 1987: 100).

The height of these carvings, 25-30 metres above the sea, deterred us from doing any measuring up here. However, the Torsbo complex was probably the key to a wider understanding of the chronological and spatial context of the rock art in this area. Recently a lot of attention has been given to the Torsbo complex because of its many ships dating from the Early Bronze Age, period I-II (Kaul 1998; Bengtsson 2000; Kvalø 2000; Kristiansen 2002). Another interesting feature concerning the panels in Torsbo is that some of the ships from the Early Bronze Age have been altered to fit the aesthetic norms that seem to have prevailed the ideology concerning the ships from the late Bronze Age.

The most striking features were the clusters of low situated rock art, placed on the outermost edges of the rocks, in the north-western parts of the valley. At first glance, with the new shoreline

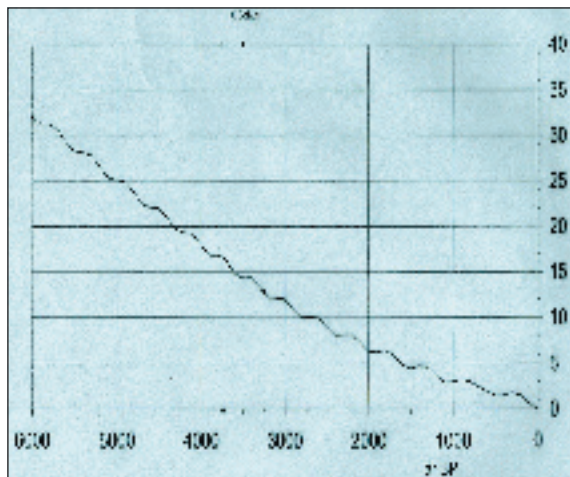


Figure 6a. The new shoreline displacement curve of central Bohuslän, uncalibrated BP (after Pässe 2001).

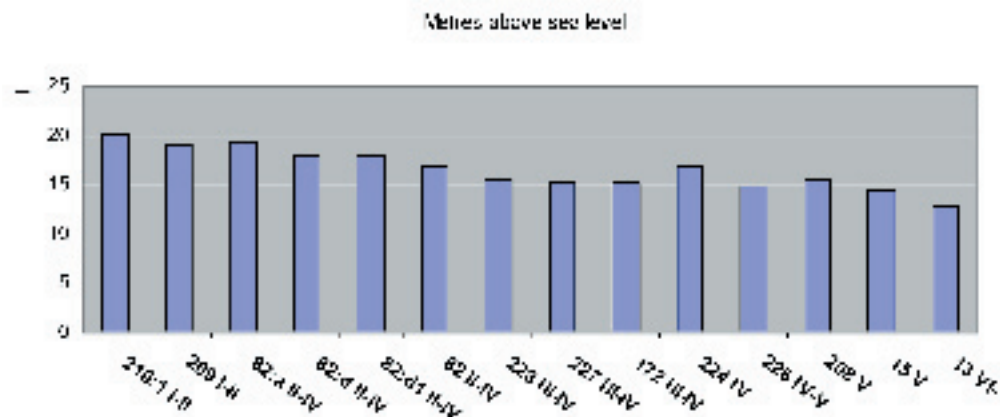


Figure 6b. Different rock art panels (No) and their altitude above the present sea level.

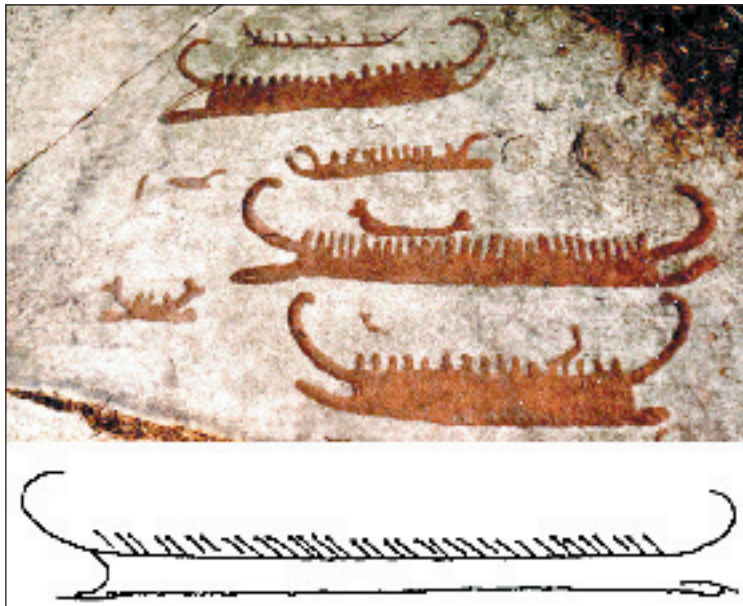
study in mind, it seems as if these carvings were made on panels just above the sea and that the low, arable land that ranges from 8-12 metres above the sea was in fact, the sea bottom in a smaller bay during the Bronze Age. Even during the late Bronze Age, the sea covered these lower parts of the valley. Could these observations give us other perspectives on the rock art? What ideological, functional or cosmological aspects could be concealed by this placing?

