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SCANDINAVIAN LATE VIKING AGE ART STYLES AS A PART OF THE VISUAL DISPLAY OF WARRIORS IN 11TH CENTURY ESTONIA

The article examines the archaeological finds from Estonia that are decorated in Scandinavian Late Viking Age ornamental styles. The majority of such finds come from burials in local fashion. The aim of the article is to outline the role of Scandinavian ornament in culture, social strategies, ideology and identity of the local society. Belt fittings and silver-plated weapons comprise the largest part of such finds. While the belt fittings often show simplified patterns, pure Scandinavian style ornament is found on weapons. The current article aims to propose a connection between warfare and warrior culture and the usage of Scandinavian ornament in Estonia. This martial link is found to coincide with the meanings proposed for animal ornament in Scandinavia. In Estonia, the fashion to decorate weapons was most widely spread in the time of Ringerike and Urnes styles. In that period, decorated weapons may have had a specific role in social strategies, probably implying the rise in position of the warrior strata. The article also discusses international relations as the background for the adoption of Scandinavian ornament. The gender aspect is mentioned, as the Scandinavian ornament associates with the male warrior role, while different symbolic languages were used in female attire. The Late Viking Age Scandinavian ornament in Estonia is seen as the visual display of the identity of warriors' social class and the affiliation of Estonian warriors with the Scandinavian cultural sphere, while the local identity was manifested mainly by some types of female jewellery.

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Artefacts decorated in Scandinavian Late Viking Age art styles have been known for a long time in the Estonian archaeological material, and were first published as early as 1914 by Max Ebert; a more comprehensive overview was given in 1929 by Birger Nerman. The finds include silver-plated and sometimes partially gilded weapons, as well as belt and scabbard fittings, plaques, and only a few pieces of jewellery. Even though the material has been reasonably well showcased in archaeological publications, little has been said so far about the items' possible role in the local culture and society.

Quite many Ringerike and Urnes-style sword hilt details (29) and spearheads (30) have been found in Estonia, mainly from the coastal areas of the country: the Saaremaa Island (Ösel) and western and northern Estonia. The artefacts have been produced by overlaying sockets of spearheads and sword hilt details with silver, and then having pattern lines engraved into it. The lines have later been filled with niello and, in some cases parts of the pattern have been gilded with mercury. No difference in the production technology or the Ringerike pattern types can be detected in comparison with Scandinavian finds.

Luxury weapons can be claimed to be both technologically and artistically the most complicated items among the find material. The “language” of that type of ornament is clearly different from the decoration styles on other artefacts in the local archaeological material.

In spite of the rich semiotic content of these finds, they can come across as fairly unimpressive at first glance – often badly burnt, corroded, and the swords are usually represented only by a single detail or a few hilt fragments. The abysmal state of the artefacts has been caused by the local burial custom in that era (Mägi 2002, 130 f.), as the majority of such finds (except some jewellery from hoards) comes from stone cemeteries with cremations. It is usually difficult to distinguish individual burials in these grave assemblages, as very often only parts of various artefacts (and probably only a small portion of the bones) have been deposited. Both the character of the burials and the overwhelming presence of local artefact types indicate that we are dealing with the burial places of local people which in turn should indicate that Scandinavian style weapons and other items found in Estonian Viking Age cemeteries belonged to the warriors from local communities.

Dating

Urnes-style jewellery comes from hoards, dated to the second half of the 12th century and the 13th century (Tamla 1995, 91 f.).

Animal-head joining mounts in their great number and variety seem to originate from a longer period of time. Some items with a more simplified and altered design are known from the burial complexes of the second half of the 12th century or the beginning of the 13th. There is still no reason to doubt that some versions, especially the ones identical or close to the initial Gotlandic models date back to the 11th century (Mägi 2002, 98).

Only a few weapons decorated in Ringerike and Urnes styles come from easily datable find complexes. The clearest example is the sword from Kurevere, deposited in a cremation burial in a stone circle grave. Other finds, such as a poppy-shaped end from a penannular brooch and a fragment of a one-sided comb suggest dating to the 11th century (Mägi 2002, 45, 93, 100). It may be noted that in the second half of the 12th century spearheads and swords of different types are common. There is no reason to date weapons decorated in Ringerike and Urnes styles later than the styles in question are usually dated.

The beginning of Ringerike style has been dated to the end of the 10th century (Horn Fuglesang 1980, 18) while the last phase of the Urnes style has been believed to have lasted until approximately 1130 (Gräslund 2006a, 122 ff.).

On the symbolic role of decorated weapons

The symbolic role of weapons in burials has been emphasised by many researchers (see e.g. Jakobsson 1992; Härke 1997, 93 f.). Discussing differences between the weaponry finds from Birka's Garrison and graves, Charlotte Hedenstierna-Jonson has pointed out:

The grave provided an arranged and idealised image of how the warrior ought to be, reflecting his self-image and contemporary society's perception of the warrior and his role. /.../ The weaponry in the graves should therefore accordingly be interpreted as a *representation* of the role and status of the interred while living, providing an idealised image of how the deceased should be when entering the next world (Hedenstierna-Jonson 2006a, 39).

The quality of deposited weapons was probably important, as well as their decoration. The finds of undecorated weapons from the same period indicate that cheaper, but functional alternatives were available while obtaining the decorated ones must have demanded more effort and expense. Still, weapons with Scandinavian Late Viking Age ornament are not rare or occasional and their number allows us to see them as a persistent fashion. The engagement of decorated weapons in burial rites must have been meaningful for the people taking part in performing the rites. We may assume that the occurrence of Scandinavian-style ornament on weapons found in burials may have been a feature of the idealised warrior image in local society.

On the other hand, the plainness of weapons has been viewed as an indication of warrior professionalism in the case of the finds from Birka's Garrison, while decorated weapons are considered to have been for ceremonial use, designed for display rather than battle (Hedenstierna-Jonson 2006b, 10 f.). Regarding decorated weapons as impractical seems unconvincing for me. One might suppose that decorations on sword hilts could get damaged during fighting. The danger or importance of that possible damage, I tend to think, was counterbalanced by other effects of the ornament. As there is no evidence of armoured gloves having been used in the Viking Age and the 11th century¹, it seems doubtful that a warrior could afford to expose his sword hand to the adversary's blows. A warrior's hand was certainly more valuable in a fight than the decoration on the hilt; thus keeping the hand safe would have avoided the damage on the hilt as well. Finnish scholar Mikko Moilanen has found that recognisable traces of use and repair are as common in ornamented as in non-ornamented weapons during the Late Iron Age (Molainen 2010, 2 ff.). The decorations on weapons did not diminish their

¹ For example, on the Bayeux tapestry all warriors are depicted bare-handed, though details of weapons and armour are depicted in remarkable detail. A similar picture appears in the miniature art of the period manuscripts.

functionality, but rather added a cultural, and probably psychological effect. The meaning of the ornament (see below) could strengthen the confidence and warrior ethos of the weapon bearer, while showing him as a successful warrior and therefore dangerous to the enemy (Halsall 2003, 175 f.).

