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Counterpoint: Essays in Archaeology and Heritage Studies in Honour of Professor Kristian Kristiansen

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The Flintknapper and the Bronze Smith

Deborah Olausson

Abstract: The labels 'stone' and 'bronze' in Stone Age and Bronze Age reflect what archaeologists perceive as trends in material culture, but our perspective is skewed by a number of factors such as formation processes and our need for dividing the temporal continuum into discrete units. The focus of the paper is on examining this transition from the perspective of the craftspeople who were making the objects which archaeologists perceive as central for defining a Stone Age and a Bronze Age. Southern Scandinavia is the region in focus. Conditions and constraints on the flintknapper and on the bronzesmith, respectively, are compared and contrasted. No specialists can be discerned in the realm of flintkapping. Regarding metals, domestic copper/bronze casting begins somewhat hesitantly, as would be expected of a new technology. The number of forms is limited and metal alloys are heterogeneous. By Period IB of the Bronze Age, however, we see a bifurcation whereby we can distinguish between elaborate and complicated bronzeworking using a standardized raw material on the one hand, and simpler, less complicated crafting, on the other. This confirms Kristian Kristiansen's conclusion from 1987 (p. 46) that bronze specialists had emerged by Period II.

Keywords: Flintknapper, bronzesmith, specialists, bronze, copper

Introduction

The period between 2350 BC and 1500 BC, encompassing in southern Scandinavian archaeological terminology the Late Neolithic up to and including Bronze Age Period IB (Table 1), was surely a time of turbulence in southern Scandinavia. In the retrospective view that archaeology affords us these 850 years, equivalent to about 35 generations, embrace the end of the Stone Age and the beginning of the Bronze Age. The labels 'stone' and 'bronze' reflect what we archaeologists perceive as trends in material culture, but our perspective is skewed by a number of factors such as formation processes and our wish to divide the temporal continuum into discrete units. It is worthwhile to question the validity of our temporal classification systems now and then to ask if the prehistoric agents would agree that significant changes marked the beginning of a new ‘age’, and to explore the mechanisms involved in the change. I propose to examine a particular aspect of this transition from the perspective of the craftspeople who were making the objects archaeologists see as central for defining a Stone Age and a Bronze Age, respectively.

In spite of what our terminology implies, copper-based metals were being worked in southern Scandinavia during the entire late Neolithic, just as stone crafting (including flintkapping) was practiced during Bronze Age Period I and thereafter. Daggers, sickles, axes and pressure-flaked points of flint, for instance, occur in both late Neolithic and early Bronze Age contexts. By the same token, individuals were casting naturally alloyed copper into flanged axes from at least the outset of the late Neolithic period (Vandkilde 1996; Magnusson Staaf 2002; Melheim 2012).

Table 1 Calibrated BC dates for the relevant archaeological periods. Based on Vandkilde 1996:305-6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Date cal BC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Late Neolithic I</td>
<td>2350 - 1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late Neolithic II</td>
<td>1950 - 1700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronze Age Period IA</td>
<td>1700 – 1600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronze Age Period IB</td>
<td>1600 - 1500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On a scale visible in the archaeological record we might conclude that individuals versed in flintkapping and individuals versed in shaping metal were performing these activities during the same time-span and in the same geographical area. Were the flintknapper and the bronzesmith the same person?

One major obstacle to answering this question is a virtually complete absence of information regarding where these crafts were being carried out during this transitional phase. As an alternative avenue of approach I propose to examine the conditions involved in knapping flint1 and casting copper/bronze2 during the period, in order to explore similarities and differences between them from the crafter’s point of view. Following that I will investigate what we can learn from the products of these respective crafts. Denmark and southern Sweden are my focus.

Conditions and constraints on the flintknapper and on the bronzesmith

Raw material availability

Besides flint, the flintknapper’s raw material requirements include stone, bone, wood or antler for making hammers and punches plus stone suitable for grinding. These needs could easily have been met by locally available raw materials. As for flint, it is widely accessible on beaches and streambeds and in the moraine soils of southern Sweden and Denmark today, as it probably was in the past (Högberg & Olausson 2007). The flintknapper in southern Scandinavia would most likely not have experienced any constraints on raw material supplies for plying his/her craft.