Before we enter into any of these discussions, I propose to give an account of the outcome of the digital measurements that we made at these specific localities and the chronological estimation based on the two methods as shown in these panels. None of these panels show ship features that diverge from the chronological sequence in relation to the contemporary sea-level, which includes a normal fluctuation of approximately 1 metre (Kaul 1998; Pässe 2003). The measurement of the surrounding terrain also showed that all these different carvings had then been placed near or on the contemporary shore during the Bronze Age and the shore was undoubtedly the main reason this placing (fig. 6a/b). In this

respect, it is interesting to refer to Helskog's theory concerning the ritual behaviour behind the placing of the rock art in the most northern parts of Scandinavia. According to Helskog the placing of rock art in these areas may well reflect a cosmological system in which the shore was a decisive feature (Helskog 1999: 81).

In this context it is worth mentioning that some of the main carvings in Kville have a close spatial connection with old roads that seem to have ended where they connected with the sea. Roads, paths and trails may theoretically have functioned as prehistoric infrastructure if the topography did not allow any other alternatives, especially if they passed by or led to prehistoric remains (Bradley 1997: 82). Here it seems as if the rock art and the old roads together form a pattern similar to the rock art in Tisselskog, Dalsland, with a succession of rock art from the former shore towards higher grounds (Tilley 1999). But in Kville this trail or pattern is more extensive and heterogonous, it is like seeing the Tisselskog pattern rock art on a macro plane (fig. 5). Could this pattern actually indicate that some of these places with rock art were used both as





*Figure 7. Ships from Torsbo and Rørby. Rearranged after Fredsjö and Kaul 1998 by the author.*

cosmological edges and as markers or points for concrete transitions between land- and seagoing communications? An attempt to interpret the chronological and spatial use of rock art in this area leads to the following conclusions.

(i) In the Early Bronze Age the activity was more spatially homogeneous and mainly concentrated to the Torsbo area and on the basis of the high frequency of typological motifs from periods I-II this complex may then be regarded as initial for the rock art activity in the area (fig. 7, 8).

(ii) During the late Bronze Age it seems as if the rock art activity followed the regression of the shore-level. At the same time and in a spatial perspective, the rock art became more extensive and heterogeneous, with new panels on the lower, topographical levels (fig.8). Older panels on higher ground were also recreated and amplified.

(iii) During the entire Bronze Age, the area was a communicative maritime zone, port or passage with a high frequency of rock art and with bronze finds that correspond chronologically to the major carving periods, per I and IV-V, but with few settlement finds and graves in comparison. The area was strategically situated and could be reached from the sea by a connection from the south (fig. 8, 9). In this context the cairns may indicate an earlier sea route leading to the area from the south. Moreover, a striking similarity between the Kville area and the areas with rock art in western Norway by the setting of complex versus simple localities of rock art in the terrain. The majority of complex carvings with ships are situated towards lower grounds while localities with cup marks only regularly on higher grounds. Although these areas were considerable distance apart it seems as if similar norms have governed the settings of the