The viewpoint expressed by 12th century Danish historian Svend Aggesen should also be noted here. He has written that King Canute the Great, intending to have the noblest men in his retinue, demanded that every warrior, willing to join his *thinglith*, had to have a sword hilt gilt with gold (Larson 1912, 131; Christiansen 1992, 32 f.). This suggests a link between decorated weapons and belonging to the aristocracy.

In Estonia the trend to decorate weapons seems to have been strongest in the time of the Ringerike and Urnes styles. While sword hilts have also been decorated in earlier periods and to a lesser degree also later, the decoration on spearhead sockets with precious metals is almost exclusively confined to these styles (the only exception being the spearhead from Kaarma (AI 499) from earlier Viking Age). In Scandinavia spearheads with decorated sockets were widespread all through the Viking Age, in Finland the Urnes-style decorated spearheads were later followed by the ones with acanthus patterns of silver wire (Leppäaho 1964, 119, plate 57; Lehtosalo-Hilander 1985, 32). It may be that decorated weapons had their specific role in the social strategies of the 11th century and at the beginning of the 12th, emphasizing the high, rising status of warriors in the society.

Among weapons with Ringerike style, spearheads (12) clearly prevail over sword details (6), the ratio is 2 to 1 in favour of spearheads. The sword hilts represent 4 different types, with unique patterns. When looking at the material with Urnes-style decorations, the picture is a bit different, as sword (hilt) details coming from at least 23 swords, are now even slightly more numerous than spearheads (18) with such an ornament. Except for two bronze hilts, all sword hilts are of the same type (Mandel 1991, 117 f.). Thus it seems that in the course of time, the importance of the sword as the luxury weapon of choice to be deposited in the burial has grown. The shift from the spear to the sword can indicate the growing wealth or rising position of the social stratum burying their dead with decorated weapons in the type of cremation burials described above. The growing preference for sword over spear has been observed also in 12th century burials in Saaremaa and explained by a narrow circle of people having had the right to be buried in stone cemeteries (Mägi 2002, 142). The growing exclusivity of furnished burials has been mentioned also by Lang (Lang 2011, 123). The change seems to have been towards the rise and exclusivity of the military elite.

Assuming that the wide use of weapons decorated in Urnes style was connected with the developments and demands of the social strategies of local people, we might question if these weapons were the primary trend in north-eastern Baltic region. The scarcity of weapon finds with Urnes-style decoration in Scandinavia may indicate the actual low number of that type in use; however, as the custom of furnished burials was abandoned in Scandinavia, we can never know how popular such weapons really were there.

Weapons decorated in Ringerike style

In the case of Estonian weapon finds with decorations in Ringerike style, there exists some find material from Scandinavia allowing comparisons – first and foremost it concerns the spearheads of Petersen's type M. Spearheads of that type were mainly used in the 11th century, especially in the first half or even the first quarter of the period (Petersen 1919, 35; Lehtosalo-Hilander 1982, 34 f.) and their decoration is in Ringerike style. If we take the use of the decorating style as the basis for dating ornamented spearheads found east of the Baltic Sea, the M-type seems to have been followed by type G spears that were mostly embellished in Urnes style (Horn Fuglesang 1980, 41). A few G-type spearheads have Ringerike style patterns, but these are different from the ones used on M-type spearheads, sometimes heavily simplified.

Recent research has demonstrated that some M-type spearheads found in Estonia can be a local production (Creutz 2003, e.g. 120). There is a group of M-type spearheads from Saaremaa with specific features of shape, such as the raised mid-rib on the blade, or the lack of facets; only one M-type spearhead of exactly the same kind is known outside of Estonia, from Valsgärde, Sweden. A less similar one comes from Jaunzemi Salaspils, the Daugava Livian area in Latvia. Due to the type's compact group and distribution area, Christina Creutz has located the workshop of the production of such spearheads in Saaremaa, using the label 'Pöide smith'. Three Saaremaa finds and the Valsgärde one bear the Ringerike decoration, while 5 are undecorated (Creutz 2003, 166 ff.).

Though it is not known if it was the same master who forged the spearheads and decorated them, the Pöide smith's spearheads' decoration deserves special attention. The surface of most M-type spearhead sockets is divided either into rhomboid and/or triangular panels. The decoration has usually certain types of patterns on particular panels. The Viltina spearhead (AI 38884: 1671) has a pattern type with a single S-shaped animal on the central rhomboid panel, which does not seem to occur in this position on any other M-type spearhead, except maybe a spearhead from Paju, which is lost now with only an inaccurate drawing remaining. The ornaments on the central rhomboid field of the three other Pöide smith's spearheads (Viltina AI 3884: 3905, Muhu AIK 43: 3, Valsgärde grave 5911) are different from the one described above, while resembling each other. The same type of pattern has been found also on one G-type spearhead from Saaremaa (AIK 88: 199). Perhaps even the pattern on a pommel from Viltina (AI 38884: 2180) can be connected to the same type, though with a variation caused by the different shape of the artefact. The decorations comprise a small distinct and compact group.

The design of the spearheads develops notably in the course of time: the usual thinner ribbon springing from the wider ones and interlacing with them on their crossing point, still present on the Viltina spearhead (AI 38884: 1671), is replaced by a closed ring on others (Fig. 1: 2). The Valsgärde spearhead and Saaremaa