The bronzesmith’s raw material requirements, aside from metal, include: fuel; clay suitable for making moulds (only two stone moulds dating to this period are known, see below), tuyères and/or crucibles; quartz for tempering these; grinding stones; stone, bone, wood or antler for making hammers or clubs; and perhaps

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1 I use ‘flintknapper’ as a term to describe both the expert flintknapper, capable of elaborate knapping such as is required for making type IV flint daggers, and the everyday knapper.

2 I use ‘bronzesmith’ to describe the person responsible for casting copper and/or bronze.
beeswax. We can assume that all these raw materials were locally available in the surrounding landscape. What is the situation in regard to metal raw material?

For the bronzesmith, potential sources of copper, tin or copper alloy are: a) smelting of naturally occurring ores, b) ingots, or c) recycled metal objects. Only options b and c would have been available in southern Scandinavia, however, as neither copper nor tin is local to this area.

Regarding option b, Helle Vandkilde (1996:205) lists 22 examples of objects dating to Late Neolithic II from Denmark which might be ingots; for instance, the heavy rings in the Late Neolithic Pile hoard (Weiler 1994:48). Bronze ingots from the Early Bronze Age are absent, however, at least in the Danish material (Vandkilde 1992:125; cf. Buchwald & Leisner 1992:96).

This leaves us with option c. There is general agreement that remelting alloyed metal was the main source of raw material for Scandinavian smiths, at least until Period I (Levy 1991:59; Liversage 2000:17). Interestingly, the earliest Bronze Age objects are not made from late Neolithic metal, however (Liversage & Liversage 1989:74). In fact Liversage and Liversage see this as one of the most important markers for a discontinuity between the Stone and the Bronze Ages (Liversage & Liversage 1989:67). By Period IB of the Bronze Age we see a compositionally standardized full tin bronze completely dominating Denmark and much of Europe, according to Vandkilde (1996:246). David Liversage (2000:74) does not fully concur; however, he concludes on the basis of impurity patterns in copper that there were two main types and some minor types of copper in use in Denmark during Period I. When he added the information about tin content, which tells us about alloying practices, he found that these two metal types may have been the products of different workshop traditions (Liversage 2000:17).

Consequences of raw material availability for gaining access to a craft

While the flintknapper’s raw material was widely available in southern Scandinavia, it is safe to assume that the bronzesmith was faced with limitations regarding access to the raw material for his/her product. This factor has a particularly significant impact on how a craft is learned. A ubiquitous raw material permits trial and error and allows practice. It seems reasonable to assume that most Stone Age people were flintknappers and all Stone Age individuals were most likely taught flintknapping by their parents as an essential life skill (Olausson 2012). The ubiquity of flint and flintknappers meant that some particularly talented knappers emerged. The combination of natural ability and a plentiful raw material allowing practice are prerequisites. These knappers are visible in the archaeological record through their exceptional products, such as well-made type IV flint daggers (Olausson in press).

During the late Neolithic the technology involved in casting copper or bronze represented an innovation quite different from any technology already existing in Stone Age society, according to Ben Roberts (2008:362). Given raw material limitations, the introduction of metallurgy in southern Scandinavia required building up a stockpile of bronze. Eventually a balance between production and consumption was reached and supplies could thereafter have been maintained by modest annual accrualment (Kristiansen 1981:258). Even after that stage, however, access to
copper/tin or bronze was not unlimited. Failures during the casting process can be rectified by remelting, which means that some trial and error is possible. Nonetheless, oxidation in connection with each melt (Vandkilde 1992:125) is a limiting factor. Further, with the lost wax method each casting episode is unique as the mould is broken to release the cast object. This reasoning means that bronzesmiths were never as common as flintknappers. The south Scandinavian bronzesmith was probably taught by someone who already had theoretical knowledge of and/or practical experience with the process, rather than each individual learning by trial and error (cf. Melheim 2012:40). Next I wish to explore the knowledge (theoretical) and the know-how (practical) required for each type of craft.