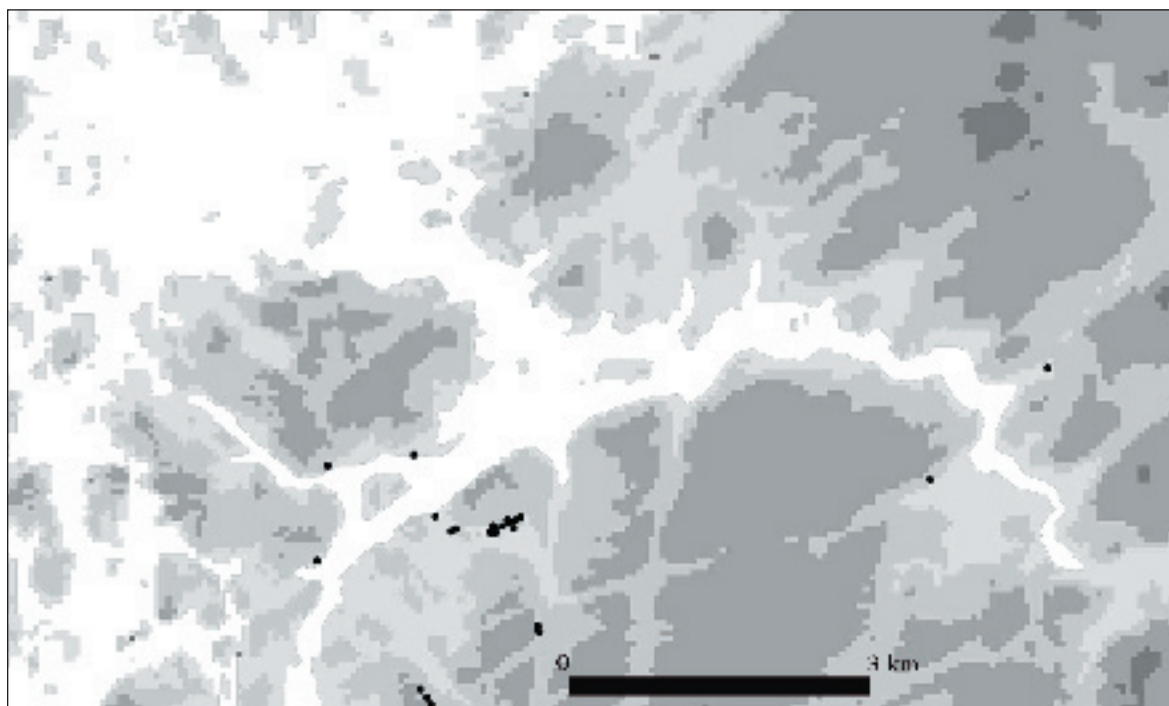
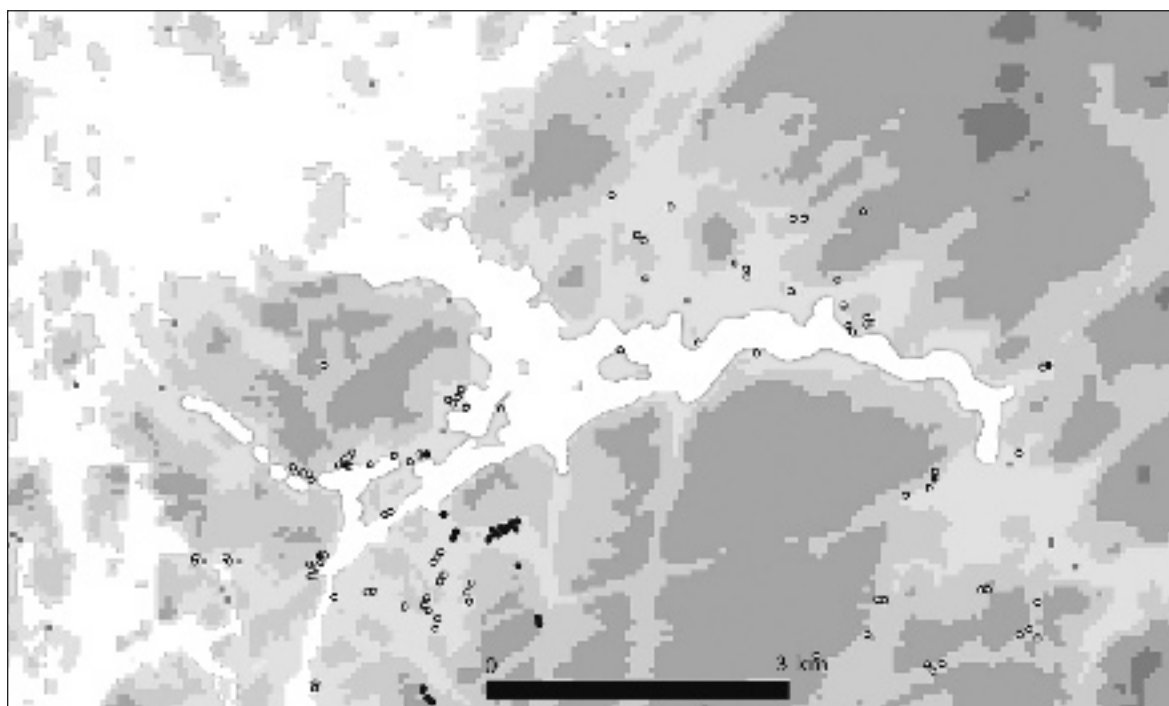