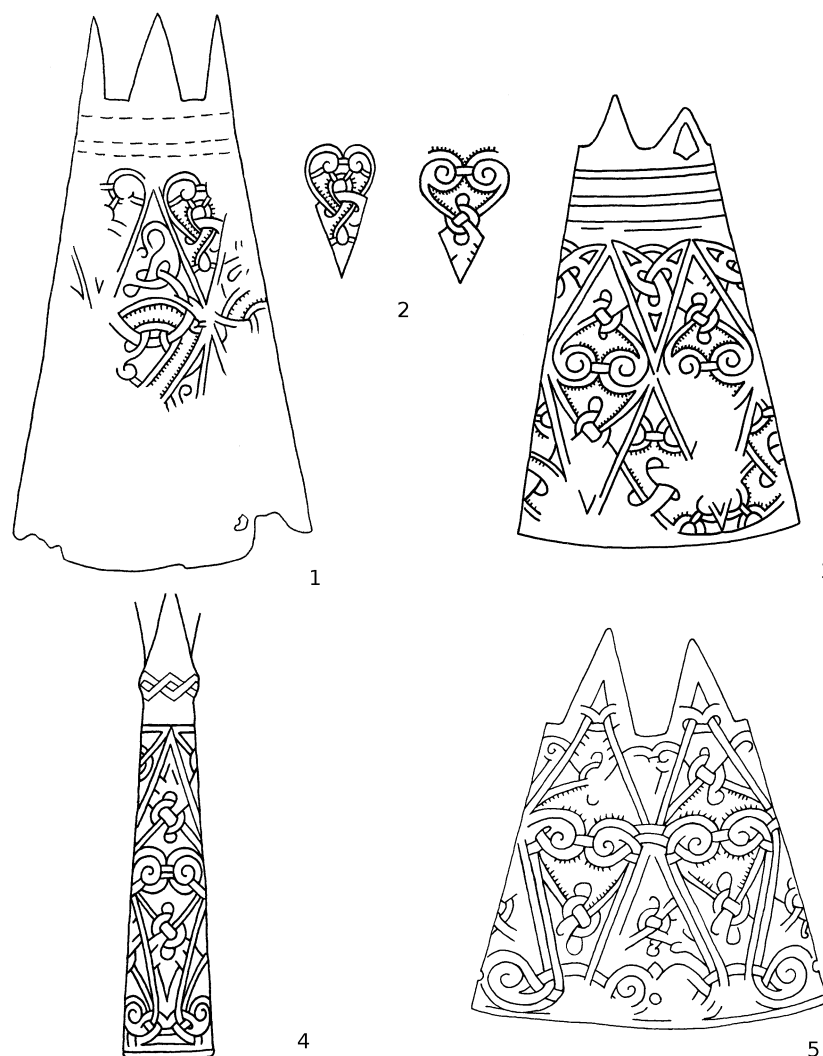


Fig. 1. Ringerike style patterns on spearhead sockets. 1 Viltina (AI 3884: 1671), 2 comparison of motifs, 3 Viltina (AI 3884: 3905), 4 Valsgårde grave 5911, 5 Saaremaa (AIK 88: 199). Patterns are fragmentary due to incomplete preservation. Scale ca 1: 2.

G-type spearheads also have a composition of interlacing ribbons around the spiral motifs. This seems to be a somewhat innovative element among the M-type spearheads' decorations. Such interlacing surrounds only pairs of spirals in the lower triangular fields of the Valsgårde spearhead's socket, while on the G-type Saaremaa spearhead it occurs in spirals of the central rhomboid fields as well (Fig. 1: 4–5). As the G-type can be considered somewhat later than the M-type, we may see development of the designing idea here.

It seems, accordingly, that the combination of originality and competence of weapon-forging of the Põide smith (Creutz 2003, 275) is paralleled by the development of skilled ornamenting on these spearheads. We can assume that there probably was a master in Saaremaa, who was able to alter and slightly develop the Ringerike style ornament, instead of mere copying.

Weapons decorated in Urnes style

Unlike the Ringerike spearheads, the weapons with Urnes-style decorations have little direct comparative material from the western coast of the Baltic Sea, apparently due to the disappearance of weapons from graves and the ceasing of offerings because of the Christianisation process (Nylén 1973, 167; Lehtosalo-Hilander 1985, 30; Mägi-Lõugas 1993, 218). While there are plenty of Urnes-style rune stones, mainly in Sweden, the number of weapons decorated this way is low. One Urnes-style bronze sword guard is known from Skillingmark, Värmland, Sweden, another has been found from the sea near the Smalls reef on the coast of Wales. Two spearheads with Urnes-style decorations are known from central Sweden and one from Gotland. The scarcity of such finds hinders comparison and locating the production centres. It may be noted that neither of the mentioned sword guards resemble the sword hilt details found in the eastern Baltic region. The spearhead found in Vendel (SHM 12753) corresponds to Lehtosalo-Hilander's type 3, which has been found in Finland (5 items) (Lehtosalo-Hilander 1985, 19, drawing 8: 3, 22, 25 f.), Estonia (3 items²) and Latvia (at least 1). The spearhead from Gotland has a direct analogue from Zalachtovje, a burial ground on the eastern coast of Lake Peipsi (Khvoshchinskaya 2004, plate CXXVII), while similarity with some spearheads from Latvia (Antejn 1973, 81, 82, drawing 98: 20, 27) and Valjala Rahu (AI 4213) remains more distant. Most of the Urnes-style ornament variants on weapons found east of the Baltic Sea do not have direct analogues on western coasts.

In most cases the patterns in Estonia, Latvia and Finland represent certain types, all of which use one particular interlacing motif as a basis (Fig. 2: 8), (see Lehtosalo-Hilander 1985, 19, drawing 8). Such propensity to shared elements of style differs from the higher variety of images on rune stones of central Sweden. The mentioned basic motif occurs there sometimes (e.g. on runestones from Ballingsta U859, U871 in Skansen, Haga Skramsta U460, Odensala Näsby U 455), but is by no means dominating. The filiform snakes, on the other hand, often intertwining with bigger beasts in central Swedish runestone ornament, are missing in the Urnes-style patterns on the weapons of north-eastern Baltic region. Weapons and runestones are, admittedly, a different media, therefore the comparison

² Kullamaa Maidla (AM 580: 1542), Kodavere Lahepera (AI 1984: 131), and Peetri Väike-Kareda (AM 613).