Knowledge: the recipe for action

I would argue that we can see differences in the amount of knowledge required of the bronzesmith as opposed to the flintknapper. Flintknapper knowledge would include for instance where to find flint and the chaîne opératoire for making a particular object. While the theoretical basis for flintknapping (knowledge) can be explained in five minutes, becoming a proficient knapper (know-how) takes a great deal of practice (Olausson 2008).

In contrast, casting bronze requires access to several recipes for action. To enumerate these we need to know something about how casting was done in southern Scandinavia during the Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age. Unfortunately, however, the archaeological record suffers from an almost complete lack of direct evidence dating to this period (Bodin 1998; Melheim 2012:46; Oldeberg 1976; Stilborg n.d.; Vandkilde 1996; Weiler 1994). Only two stone moulds with a possible date to Bronze Age Period I are known from the Scandinavian area: one half of a bivalve mould for a Bagterp point found at Österby in Östergötland (LUHM [Lund University Historical Museum] 21014; Oldeberg 1943:140) and a bivalve mould from Blia, Värmland (Oldeberg 1938). Therefore, we can only assume that casting was usually carried out in moulds of clay or sand which have not survived. Direct evidence for crucibles is also weak. Only one example of a crucible possibly dating to this period, from Ordrup, Denmark, is known (Ronne 1989:107). Assuming this crucible is typical we might say that knowledge of suitable clay as well as a recipe for the amount and type of temper are necessary for making clay moulds and crucibles (Pettersson 2011; Weiler 1994:49). And if the lost wax method was employed the bronzesmith would need knowledge of how to gather and prepare wax (Ronne & Bredsdorff 2011; Weiler 1994:49).

The most complicated part of the process, requiring a large measure of theoretical knowledge, involves achieving the optimal composition of the metal. B. Ottoway (2001:99) maintains that alloying, i.e. mixing copper and tin, requires specialist knowledge. However, as noted above, there is no evidence that Scandinavian smiths were alloying at this time. Rather, they relied on remelting alloyed metal, at least until Period I (Levy 1991:59; Liversage & Liversage 1989:64). Vandkilde (2000:16-17) characterized the earliest flanged axes as completely lacking standardization in technological procedures and material forms. This picture changes as time passes, however, and during Bronze Age Period I greater homogeneity emerges (Melheim
Know-how means practical and embodied. I propose that whereas more knowledge was necessary for the bronzesmith than for the flintknapper. These emerge after metalworking has been practiced for some time in southern Scandinavia, however. I show that intensive hammering and annealing was required for shaping many of the alloys in use (Buchwald & Leisner 1990:82). However, Sue Bridgford points out that the level of difficulty rises when casting thin blades on objects such as daggers, rapiers and swords (Bridgford 2002:123). In southern Scandinavia, domestic casting of such objects appears first towards the end of Bronze Age Period I. Two more technological innovations which appear at this time are the socketed spearhead, requiring core casting, and axes with high-cast flanges (Liversage & Liversage 1989:66). Demands on practical know-how increase substantially with these elabations.

Metallurgical analyses of flanged axes from Bronze Age Period I show that intensive hammering and annealing was required for shaping many of the alloys in use (Buchwald & Leisner 1990:82). Bridgford claims that hammering the metal in order to thin and harden it is a highly skilled task. She writes further that annealing at too high a temperature can cause the metal to crack (Bridgford 2002:124). Here we see facets of bronze crafting requiring a high degree of know-how. These emerge after metalworking has been practiced for some time in southern Scandinavia, however. In its
early stages the degree of know-how was low and it does not appear as though bronze casting required extensive practice.