Figure 8. The landscape in the S-W part of the Kville area during the Early (above) and Late Bronze Age (below). The black dots represent rock art localities from the Early Bronze Age according to Flemming Kauls (1998) recent ship chronology. White dots signifies rock art localities dated to Late Bronze Age.



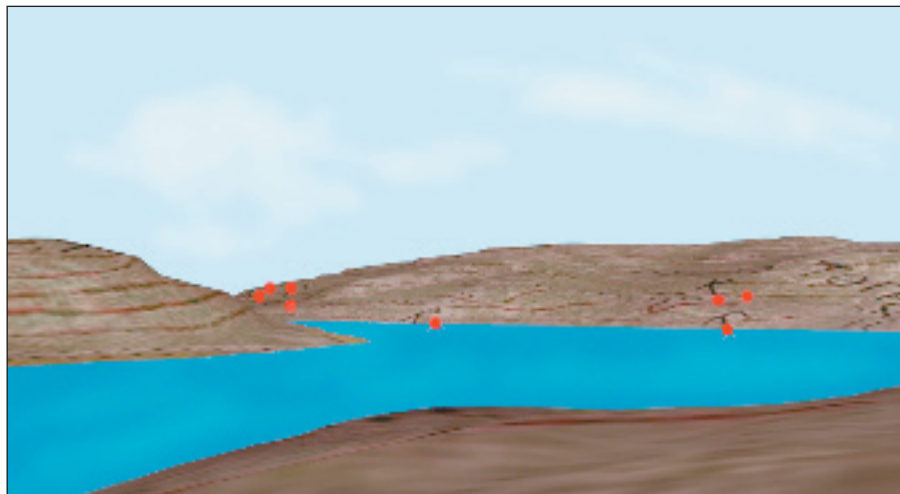


carvings in these landscapes. It also seems as if the rock art and old roads together formed a succession from the former shore towards higher grounds. This pattern may speak for the fact that some of these places with rock art were used both as cosmological edges and as markers or points for concrete transitions between land- and seagoing communications (fig 10, 11).

How are these new observations to be interpreted in relation to earlier paradigm as well as in relation to real landscape? Why is the rate of rock art localities so much higher than that of the graves and the settlement finds? To be able get any further with this analysis, which up to now primarily has dealt with chronological and spatial problems, we now need to integrate more socially orientated approaches to the analysis. However, before entering this discussion there are

some general interpretative conditions we need to present.

**Synthesis.** The conclusion of all the different facts, observations and situations made during the investigations of the rock art prehistoric location in Kville, the rock art locations in western Norway, and the interpretative constraints of the current research paradigm, points altogether towards a different interpretative approach or strategy concerning many areas with rock art in Bohuslän. In the following I will advocate an alternative, third model, that by no means stands in opposition to earlier attempts; its purpose and intention is rather to include and juxtapose these perspectives in a dialectic manner (fig. 10). For the development of this third maritime model, Anthony Giddens' structuration theory seems to be useful, particularly his discussions about societal changes that occur in edges or liminal



*Figure 9. A reconstructed "seascape" at Hamn in Kville during the Late Bronze Age with different rock art localities marked with red dots. Localities on higher latitude is dated to the Early Bronze Age according to Kauls chronology (1998). During the Early Bronze Age they would be situated at the liminal place between Sea and land - at the waters edge.*