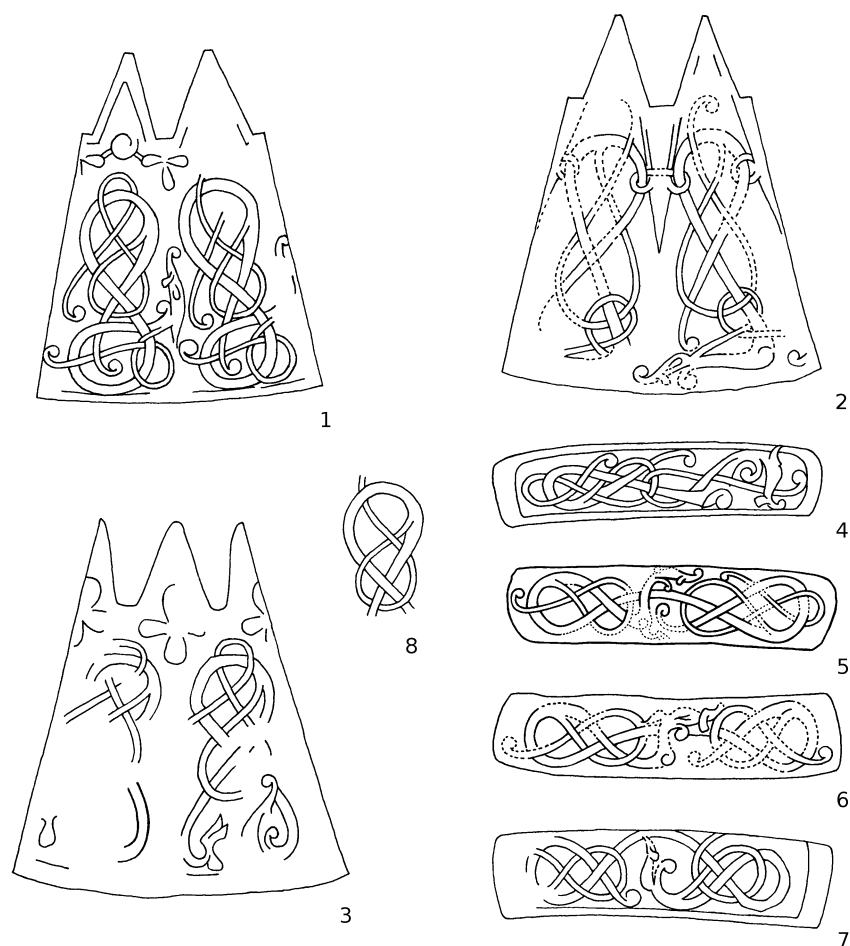


Fig. 2. Examples of Urnes-style ornament types on Estonian finds. 1 Lehtosalo-Hilander's type 6, Lehtse (AI 3937), 2 type 3, Maidla (AM 580: 1542), 3 type 4, Leevre (HM 3074: 43), 4 type 1, PÄinurme (AI 2635: 1536), 5–7 quasi-symmetric type, Maidla (AM 839: 1, 2), Kõmsi (AM 510: 400), and Maidla (AM 580: 5970), 8 basic interlacing motif. Patterns are fragmentary due to incomplete preservation. For a better understanding of motifs, in some areas the reconstruction is added with dotted line. Scale ca 1: 2.

of their ornament cannot perhaps give clear conclusions, but certain tendencies can still be noted. My personal impression is also that in Gotland, the above-mentioned interlacing motif seems to be more prevailing, on runic stones as well as on metal objects (see for example Thunmark-Nylén 1998, table 9: 3, 30: 1, 2, 3, 4, 71: 1, 2, 3, 72: 1, 2, 232: 4, 5, 6, 7; Nylén 1978, 19 f.).

As for particular types of Urnes-style patterns, there are differences in the distribution of these in Finland, Estonia and Livonia. The quasi-symmetrical animal

motif (Fig. 2: 5–7), appearing on 5 (of total 12) sword guards in Estonia³ is not known in Finland (as it can be concluded from Tomanterä 1978). Lehtosalo-Hilander's type 6 is most popular on Estonian spearheads (9 of total 18⁴), while in Finland that type is not common outside Eura (7 of total 56 spearheads, 4 of 7 coming from Eura and one from Ladoga Karelia).

In Finland certain types of spearhead patterns seem to concentrate in certain regions (Lehtosalo-Hilander 1985, 27). The local production of at least a part of such weapons seems to be the most natural explanation to this, though certain proof is hard to find, as comparative material from Scandinavia is lacking. The proposed manufacturing of earlier, Ringerike style decorated spearheads in Saaremaa enables the assumption that there existed a local production of Urnes-style decorated weapons in a later period. The technology of decorating remained the same and the ornament was simpler. On the other hand the location of the production centre is not as significant as the remarkable popularity of such weapons in Estonian, Finnish and Livian areas. For answering questions about the role of Scandinavian Late Viking art in local culture, ideology and identity, the location of workshops is not of prime importance.

Relations with Scandinavia as a background

One important question remains: why was a Scandinavian ornamental design adopted in the northern half of the eastern Baltic region? One possibility would be to see it as a continuation of attitudes developed in earlier times.

Scandinavian animal ornament had reached Estonia and Finland already in time of its emergence in the Migration period, as can be demonstrated by the finds from e.g. Proosa, Ojaveski, Paju, Lihula (Tvauri 2012, 114, 116, 119). The find material from the following pre-Viking period is scarce in Estonia, though in Finland richly furnished burials occurred containing spectacular finds of weapons and jewellery with Scandinavian ornament. One Scandinavian type sword pommel was found from Rebala Presti near Tallinn (AI 5490: 404), a *tarand*-grave, where 7th–8th century secondary burials are indicated by some finds (Lang 2007, 56). The secondary use of earlier burial grounds has been interpreted as the claiming

³ Kullamaa Maidla (AM 839: 1, 2, 580: 5970), Lügänuuse Maidla (in Käsmu museum), Kõmsi (AM 510: 400), Kaarma Uduvere (AIK 15: 212), other ornament types on the guards: Lehtosalo-Hilander's type 1: Kihelkonna Kurevere (AI 4368: 38), Peetri Päänurme (AI 2635: 1536); similar to the type 5, but more complicated: Tahula (AIK 66: 1), Saaremaa (AIK 85: 33); the pattern on guard from Viltina (AI 38884: 778) has preserved too fragmentarily to make an attribution.

⁴ Põide Randvere (AI 3895: 242), Essu (AM 83: 221), Kihelkonna Kurevere (AI 4368: 140), Lügänuuse Kalmeistri (AI 4183), Ambla Lehtse (AI 3937), Simuna Rohu (AM 107: 2), Saaremaa (AIK 85: 116), Märjamaa Lümändu (AM 369: 38), Põide Viltina (AI 3884: 1537). Of other types, type 2 with one from Saaremaa (AIK 85: 117) and type 4 from Kullamaa Leevre (HM 3074: 43). Patterns on spearheads from Põide Mui (AI 2712: 15), Kaarma Loona (AI 507: 4) and Nissi Varbola (AI 3403: 3) are preserved too fragmentarily to attribute.

of ancient roots (Ligi 1995, 227 ff.). In some Finnish graves belt plaques of eastern origin, from Perm, occur together with Scandinavian type weapons. Some Permian plaques have been found in northern Estonia as well (Tvauri 2012, 116 f.).

Several Scandinavian finds are known from the Early Viking period. These include weapons of the same type as used by Scandinavians, as well as horse harness fittings (Linnakse AI 6961: 115, Keskvere AM 996: 62, 66, Ridaküla AI 3964: 21), occasional jewellery and other accessories. It is hard to evaluate their amount and importance. The finds are not too numerous, but the find material from that period altogether is not vast. In the cases when it can be determined, such finds seem to come from the burial grounds of local character. Thus they are interred probably with locals or migrants absorbed by the local community.

In addition to the Scandinavian artefacts, the occurrence of coin hoards should also be mentioned, more numerous in Estonia than in ethnic Baltic areas (Leimus 2007).

Discussing pre-Viking period relations between central Sweden, Åland and Finnish and Estonian areas, Johan Callmer has proposed the existence of a network of relations between the families of a certain social standing with intermarriages, guest-friendship, blood-brotherhood, maybe small-scale migrations and perhaps the development of bilingualism (Callmer 2000, 28). This kind of bilingualism could have gained more importance with the emergence of a trade route towards the East. The geographical advantage of such interaction was the waterway from central Sweden along the Åland archipelago and Finland to the north Estonian coast and further east, easier to navigate than trips over the open sea. The economic reason could be trade, initially primarily fur trade (Callmer 2000, 12). There also appears to have been some kind of a connection between Gotland and Saaremaa, visible in similar features in burial constructions, like stone circles, occurring there at the end of Vendel period and during the Viking Age (Mägi 2002, 127).