Up to this point I have ignored the question of decoration on the bronze objects. Elisabeth Herner argued that Early Bronze Age spiral ornamentation was applied by punch after the object was cast (Herner 1987). Indeed, examples of clumsy ornamentation can be seen in Andreas Oldeberg’s catalogue (e.g. Oldeberg 1976 no. 3305). Herner’s attempts to use this technique resulted in obvious mistakes, but a professional craftsman was able to copy the design with ‘a minimum of effort’ (Herner 1987:144). However, Rønne’s experiments demonstrated that ornamentation could also be cast (Rønne 1991; Rønne & Bredsdorff 2011). Helle Vandkilde argues that cast ornamentation on flanged axes was present in the Late Neolithic II (Vandkilde 1996:263). Convincing arguments have also been presented in favour of the idea that the ornamentation on three of the bronze scimitars dated to Period IB (Fig. 2) was cast (Jensen 2002:74). My point here is that achieving a high quality result in regard to decoration is easier (i.e. requires less physical expertise/know-how) when it is cast.

While some of the processes involved in making the metal objects from the late Neolithic and Period IA of the Bronze Age required manual dexterity (know-how), in general the level of technology in evidence did not require special skills or expertise. By Period IB we see some objects requiring intensified know-how, however. If we accept this scenario then we find a not insignificant difference between flintknapping and bronze casting. I have argued elsewhere (Olausson in press) that even the most highly crafted flint daggers were not made by professional specialists but rather by especially talented individuals with the time and inclination to polish their skills. However, we know from studies of modern knappers that reaching this level of know-how requires practice over many years. Data on the degree of know-how required for casting the Late Neolithic and Period IA objects are scarce, but I believe they indicate that the level of expertise required could have been attainable by practically everyone. This is not true from Period IB, however (see below). Next we will explore what information can be gleaned from the products themselves.

**Evidence for differences in expertise on objects of flint and metal**

It is not far-fetched to argue that the amount of skill or expertise held by the crafter may be visible in the products, although there are practical considerations which may hamper our efforts to study this. Flintknapping is a subtractive technique; once the flake is removed it cannot be replaced and knowledge is therefore of being preserved in the archaeological record. An example of this approach can be found in Olausson (2008). Here I set up criteria for classifying Scandinavian flint daggers in regard to how skillfully they were made and applied these in an examination of c. 500 flint daggers belonging to types I-VI. I found substantial variations within each type, from daggers made with low skill to daggers made with a high degree of skill. I argued that the most reasonable explanation for these differences is the different levels of knapping ability among the knappers (Olausson 2008).

Studying the quality of workmanship on metal objects is fraught with source-critical pitfalls, however. The most serious of these is the fact that, due to remelting, casting mistakes will not necessarily be preserved for the archaeologist to observe. Faulty casting has a theoretical chance to turn up in a founder’s hoard but we lack such hoards from the period in question. Therefore, it is possible that any evidence for unskilled work, if it existed, is not preserved. Nevertheless, I have made a modest attempt.

A team consisting of archaeologist Andreas Nilsson, conservators Bernd Gerlach and Lovisa Dal, and myself examined 37 metal copper/bronze artefacts dating to Late Neolithic I, Late Neolithic II, Bronze Age IA and Bronze Age IB from the collections of the Historical Museum in Lund (Table 2). The objects belong to types which Vandkilde (1996) identifies as domestically cast and all were found in southern Sweden. We noted features such as symmetry, complexity of form, and surface regularity. We examined holes in the metal in order to determine if they were due to casting mistakes (blistering) (Bridgford 2002:125; cf. Nilsson 2008) and recorded observations regarding grinding, hammering or damage.

We observed no major differences during any of the four periods regarding the quality of workmanship. We saw little evidence for clumsy workmanship or beginner’s work. The differences between what we judged to be the poorest and the best workmanship were slight. Furthermore, there did not seem to be any obvious chronological development; both poorly-made and well-made objects were present from the early Late Neolithic and continued to be present during Bronze Age Period IA and IB (cf. Bridgford 2002:128), although the appearance of Bagterp and Valsemølje Points in Period IB, as they possess both sockets and thin blades, does represent a step up in complexity at this time.