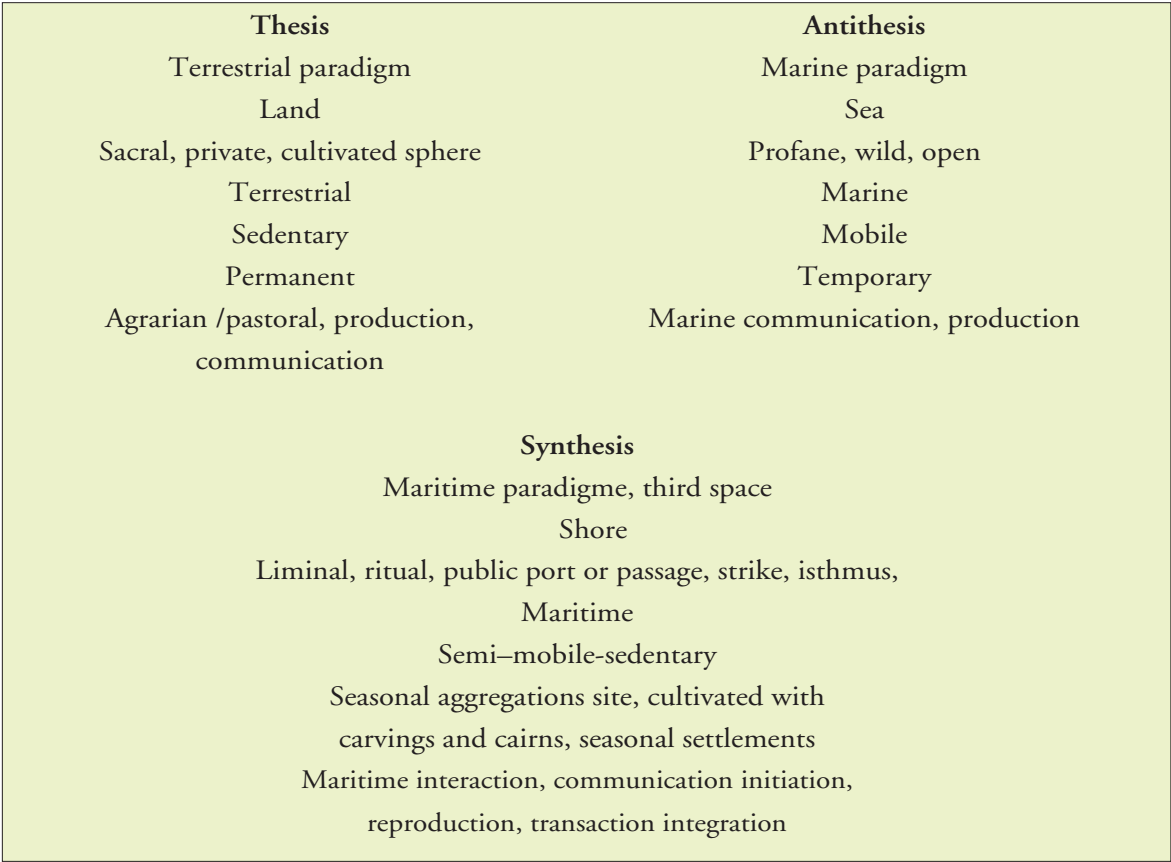


Figure 10. A general illustration of the different interpretative discourses (over time) concerning the rock art in Bohuslän and its signification to the landscape and the society.

spaces or spheres between various societies with different concepts regarding time and space (Giddens 1981: 23):

"Time-space edges refer to the forms of contact- and often of interferences- between different structural types of society. These are edges of potential or actual social transformations, the often unstable intersections between different modes of societal organisations".

It is tempting to see the high frequency of rock art in these areas (edges) as a materialised reflection of friction and stress caused by contacts and

meetings between a domestic and a non- domestic public with different concepts regarding time and space (Giddens 1981, 1984; Hood 1994; Olsen 1997: 176; Bradley 1997: 213; Fahlander 2003). Moreover, this theoretical framework may be even more explicit by the post-colonial theoretician Homi K. Bhabha.

By introducing the notion called "the third space" Bhabha purchases an interesting model for interpreting interaction, negotiation and meetings that take place in "liminal" social and cultural places. According to Bhabha the third space is an ambivalent hybrid, an edge located in between dominant social formations where



cultural differences and traditions may be articulated, re-articulated, initiated, re-initiated, negotiated, transmitted and transformed into possible new constellations of cultural identity. Furthermore, the third space represents:

“...both general conditions of language and the specific implications of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy of which it cannot ‘in itself’ be conscious. What this unconscious relation introduces is ambivalence in the act of interpretation” (Bhabha 1994: 36).

