Revisiting the 'Valkyries'

Armed Females in Viking Age Figurative Metalwork

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This paper offers an in-depth exploration of a group of small Viking Age figurines commonly referred to as 'valkyries' in Viking and Old Norse scholarship. After presenting an overview of the long research history pertaining to these finds and their varying definitions, this study re-analyses their various formal and stylistic features and proposes a new typological system based on a comprehensive investigation of the current find corpus. This is followed by a deconstruction and discussion of the ambiguous gender characteristics of the figurines and an exploration of the potential new avenues of their interpretation. The study is supplemented by detailed catalogues of all presently known finds of so-called armed 'valkyrie' figures as well as high-quality illustrations that demonstrate their great iconographic value for studies of Viking Age clothing, martial equipment and ritual behaviour.

Keywords: women, figurines, amulets, miniatures, weapons

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Introduction

The rush to label can arguably be seen as the curse of Viking Age figurative iconography. For several scholarly generations, the humanoid cast-list of Scandinavian 'art' – whether in two or three dimensions, carved in stone and wood or cast in metal – was unhesitatingly populated with named gods, goddesses and other mythological beings. Alongside the celebrity characters that repeat throughout the synthetic literature is also a separate category of lesser-known images, relegated to the second tier precisely because they are hard to equate with recognisable individuals from the Norse textual story-world. The truth is that, excepting a small handful of figures with very specific attributes (for example, the rune stone depiction of a hammer-wielding Þórr fishing for Miðgarðsormr, U 1161), *none* of these images can be unequivocally identified (Price 2006). A variant of the same problem sees the collective application of a single and intrinsically uncertain label to a range of clearly different images – the two most obvious examples being the horned so-called 'weapon dancers' and the standing females shown mainly in profile, both of which in fact exhibit very considerable iconographic variation (for discussion of these issues, see Arrhenius 1961; Simek 2002; Helmbrecht 2011; Wihlborg 2019, 2020; Lanz 2021).

In this paper we explore this phenomenon through an in-depth review and interpretive deconstruction of one specific genre of these figures: those probably depicting armed females, which (following the tradition noted above) have long been reflexively labelled as valkyries. We begin with defining and describing the existing corpus (linked to our catalogue appendices), introducing a new attempt at classification, followed by a research history of interpretations – including the ambiguous gender of the figures – and ending with some speculations of our own.

Definitions and deconstructions

In order to identify a corpus of 'armed female' figures that can be clearly distinguished from other metalwork images of the kinds mentioned above, some basic definitions must be explored.

Their armed aspect is obvious, though not without complications. It is clear that all the figures of this group bear weapons of various kinds and combinations, both offensive and defensive: shields, swords, spears, probably helmets, and perhaps armour. However, identifying the meaning and context of these armaments is not straightforward, and involves notions of warriorhood, the symbolic language of weapons, and the manner in which they are depicted in any individual figure. We return to these points below.

The armed figures' gender is ultimately ambiguous, and variable, possibly differing between one example and another. However, it seems reasonably secure that the figures all intentionally project at least one or more feminine gender signal, based on the key markers that have been widely recognised and studied in the clothing and hairstyle iconographies of the late Scandinavian Iron Age. This work has focussed in particular on the gold foil figures, but has also extended to other metalwork images of the kinds mentioned above, with an inevitably limited correlation to the funerary record (Watt 2002; Mannering 2010, 2013, 2017; Helmbrecht 2011). The primary iconographic notations of femininity seem to have been the characteristic loosely knotted hairstyle, with a ponytail that in some cases stretches almost to the feet; a long, gown-like garment with a trailing profile; a shoulder-length shawl; and necklaces of beads, or perhaps linked chains. All of these in turn have variations, sometimes quite substantial, but nonetheless a sufficiently consistent pattern emerges to meaningfully read gender norms from these motif conventions.

Gender signals can of course be subverted, blended, and their meanings activated in new contexts to convey an array of different messages. Many studies have now considered such ambiguities, variations, and challenges for the late Iron Age, not least in relation to gender perceptions that may have extended beyond the binary (e.g. Arwill-Nordbladh 1998, 2013; Göransson 1999; Back Danielsson 1999, 2002, 2007; Moen 2019a, 2019b; Price 2020:155–79; Moilanen et al. 2022). This extended gender spectrum is also intimately connected with the bearing of arms, or rather with the changing ways that this has been perceived by scholars and society at large. Who could be a 'warrior' in the late Iron Age, under what circumstances? What did this mean for their identity, and how was this mediated in life and death? These questions were thrown into sharp relief by the controversies around the 'female warrior' burial Bj. 581 from Birka, Sweden and the ensuing discussions of 'shield maidens', valkyries, and more (e.g. Gardeła 2015, 2018a, 2018b, 2021; Hedenstierna-Jonson et al. 2017; Price et al. 2019; Friðriksdóttir 2020:58–71). All these issues too are explored further below.