Within such network, some people inhabiting coastal Estonia could become engaged in trade and military actions with Scandinavians. These people as well as possible migrants who got absorbed in the local society could have introduced features of the Scandinavian warrior culture.

Some scholars have suggested that in the Viking Age Scandinavian warfare was associated with wildness (Andren 2006, 35). Contrasting with the quotidian life, warfare with its violence could have been experienced as something alien. In modern times, psychological problems have been observed among soldiers in conflict zones. The warriors may have had to cope with disturbing experiences and some means for that may have been provided by warrior culture. The use of foreign symbolic language could fit with the perceived “Otherness” of warfare and warriors. Warriors themselves could have found it useful to differentiate themselves from the rest of the population, to emphasize their special status in society. On the other hand, using Scandinavian symbols indicates that the identity of local warriors could not have been sharply contraposed to Scandinavians. Previously instituted relations would have created a suitable background for such attitudes.

We may assume that although conflicts undoubtedly occurred, and also there probably could have been tribute relations for some periods (Mägi 2011b, 193, 195, 210, 227), the overall impact and impression about Scandinavian relations should have been positive enough to be marked by Scandinavian artefacts as burial deposits.

Besides Scandinavian artefacts, a common feature in burial customs should be mentioned here – the thrusting of weapons into burials or the burial ground (Nordberg 2002, 15 ff.; Mandel 2003, 134 f.). If perceived as evidence of rituals performed with weapons, it may indicate common elements in warrior culture.

Among the Scandinavian loan words in Finnish and Estonian, there are some connected with warfare. An interesting one among the loan words is also the Estonian-Finnish word *arg*, meaning ‘afraid’, ‘a coward’, probably a derivate of the Scandinavian *argr* (related to *ergi* and *ragr*, see Ström 1974). Borrowing that word may indicate that the concepts of bravery/cowardice, honour/dishonour, were modelled in concordance with Scandinavian views.

Assuming that the use of Ringerike and Urnes decorations on weapons was based on an earlier tradition of Scandinavian features absorbed into local warrior culture, one puzzle lies in the different character of decorations used on weapons in different time periods. The weapons in earlier Viking Age were decorated with geometric patterns that need no culturally specific ability to understand and relate to. Contrary to these simple motives, Ringerike and Urnes-style interlacing patterns were complicated and specific. The ability to understand and appreciate the interlacing animal ornament could have been based on the use of artefacts with animal ornament of earlier styles (jewellery, horse harness fittings and others). However, decorating a series of weapons with such patterns was innovative. It is also clear that Ringerike and Urnes decorations on weapons follow the changing fashions, innovations in Scandinavian art. To follow the change, there must have been continuing contact enabling this; perhaps this kind of network of relations, proposed for earlier periods, was still maintained in the 11th century. There could be some changes, for example the growing importance of Gotland in the second half of the 11th century.

A study of M-type spearheads (a part of them decorated in Ringerike style) revealed no indication of special relations between Saaremaa and Gotland in this regard, though, and no other particular Scandinavian area could be pointed out as the source of the influence, either. A bit later the Urnes-style patterns, as well as details of the composite belts indicate a connection between Finns, Estonians and Livs with Gotland and also with each other. Artefact types common to these areas also comprise several types of penannular brooches and other items that could suggest that a kind of shared identity embraced foremost these areas in the second half of the 11th century.

However, the identity of Estonian warriors could not have been juxtaposed to Scandinavians; on the contrary, they rather chose to demonstrate their affiliation with them in their choice of material culture. A similar attitude can be observed

among Finns and Livs, to a lesser degree also Karelians and Curonians, while the position of ethnic Baltic groups was probably much more opposing.⁵

Belt fittings ornamented in Scandinavian animal styles

Besides silver-plated spearheads and sword hilts, Scandinavian art style can also be found on some details of belts in the north-eastern Baltic areas. These details comprise buckles, strap ends and more numerous, animal-headed joining mounts, similar to the ones found in Gotland. Animal-headed joining mounts, however, are found in numerous local variations and modifications, while items in original Scandinavian (Gotlandic) style form a minority. Joining mounts seem to have been a part of the trimmings of composite belts, adorned also with numerous plaques. Such belts, decorated with a multitude of patterned cast metal plaques, are not of Scandinavian origin itself, but seem to have prototypes in the eastern fashion belts of 10th century Rus, which themselves are thought to originate from steppe nomadic warrior belts (Murasheva 2000, 3 ff.). Rus belts are believed to have been an important visual element of the *druzhina*, a military retinue culture and material expression of Rus identity (Murasheva 2000, 97; Hedenstierna-Jonson 2006a, 82). At the end of the 10th century and in the 11th century the so-called Novgorodian type composite belts emerged and spread. The connection to *druzhina* fashion is still assumed, some mounts having been found on Rjurik's Gorodische. On the other hand, many of such belts have been actually found in Novgorodian borderlands and outside the Novgorod principedom. Similar belts, or rather details of these, have also been found in Estonia and Scandinavia, e.g. Gotland.

The distribution rings and buckles of a typical Novgorodian belt did not have animal-headed joining mounts; instead, special plaques with plant decorations were sometimes used (Mikhailov 2007, 205 ff.).

The plaques of belts with the animal-headed joining mounts usually seem to be different from the Novgorodian ones. Although presumably based on eastern paragons in the first instance, they were adapted to local tastes.

As for the animal-headed joining mounts, it is not clear if the stylistic connection with the weapon ornament was noticed. The shape of the animal head of the joining mounts was always of a different type compared to the heads of interlacing animals on weapons. Joining mounts had plenty of variants, moved from the initial Scandinavian style, while on the weapons the style was followed more strictly. The belt as a whole was a hybrid item, and retaining the initial style of every detail may have seemed unnecessary.

The social significance of composite belts with animal-headed joining mounts is not so easy to determine in Estonia, as there are too few find complexes

⁵ Finns, Karelians, Estonians and Livs, as well as the inhabitants of the northern part of Curonia, spoke Finnic languages. Latgallians, Selonians, Semigallians, the inhabitants of the southern areas of Curonia, as well as East Prussian and Lithuanian territories, spoke Baltic languages.

for that. However, some examples can be mentioned. A rich 11th century burial complex with such a belt unearthed at the Randvere cemetery on Saaremaa contains a sword scabbard chape (scabbard as a substitute for a sword) and two spearheads among other items (Mägi 2002, 51, plates 30–31). In one supposed complex in Maidla, west Estonia, a complex of finds has come to light consisting of a strap distributor with two animal-headed joining mounts, a buckle and a strap end from the composite belt, found together with two spearheads (one with Urnes decoration), sword hilt details of E-type, bridle bits and a penannular brooch (Mandel 2003, 48, plate XVIII). Some 12th century find complexes with such belt sets include sword details, spearheads and riding gear (Mägi 2002, 56, plates 38–39, 48–49, 51). All of the above appears to suggest that belts with animal-headed joining mounts have at least sometimes been used by wealthy warriors.