One unexpected result of this study was the discovery of two flanged axes which appear to have been cast in the same mould or from the same prototype (Fig. 1a-d). Both axes were turned in as stray finds; axe LUHM 6485 is listed as coming from a mould while LUHM 6540 lacks further contextual data.

**Conclusions**

During the early Neolithic, members of the Funnel Necked Beaker Culture were circulating copper flat axes in Northern Europe. There is even evidence that such axes were being cast here (Klassen 2000:308; Magnusson Staaf 2001:23). However, this activity did not give rise to a metal age. One thousand years later, metallurgy was reintroduced to Scandinavia (Klassen 2000:310). This time the idea caught on and stayed for good, eventually resulting in an age of bronze.

During the period between 2350 and 1500 BC people were knapping flint and casting objects of copper and then bronze in southern Scandinavia. As would be expected of a new technology, domestic casting begins somewhat cautiously. Smiths were making only flat axes in Late Neolithic I, progressing to somewhat more complicated low-flanged axes by Late Neolithic II. Vandkilde (2000:16-17) notes that the earliest flanged axes lacked standardization regarding technological qualities and forms. As time passes and we enter Bronze Age Period IA, we find an increase in variation of forms produced but the number of forms in domestic production is still quite limited. However, this development is accompanied by greater homogeneity in metal content (Melheim 2012:112; Vandkilde 1992:121), suggesting increased knowledge. As we move into Bronze Age Period IB we find a significant increase in the number of product types, with the addition of for instance several types of points requiring high casting know-how. Vandkilde (2000:27) remarks that the amount of metal in circulation increases markedly at this time. She also notes that flanged axes differentiate into two groups at this stage: a larger group containing small, inconspicuous axes which are
Table 2 Metal objects examined to determine workmanship. Types are classified according to Vandkilde 1996. Tin percentages are taken from Cullberg 1968. n.d. = no data available. LUHM = Lund University Historical Museum. LN I = Late Neolithic I, LN II = Late Neolithic II, BA IA = Bronze Age Period IA, BA IB = Bronze Age Period IB.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>% Sn</th>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Findspot</th>
<th>LUHM Number</th>
<th>Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LN I</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>Lilla Bedinge</td>
<td>Lilla Bedinge, bog</td>
<td>5130</td>
<td>Surface appearance may be due to heating prior to breaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LN I</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>trace</td>
<td>Tygelsjö</td>
<td>Tygelsjö, east of church</td>
<td>12597</td>
<td>Good workmanship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LN I</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>trace</td>
<td>Borgerby</td>
<td></td>
<td>12634</td>
<td>Heavily damaged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LN I</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>Vellinge</td>
<td>Vellinge nr 22 + 30</td>
<td>27860</td>
<td>Average workmanship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LN II</td>
<td>A2</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>Hörsby</td>
<td></td>
<td>3507</td>
<td>Slight edge damage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LN II</td>
<td>A2</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>Simris village</td>
<td>Simris village</td>
<td>6485</td>
<td>Fault near edge on one face; slightly twisted; heavily used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LN II</td>
<td>A5</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>Simris village</td>
<td>Simris village</td>
<td>6540</td>
<td>Some potlidding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LN II</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Ringsjö</td>
<td>near Ringsjön</td>
<td>12390</td>
<td>Poor workmanship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LN II</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>trace</td>
<td>Malmö</td>
<td>Oxlé, Fredriksberg</td>
<td>19336</td>
<td>Asymmetric edge; heavily corroded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LN II</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>Kvästofta</td>
<td>Gantofta</td>
<td>20024</td>
<td>Evenly spaced nicks on flange; result of metal testing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LN II</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Lilla Bedinge</td>
<td>Lilla Bedinge nr 2, Angarna</td>
<td>28676:34</td>
<td>Edge is poorly cast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LN II</td>
<td>A2</td>
<td>trace</td>
<td>Löderup</td>
<td>Löderup village</td>
<td>12581</td>
<td>Surface appearance may be due to heating prior to breaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LN II</td>
<td>A2</td>
<td>trace</td>
<td>Gislöv</td>
<td>Gislöv</td>
<td>18560</td>
<td>Symmetric edge; heavily corroded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LN II</td>
<td>A2</td>
<td>trace</td>
<td>Lilla Bedinge</td>
<td>Lilla Bedinge nr 1</td>
<td>20937</td>
<td>Asymmetric edge, potlidding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LN II</td>