Using Bhabhas and Giddens concepts on the rock art this “utterance” may be addressed to very different groups and thereby reflecting very different situations, actions and interpretations. Thus it may reflect ambivalent and stressful situations where cultural meaning and identity have been communicated, understood and misinterpreted. Who where all these different groups subjected to interaction in this particular area? Is there any way to trace these groups? Could actually a theory, aimed to deal with issues concerning political and interpretative problems of cultures, groups and places of the Third World be of use to understand a prehistoric rock art material from Bohuslän? I will further argue for these very general assumptions more explicitly by referring to the specific archaeological conditions in Kville, based on the rock art material.

Regarding the rock art, it seems as if a majority of the carvings have been made by similar aesthetic and technical norms over a larger area, at least including the whole parish or even the hundred. We may here speak for both a local and trans local action. But there are also some motifs that

show upon a more universal character that may be traces of a larger mobile pattern that might signify a marine activity concerning the areas of central and Northern Bohuslän (Fredsjö 1981; Bengtsson 2004). Thus, the quantity and accessibility of the rock art in these areas make it hard to address this activity to a specific group or identity, it rather reflects poly-agency and mobility (Hood 1994; Nordmark 2004). The cairns, the stone-settings, the finds of flint, the ceramics and the bronze finds from the area clearly indicate that some permanent residence existed here during the Bronze Age, maybe three to five permanent settlement units, which we hereby may address as Maritime sedentary groups.

However, the topographical conditions and the limited number of archaeological finds from the period rather indicate that the high frequency of rock art may have represented a larger area of habitation and activity, maybe within a radius of 5-10 km or more (fig. 11). Bearing this in mind, we may assume that people from a larger area may possibly have visited the south-western part of Kville in order to maintain, transmute, produce, reproduce or initiate structures of cultural identity, ideology and cosmology as well as to maintain economic activities.

This action would then presumably have been manifested by semi sedentary groups who had a general social and economic need to reach and interact in this area on a seasonal basis.<sup>1</sup> This strategic and communicative maritime zone could have served as an important port or centre for the local and the regional sea-going communications during the Bronze Age. With the contemporary sea-level during the entire Bronze Age in the area it actually seems logical to assume the communicative status of this area.<sup>2</sup> In this context we may





refer to a third general group presumably manifested by mobile marine groups or specialists.<sup>3</sup> A journey to such a port may also have been of great symbolic significance during the Bronze Age, and both local and regional power may have depended on this interaction (Helms 1988; Larsson 1997; Kristiansen 2002; Kvalø 2000).

Both local and regional identity and imagery may have been manifested by the carvings to illustrate the importance of consensus, divergence and independence regarding ideology, cosmology and identity. Consequently, the rock art in this

area might be interpreted as implicit or explicit traces of different forms of social interactions, placed in “a third space”; a space where carvings could be made as a condition, as a manifestation or as a reflexion of interaction (fig. 11). A space in between dominant social formations where cultural identity was being created, transmuted, articulated, communicated by the making, reading, interpretation and misinterpretation of rock art carvings. A space conducted and used both by a domestic and a non-domestic public with different concepts regarding time and space.