On the other hand, the find complex from Kurevere, Saaremaa, containing a sword with Urnes-style decorated hilt lacks belt mounts altogether. But a belt with an animal-headed joining mount for a buckle was found in another, a female burial in the same cemetery in Kurevere, Saaremaa (Mägi 2002, 45, plates 27–28). Perhaps one of the latest depositions of the described belt type, unearthed in an inhumation burial at Maidla and dated to the beginning of the 13th century, belonged to a four-year-old child (Mandel 2003, 55 f.). It was, however, not around the waist, and seems to have been an old belt, with the divider rings worn through. It seems probable that it did not represent a piece actually worn by the deceased child when alive, or at least had not originally been made for him.

The occurrence of belt fittings in non-male graves can be compared with the occasional presence of weapons in the burials of children and women in Baltic-Finnic areas, whatever the explanation for these may be (see Mägi 2002, 77 ff. for further discussion). Accordingly, the known burial complexes do not enable us to connect such belts unequivocally with warriors only, though the remote origin of the fashion is thought to lie in the military environment. No special connection between the composite belts and silver-plated weapons can be found in burial complexes. Still, the belts could have held the significance of demonstrating a somewhat higher social standing. All in all they were elaborate and doubtless costly items.

On the other hand, some correlation seems to occur on the level of the geographical distribution of belts and weapons decorated with Scandinavian styles. On the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea, the above-mentioned belt mounts and Urnes-style decorated weapons were confined mainly to the same regions – Finland, Karelia, Estonia, and the Liv and Curonian areas in present-day Latvia. On the western side of the sea, Gotland has been rich in the finds of belt fittings of the type, and the Gotlandic Urnes style is the closest to the variants used on weapons in Finland, Estonia and Latvia.

Judging by the information gained from 12th and 13th century written sources, some kind of an occasional alliance in the relations between Estonians and Curonians, Livs and Curonians, as well as Saaremaa and Gotland seems to have

occurred (Estonians and Curonians – Saxo Grammaticus XIV: 40.3, Estonians and Thoreyda Livs HCL XIII (5), Livs and Curonians HCL XIV (5), Osilians and Gotlanders HCL XXX). The distribution of similar composite belts and decorated weapons may also mark political affiliations.

The meaning of ornamental motives

The semantics of the animal ornament has been discussed by several scholars – Karl Hauck (1983), Lotte Hedeager (1998; 2000) and Maria Domeji Lundborg (2006) – to only mention some. The idea of a connection to the Norse religion has been proposed, but also possible connections to Christianity have been pointed out. More agreement has been found in taking animal art as a part of heroic culture, as a visual counterpart to skaldic poetry (Domeij Lundborg 2006, 39 ff.). Thus it can be seen as an expression of warrior ideology (Hedeager 1998, 382 ff.; Domeij Lundborg 2006, 43). Some kind of apotropaic magic has been assumed (Dickinson 2005, 109–163; Hedenstierna-Jonson 2006b, 11 f.), which could have also continued as a kind of ‘low-level’ magic in the Christian era of the late Viking age.

Animal ornament had been used to decorate weapons in Vendel times as well (Lundström 1983, 106), but during most of the Viking Age it was rare. Borre style animal motifs are usually not found on weapons themselves (the sword from Gnjozdovo and a guard from Gislevold are exceptions, Petersen 1919, 15; Kirpichnikov & Kainov 2001). Some images of Borre style are thought to have referred to Odin as a sorcerer and were therefore not proper for weapons (Hedenstierna-Jonson 2006b, 12 f.).

Animal ornament, together with plant motifs, was used again on the weapons in Mammen, Ringerike and Urnes-style period. That was a time of change in Scandinavian society and religion. Christianisation also changed the use of symbols and the meaning of the ornament. Still, these styles continued in the Scandinavian art paradigm of interlaced animals and many motifs are in essence not too different from the animal motifs of the Vendel period. Therefore, one might suppose the continuity of some of the layers of meaning.

It must be noted that the ideological changes in Estonia were somewhat different. There is no evidence to assume larger-scale Christianisation. Institutionalised Christianity was established here only with the Crusade at the beginning of the 13th century.

On the other hand, if the ornament’s ties to more specific and deep layers of Norse religion weakened, it could have made the adoption of the Late Viking styles easier for non-Scandinavians. A parallel to the popularity of Urnes style in north-eastern Baltic region can be seen in England, where quite many Urnes-style finds have come to light (Owen 2001, 203 ff.).

Some ideas of the probable semantics of animal motifs can be presented here as examples. The Icelandic saga of Kormac contains a story about the Skofnung

sword. The story tells that a little snake, the spirit and the embodiment of good luck for the sword, was crawling out beneath the sword guard (*The Saga of Cormac the Skald*, Chapter 9). The reality behind that motif can probably be explained by the pattern welded blade. The snake appears as a protective spirit or the embodiment of luck in a house in Estonian folklore (Loorits 1990, 43, 58). The idea of such protective spirits may be connected with dragon- and snake-like creatures on Urnes-style sword hilts' and spearhead sockets' decorations. The snakes or dragons could also be connected with the underworld creatures of the death realm known from Scandinavian mythology (Bæksted 2001, 182, 188); even Odin himself took the shape of a snake (Gräslund 2006b, 126).

One hilt from Maidla (AM 839: 1, 2) has an Urnes-style animal like a dog or a wolf on its upper guard. Also, the animal-headed joining mounts of composite belts can be seen as stylised wolf heads. In many ways, the wolf has been associated with war and magic in pre-Viking and Viking Age Scandinavia (Price 2002, 120, 178, 226, 366 ff.), for example as a beast of battle in Norse skaldic poetry. The wolf is a dangerous predator and its connection with war and death was probably archetypal. In Estonian folklore, the howling of wolves was thought to predict war (Km H II 14, 530 (6) Ambla, H II 53, 470 (197) Simuna, H III 30, 697 (97) Vastseliina) and there were many other beliefs and taboos associated with wolves (Loorits 1990, 42, 59).

While in Scandinavia Late Viking Age animal patterns occur on a great variety of objects, in Estonia the ornament appears mostly on weapons. It seems that the Scandinavian ornament has been adopted foremost for martial association. As mentioned before, some scholars have connected the ornament with warrior ideology in Scandinavia (Hedeager 1998, 382 ff.; Domeij Lundborg 2006, 43), and in Estonia, the connection to warfare is even more evident.