<td>A2</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>Hammarlöv</td>
<td></td>
<td>25038</td>
<td>Good workmanship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LN II</td>
<td>A5</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>Malmö</td>
<td>Bunkeflo Vintrie nr 1</td>
<td>25775</td>
<td>Uneven flanges; heavily corroded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LN II</td>
<td>A5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Köpinge</td>
<td>Gärds Köpinge</td>
<td>28117</td>
<td>Good workmanship but asymmetric edge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LN II</td>
<td>A6</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Burlöv</td>
<td>Arlöv</td>
<td>28678</td>
<td>Good workmanship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA IA</td>
<td>Torsted point</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>Södra Vram Bökeberg</td>
<td></td>
<td>20548</td>
<td>Good workmanship except for 1 hole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA IA</td>
<td>B2</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>Svedala</td>
<td>Marktflecken</td>
<td>22245</td>
<td>Left and right flanges do not resemble each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA IA</td>
<td>B2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Skytt</td>
<td></td>
<td>4410</td>
<td>Good workmanship but some potlidding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA IB</td>
<td>Bagterp point</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>Vallby</td>
<td></td>
<td>11112</td>
<td>Good casting quality, decoration clumsily done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA IB</td>
<td>Bagterp point</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>Lund east</td>
<td></td>
<td>12718</td>
<td>One shoulder imperfectly cast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA IB</td>
<td>Valsömagle point</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>Helsingborg Raus</td>
<td></td>
<td>16129</td>
<td>Good workmanship; corroded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA IB</td>
<td>Valsömagle point</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>Burlöv</td>
<td>Stora Bernstorp</td>
<td>27042:25</td>
<td>Good workmanship; but 5 pinholes are evident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA IB</td>
<td>C3</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Stora Råby</td>
<td></td>
<td>2818</td>
<td>Good workmanship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA IB</td>
<td>C3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Sankt Ibb</td>
<td>Ven</td>
<td>2825</td>
<td>Good workmanship but some edge asymmetry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA IB</td>
<td>C3</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>Simrishamn</td>
<td></td>
<td>8662</td>
<td>Rough and uneven surface; heavily used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA IB</td>
<td>C3</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>Vittskövle</td>
<td>Vittskövle</td>
<td>10504</td>
<td>Good workmanship; heavily used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA IB</td>
<td>C3</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>Hemmesdyinge</td>
<td>Villen</td>
<td>17146</td>
<td>Poor workmanship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA IB</td>
<td>C3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Kävlinge</td>
<td></td>
<td>19594</td>
<td>Some potlidding; heavily used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA IB</td>
<td>C3</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Ivetofta</td>
<td>Grödby</td>
<td>25600</td>
<td>Good workmanship, heavily used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA IB</td>
<td>C3</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>Sankt Olof</td>
<td>Almhalt</td>
<td>27536</td>
<td>Asymmetric edge, potlidding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA IB</td>
<td>C3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Südra Äby</td>
<td>Ellebergia</td>
<td>27983</td>
<td>Good workmanship; heavily used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA IB</td>
<td>C5</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>Högestad</td>
<td></td>
<td>12635</td>
<td>Good workmanship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA IB</td>
<td>C5</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>Lund Sandby</td>
<td></td>
<td>28495</td>
<td>Surface appearance may be due to heating prior to breaking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
coarse and often show damage from use, and a less numerous group of long, slender, delicately built axes. Domestic Period IB metalwork includes unique objects which have neither antecedents nor successors, such as the bronze scimitars, of which six are known (Vandkilde 1996:243). Given their size and complexity, I would suggest that the scimitars required a higher level of technical know-how than we have seen previously. Two of the scimitars (Fig. 2) were deposited together, and morphological similarities among four of them have led many to conclude that they were made from the same prototype (Forssander 1935:44; Mathiassen 1957:43; Vandkilde 1996:232). Kristian Kristiansen (1987:33) writes that here, at the threshold to Period II, we see an explosive development of local metalurgy in southern Scandinavia which embraces a complicated technology including modelling, casting, hammering, engraving, fitting gold and amber, etc.