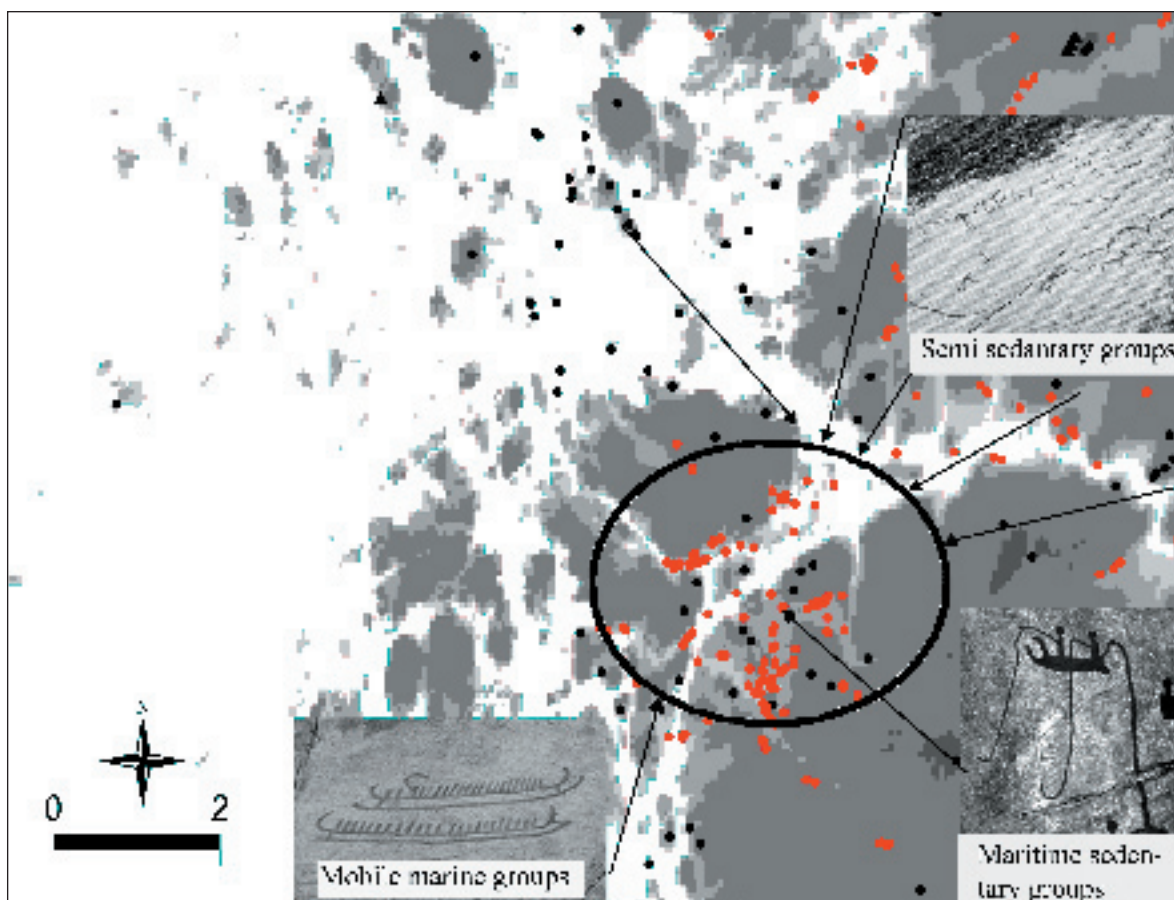


Figure 11. The hypothesis concerning the third space of interaction, negotiation and enunciation in the Kvillle area during the Bronze Age.



**Coda.** I began this attempt with a discussion about how the land up lift in the rock art areas in Bohuslän, caused both limitations and opportunities for the interpretation of rock art. I have also contributed with my own attempt basically by presenting the carvings in a dialectic interaction with an organic shoreline and other archaeological remains and the landscape.

I have then only briefly touched upon an issue that could be far more developed. The study clearly showed that many rock carvings had been placed on or near the contemporary shore during the Bronze Age. However, there are also areas with lots of carvings on higher ground at some distance from the maritime zones. It would be of great interest to further analyse and discuss the differences and similarities regarding content and context between the terrestrial and the maritime areas of rock art, cairns, stone-settings, dwellings sites, stray finds and other remains in the landscape of Bohuslän (fig. 12).

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## Notes

1 / In this context it is interesting to refer to the Bronze Age settlement finds of postholes, hearths, flints and ceramics that were revealed in connection to the Tanum projects excavation in Edstensdalen,

situated approximately 4-5 km north-east of the present area (Auhlin & Gustafsson 2002). In comparison with the south-western part of Kville, Edstensdalen has very few rock art sites, only 10 panels. Is it possible that people from a larger area, like Edstendalen for instance, may have visited on a permanent seasonal basis the south-western part of Kville and for this reason marked their presence with rock art? This tradition may have been initiated in a earlier Neolithic phase with different expressions and actions for communication, maybe using portable artefacts instead of fixed rocks for conveying identity and ideology (Bertilsson 1987; Algotsson & Svedberg 1997; Bradley 1997: 4-8).

2 / The Bronze Age ships were probably propelled by rowing or paddling and consequently the routes were located in the contemporary inner skerries (Marstrander 1979; Burenhult 1983; Kvalø 2000). Whether if these journeys were short or long, they depended on temporary stops for resting and for food and water supplies. Furthermore, the weather conditions must have had a great impact on these journeys and the daily trips must have been organised in relation to the stability or changes in the weather (Marstrander 1979; Artelius 1996; Kvalø 2000).