A few notes on female decorations, the gender aspect and local identity

As a comparison, female jewellery in all the regions of Estonia has been remarkably different from the Scandinavian fashions in the 11th century, and more or less distinctive from Finnish, Livian and Curonian and Sempallian styles as well. There are common features in the repertoire of ornamentation with other Finnic, as well as Baltic peoples. Still, the particular design and set of female jewellery seems to manifest regional differences.

Karen Høilund Nielsen has stated that the distribution of female ornaments was strongly connected to the political regions in the 5th–6th-century Frankish kingdom and its neighbouring areas, as well as 6th–7th-century southern and eastern Scandinavia. When an area was conquered, the ornaments of local women changed soon (Høilund Nielsen 2000, 161 ff.).

In the Viking Age, Gotland had a strikingly original local fashion of female jewellery. Some female ornaments in the Viking Age eastern Baltic area were

also connected with certain regions. Instead of oval brooches, Estonian women wore dress pins on their shoulders. In 11th century Saaremaa and the western part of mainland Estonia, a distinctive ornament type appears to have been triangular-headed pins of the so-called Saaremaa type (Mägi 2002, 104). Saaremaa type bracelets and female knife sheaths had a similar distribution pattern in Saaremaa and western Estonia (Mägi-Lõugas 1995, 311 f.; Mägi 2002, 92). Unlike in Gotland, Late Viking Age Scandinavian art styles were never used to decorate local female jewellery here.

Saaremaa and western Estonia are known as districts from early 13th century written sources. According to Henry's Chronicle of Livonia from the beginning of the 13th century, several joint actions were undertaken by these two districts, indicating probably more than occasional alliances (see for example Mägi 2011a, 327 f.). Thus the picture provided by female jewellery seems to correspond with the later information about regional political divisions and relations. Female jewellery seems to have manifested local identity.

Foreign types of female jewellery found in these areas are not numerous. For example, pieces of only one Scandinavian tortoise brooch have been found by archaeologists in Estonia, and there has been only a few stray finds of Livian and Karelian type tortoise brooches (Luik 1998, 3 ff.). As another interesting item, one Livian type pendant found in Maidla with a Rjurikovitsh sign on it should be mentioned here (AM 580: 4888). In Latvia such pendants come mostly from female burials (many of them from the Raushi burial ground on Dole Island) and are interpreted as the indicators for women of some Livian noble lineage (Mugurevičs 1994, 76 ff.).

Some Saaremaa type triangular-headed pins have been found in the Livian area and from Gotland (Mägi 1997, 42). In the Daugava area, though, there could have been whole families of migrants from Saaremaa (Mägi 2011a, 325 ff.). Some Finnish shoulder brooches have been recovered in the Turaida Livian area, as well as in Gotland (Tõnisson 1974, plate XXXVIII: 12; Thunmark-Nylén 1998, plate 73: 7, 8, 74: 1, 2). The few foreign female jewellery finds thus point more or less to the same areas as the above described belt fittings and decorated weapons. The background here may again lie in the network of relations on the elite level with intermarriages, friendships, and occasional political alliances.

From the stylistic point of view, the male and female or, we should rather say, the warrior/matron genders, have been manifested in very different ways. The warrior role is manifested using the Scandinavian animal art styles as part of a visual display for local warriors, perhaps as an expression of warrior ideology, while wealthy women were buried with jewellery and clothing having distinct local features.

On the other hand, the burial customs do not show too strict a differentiation between genders, as some of the few distinguished burial complexes on Saaremaa occasionally contain some items of the opposite sex – some female burials contain weapons and some warrior burials have a few female ornaments deposited. The

same feature occurs in Livian and Karelian inhumation burials (Mägi 2002, 77 ff.). Also, there is a portion of unisex jewellery – for example, penannular brooches were common for both men and women in Estonia (Mägi 2002, 100).

Conclusion

The Late Viking Age Scandinavian ornament seems to have played quite a special role in the culture and the expression of identity in coastal Estonia. Weapons decorated in Scandinavian style that have been found in local burials, can be considered a part of the idealised image of the warrior. In Estonia, Scandinavian Late Viking ornament seems to be connected with warrior ideology – and more so here than in Scandinavia itself. Decorations on weapons probably had their specific roles in the social strategies of the 11th century and at the beginning of the 12th, emphasizing the rising status of warriors in the society. The sociopolitical background for the distribution of such ornament(ed artefacts) could have been the network of relations between the families of a certain social standing and perhaps the occasional affiliation of Estonians in the actions of Scandinavians. In the Urnes-style period, the common culture sphere seems to embrace especially Finnish, Estonian and Livian areas and Gotland.

In the realm of international communication, items decorated in Ringerike and Urnes styles can be seen as symbolic attributes expressing the connection of the local warriors' identity to the Scandinavian culture sphere, but perhaps also with Finns and Livs. Another significant aspect of identity – the distinction of local peculiarity – was expressed by a distinctly local kind of jewellery, especially female jewellery.

In the use of symbolic language directed to the local society, on the other hand, the Scandinavian ornament functioned for distinction, showing and strengthening the separate identity of the warriors' social strata and role in society, while the stressed regionality of female jewellery could have played a consolidating role in the combination of communicated messages instilled in material culture.

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Indrek Jets

HILISVIIKINGIAEGSED SKANDINAAVIAPÄRASED ORNAMENDISTIILID KUI OSA 11. SAJANDI EESTI SÕDALASTE ATRIBUUTIKAST

Resümee

Hilisviikingiaegsete skandinaaviapärase ornamendistiilidega kaunistatud esemeid on Eesti arheoloogilises materjalis märgatud ja mainitud ammu: juba 1914. aastal tegi neist juttu Max Ebert, põhjalikumalt on tollal teada olevaid leide käsitlenud Birger Nerman 1929. aastal. Suure osa taolistest leidudest moodustavad hõbeda ja vahel ka osalise kullatiseega kaunistatud odaotsad (30 teadaolevat eksemplari) või mõõgapidemete osad (29 määratletavat eksemplari), aga ka teatavad vöödetailid, on ka mõõgatupeotsikuid ning teadmata otstarbega ovaalseid naaste. Vaadeldavates stiilides ornamendiga ehteid on seevastu vähe leitud.

Enamik teadaolevate leiusuhetega leidudest pärineb põletusmatustega kivi-kalmetest. Kuna nii kalmetüüp kui ka suurem osa leiumaterjalist on kohaliku ilmega, võib arvata, et vaadeldavad esemed kuulusid siinse ühiskonna liikmetele.