During a time when some people were exploring the potentials and limitations of the new medium, others were pushing flintknapping to its limits. The Favrskov flint scimitar (Fig. 3) and the short dagger of flint from Næshøj, both dated to Bronze Age Period IB (Lomborg 1973:70f.; Vandkilde 1996:231f.), are objects of knapping tour de force. However, as far as we know they are unique. I maintain that the knapper who made them was not producing to meet market demand. Rather, they are the products of an especially skilled individual demonstrating his/her prowess or perhaps just pushing the limits because he/she can. They mark the flintknappers’ swan song as no comparable elaborate flint objects are known after this period.

By Bronze Age Period IB we have reached a bifurcation point in the bronze casting craft. Some individuals have fully mastered the craft and innovations and complex casting, as seen for example in domestically cast swords, are in evidence (Artursson et al. 2005:504; cf. Rasmussen & Boas 2006). At the same time simpler casting for household needs continues. Artursson et al. (2005:511) maintain that by Period IB the amount of bronze in circulation had reached a point at which it could be harnessed for building social stratification. Kristiansen (1981) advocated that the ‘fully developed Bronze Age’ begins in Period II. He also suggested that bronze specialists had emerged by then (1987:46). Jørgen Jensen goes so far as to say that within a few hundred years after 1700 BC the bronze crafting in southern Scandinavia was of such high quality that it was among the best on the European continent (Jensen 2002:69).

Were the flintknapper and the bronze smith the same individual? My position is that all members of the Stone Age community were flintknappers, although, as is true of any activity requiring bodily action, some were better than others. Because of interest, perhaps combined with native talent, some knappers explored the limits by making exceptional objects. But these artefacts occur in limited numbers and their makers were not specialists. In the same way as we find well-made and poorly-made flint daggers, we find well-made and poorly-made flanged axes. Characterized as it is by lack of uniformity of forms and raw materials, the early domestic metal casting was not in the hands of a few specialists with exclusive knowledge and/or know-how.4 Melhiem points to the rapid spread of metallurgy in the late Neolithic to support the idea that metallurgical knowledge was not esoteric, at least in the beginning (Melheim 2012:18). Towards the end of Bronze Age Period I, however, we see a bifurcation whereby craft specialists capable of mastering an increasingly complex technology are emerging. Apparently this development continued, for certainly by the late Bronze Age we see clear indications for specialized workshop locations, such as Södra Kristineberg (Högberg et al. 2011), on the one hand, and small-scale casting to fill household needs (e.g. Nilsson 2008), on the other.

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References


1 Walter Osika, MD specializing in psychiatry, notes that practice and refinement are fundamental to art and crafts. He suggests that our brains lead us to repeat actions in order to improve. This drive to get progressively better at something provided an evolutionary advantage (Naur 2012:182).

2 Vandkilde (1996) provides distribution maps showing the find locations for metal objects from LN I, LN II, Bronze Age Period IA and Bronze Age Period IB in Denmark. With the exception of western Jutland the finds are fairly evenly distributed over the landscape. No workshops or production centres are in evidence. I carried out a similar analysis for the finds from the province of Scania in southern Sweden and found that here too the products are evenly distributed in space.


STILBORG, O., n.d. Why are bronze age casting moulds made differently? Unpublished manuscript.