3 / Of great interest is the fact that the sea distance between the major rock art areas in central Bohuslän, such as Kville, Tanum and Sotenäset, seems equal to have been about a half day's march during the Bronze Age, based on the facts of speed and manoeuvre capacities of the made replica of the Early Iron Age boat found at Hjortspring in Denmark (Marstrander 1979; Burenhult 1983; Kaul 1998; Kvalø 2000).



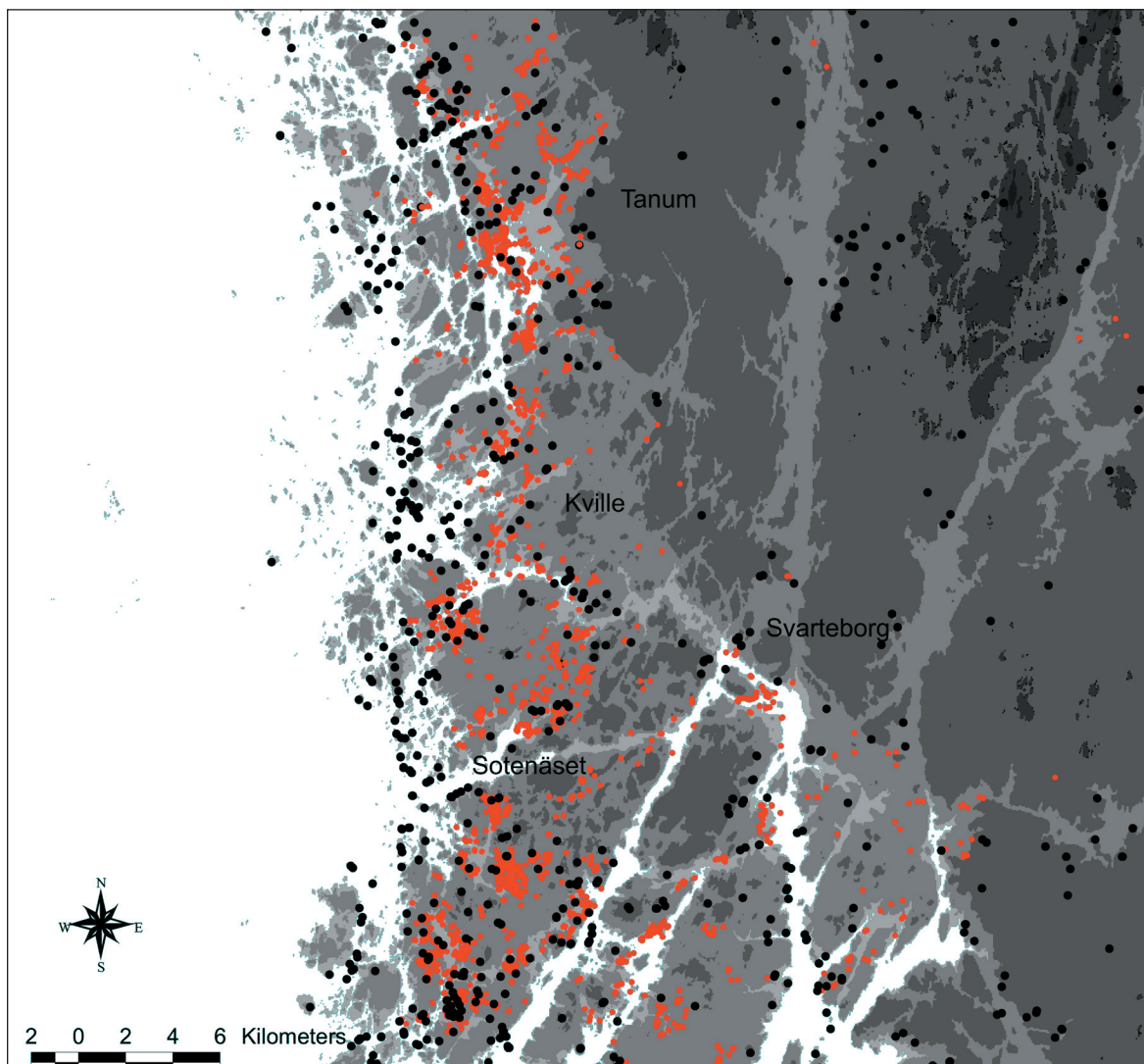


Figure 12. Central Bohuslän during the Bronze Age illustrated with a shore level 14 m.a.s.l. and cairns (black dots) and rock art localities (red dots).

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