Eestis näib relvi olevat kõige rohkem kaunistatud just ringerike ja urnesi stiilis. Ringerike stiili algusajaks on arvatud 10. sajandi lõppu, sellele järgnenud urnesi stiili lõpuajad on paigutatud 12. sajandi 30. aastatesse. Põhiliselt ja eeskätt hõlmavad mainitud stiilid niisiis 11. sajandit. Kui mõõgapidemeil leidub kaunistusi ka varasemal ja vähemal määral hilisemal ajal, siis odaotste kaunistamine väärismetalli ning ornamendiga seondub meil üksnes mainitud stiilidega (ainus erand on E-tüüpi odaots Kaarmast (AI 499)). Näib võimalik, et just sel perioodil oli kaunistatud relvadel oma roll sotsiaalsetes strateegiates, tõstes esile sõdalaste kõrget (võib-olla tähtsustuvat) positsiooni ühiskonnas.

Ringerike stiilis ornamendiga relvade hulgas domineerivad odaotsad (12) mõõgapidemeosade (6) üle, samas kui urnesi stiilis kaunistatud mõõgadetaile (23) on isegi rohkem kui vastavaid odaotsi (18). Selliselt on aja jooksul hakatud matusepanusena rohkem mõõka eelistama. Selline nihe eelistustes võib kajastada vastava ühiskonnakihi kasvavat jõukust ja positsiooni ühiskonnas.

Miks skandinaavialik mood Läänemere idakalda põhjaosas omaks võeti? Üks võimalus on näha seda varasema traditsiooni jätkuna. Skandinaavialik loomornament jõudis Soome ja Eestisse juba oma kujunemisel rahvasterändamise ajal, mitmeid skandinaaviapäraseid leide on ka viikingiaja varasemast poolest. Leidude hulk pole küll liiga suur, kuid ka kogu selleaegne leiumaterjal pole väga ulatuslik. Johan Callmer on juba viikingiajaeelse perioodi puhul oletanud suhtevõrgustikku Kesk-Rootsi, Alandi, Soome ja Eesti ranniku teatava ühiskondliku staatusega perede vahel. Selline suhtevõrgustik tähendanuks sõprus-külalissuhteid, abielusid, verevendlust, väikesemahulisi migratsioone ja teatava kakskeelsuse-keeleskuse kujunemist. Suhtevõrgustiku läbi võidi Ranniku-Eesti inimesi ka skandinaavlaste sõjalistesse aktsioonidesse kaasata. Sellised inimesed, nagu ka võimalikud kohalikku ühiskonda sulandunud skandinaavlaste, võisid kaasa tuua Skandinaavia sõdalaskultuuri elemente.

Tuleb aga märkida, et relvade kaunistuste iseloom on aegade jooksul muutunud. Varasema viikingiaja relvad olid kaunistatud geomeetriliste motiividega, mis ei vaja kultuuriliselt spetsiifilist arusaamisvõimet. Erinevalt neist on ringerike ja urnesi stiilis ornament küllaltki keeruline ning eripärane. Et järgida muutuvat moodi, pidi kontakt Skandinaavia kultuuriruumiga olema toimiv 11. sajandil. Küllap käibis eelkirjeldatud suhtevõrgustik mingil moel jätkuvalt edasi. Muidugi võis siin ka mõningaid muutusi olla: näiteks on usutav Gotlandi suhete olulisemaks muutumine 11. sajandi teisel poolel. Kui M-tüüpi odaotste võrdlus ei näidanud mingit erisuhet Gotlandi ja Saaremaa vahel, siis hilisem urnesi stiilis materjal, nagu ka vööosad ning mõnevõrra ehted, näivad rohkem selles suunas viitavat.

Läänemere idakalda põhjaosas esineb skandinaaviapärasest hilisviikingiaegset ornamentide peale relvade veel ka mõnedel vööosadel. Leidub pandlaid, rihmaotsikuid, kuid kõige arvukama leiurühma moodustavad loomapeakujulised rihmakannad. Viimaseid on paljudes kohalikes variantides ja modifikatsioonides, stiililtalt skandinaaviapärased on vähemuses.

Nii mainitud vööosad kui ka relvad esinevad Läänemere idakaldal Soome, Eesti ja Liivi aladel, vähem Karjalas ning Kuramaal. Lääne pool on selliseid võid

leitud rohkem Gotlandilt, ja nagu eespool mainitud, näib Gotlandi urnesi stiil olevat lähim idakalda relvade ornamendile. Otsustades 13. sajandi alguse allikate järgi, näib, et aeg-ajalt olid mingisugused liitlассuhted eestlaste ja kuralaste, liivlaste ning kuralaste ja Saaremaa ning Gotlandi vahel. Sarnaste vöösade ja relvade levik võib seega kajastada poliitilisi sidemeid.

Kui Skandinaavias leidub hilisviikingiaegset loomornamenti väga mitmesugustel esemetel, siis Eestis näib stiilipuhtam ornament esinevat eeskätt relvadel. Tundub, et skandinaaviapärasest ornamendi on kasutatud just sõjaga seostuvana. Kui Skandinaaviaski on loomornamenti peetud sõdalaskultuuri osaks, siis Eestis näib militaarne seos rangemgi olevat.

Mõninga võrdlusena võib välja tuua, et naisteehted on kõigis Eesti erinevates piirkondades olnud Skandinaaviast väga selgelt erinevad. Kuigi siin on ornamentikas sarnaseid jooni balti ja teiste läänemeresoome rahvastega, näib naisteehetes kajastuvat piirkondlik omapära. Stiili vaatepunktist on mehe- ja naise- või pigem sõdalase- ning emandarollid manifesteeritud väga erinevas “keeles”.

Näib, et hilise viikingiaja Skandinaavia ornamendistiilidel oli Ranniku-Eesti kultuuris ja identiteedi väljendustes üsna eripärane roll. Kohalikest kalmetest leitud skandinaavialikus stiilis relvi võib pidada sõdalase ideaalpildi osaks. Kaunistused relvadel rõhutasid ilmselt sõdalase kõrget positsiooni ühiskonnas ja väljendasid sõdalasideoloogiat. Taustaks selliste relvade levikule oli ehk teatava ühiskondliku positsiooniga suguvõsade rahvusvaheline sidemete võrgustik, samuti ajuti ka eestlaste kaasatus skandinaavlaste aktsioonidesse. Väljapoole suunatud tegutsemisel märkisid ringerike ja urnesi stiilis esemed sümboliteen kohalike sõdalaste seost Skandinaavia kultuurisfääriga, ka soomlaste ning liivlastega. Eripärane kohalik, piirkondlik identiteet leidis aga väljenduse naisteehetes. Kohalikule tasandile suunatud sümboolse keele kasutuses toimus skandinaavialik ornament sõdalasi muust ühiskonnast eristavana, näidates ja tugevdades sõdalaste kihi eriomast identiteeti ning rolli ühiskonnas. Naisteehete sümbolikeelel võis siin olla pigem ühiskonna eri kihte ühendav mõte.