These, then, are the foundations on which we believe that an examination of the figures should build: a careful presentation of the material evidence, and a cautious approach to interpretation with an openness to ambiguity rather than the pursuit of illusory certainties. There is no sense in which the following discussion can present a full corpus, since finds of this type are emerging so rapidly as a result of metal detection (especially in the context of the Danish legislation on treasure trove, also known as *Danefæ*) that our catalogue will inevitably have become incomplete by the time it sees print (for previous overviews, see Gardeła 2018a; Deckers et al. 2021). However, it *is* the most extensive compiled to date, it demonstrates

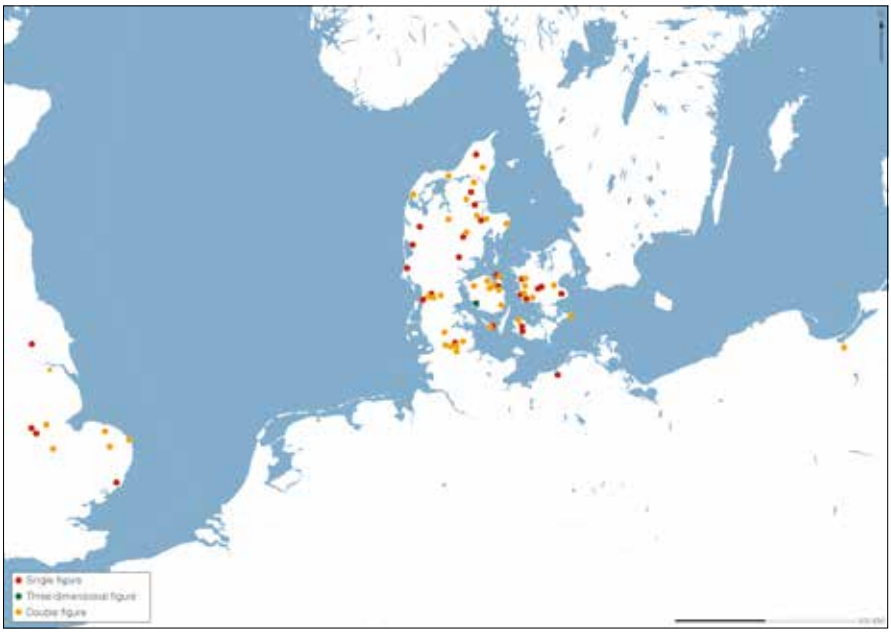
the variation within the figures, and can serve as a status report on current research on which future researchers may build.

The corpus

As a result of ongoing excavation campaigns and in particular amateur metal detecting, the corpus of armed female figures is constantly expanding. At the time of writing (late 2021), we are familiar with 50+ examples of armed figures with the rider motif and 20+ examples of standalone armed figures (see Tables 1 and 2). The artefacts that make up the corpus come mainly from Denmark, but several specimens have also been discovered in England, present-day Germany, and Poland. It is unclear if the geographical patterning of the figures is meaningful and reflects Viking Age reality; it might instead simply mirror regional laws relating to metal detection. While many specimens are reasonably well preserved, among the recently discovered copper alloy and silver objects from Denmark there are also several highly fragmented figures that are difficult to classify, for instance from Lejre (e.g. Christensen 2015:193) and Åle (National Museum of Denmark no C54961; unpublished), which only show female heads. Due to their incompleteness and uncertain attributes, we have decided to exclude them from this study.

A substantial number of Danish finds come from the Jylland peninsula and the islands of Sjælland and Fyn, but some examples have also been noted on Møn, Lolland and Ærø (Maps 1–2). The figures have been discovered within the context of important centres of trade and exchange such as Ribe – a site which has yielded casting moulds used in their production (cf. Croix et al. 2020; Deckers et al. 2021) – but also within elite estates and places of intensified ritual activity like Tissø (e.g. Holst et al. 2017). Virtually all armed figures can be classified as stray finds or as items stemming from settlement contexts; not a single one has been identified in a grave, a fact significant in itself, but which also makes their interpretation more challenging compared to other types of zoomorphic and anthropomorphic artefacts with spiritual or religious connotations (e.g. Zeiten 1997; Jensen 2010; Helmbrecht 2011; Gardeła 2014, 2020).

Judging by the variety of stylistic features the figures display, we can hypothesise that some examples were unique and commissioned by and/or for particular individuals. There is little doubt, however, that within the currently known corpus are also specimens produced in larger numbers and for a broader clientele, as shown by the finds from Hedeby, a site which until now has yielded a total of six 'valkyrie figures', four of which are identical and have been made using the same mould (Figure 1). In addi-



Map 1. Map showing the distribution of single and double figurines in Europe. Map: Mads Lou Bendtsen.

Map 2. Map showing the distribution of single and double figurines in Denmark and Germany. The numbers refer to the find-catalogues in Tables 1 and 2. Map: Mads Lou Bendtsen.

Figure 1. Four double figurines from Hedeby. In the photos below three of the finds are stacked, which illustrates that they are identical. Photos by Leszek Gardeła.

tion to Hedeby and Ribe, other sites where more than one such figure has been noted are Havsmarken, Neble, and Tissø.

Generally, the finds that concern us here can be divided into two broad groups, the first showing a rider and a standing figure (Plates 1–4) and the second showing an armed standalone figure (Plates 5–6). We review them in detail here, and especially for the standalone figures, suggest a basic typology that we hope may be applicable as more finds are inevitably made.

Figure 2. Details of the double figurine from Tissø explained. Photo courtesy of Mads Dengsø Jessen. Image design by Leszek Gardeła.

RIDER AND STANDING FIGURE MOTIF

The miniatures portraying a rider and a standing figure (henceforth also referred to as 'double figures') are typically made of copper alloy, with only a few examples in silver (Tissø KN 855, Truso). Occasionally their surface is gilded (Bylaugh, Havsmarken, Stentinget, Tissø KN 855), implying that

at least some specimens were commissioned by and/or intended for wealthy and prominent people in Viking Age society.

At first glance, it may seem that in terms of their iconographic content all the figures are roughly the same, but closer analysis reveals that there is, in fact, some diversity within the group. The standard and recurring imagery shows a sword-wielding rider additionally armed with a spear positioned underneath the leg (Figure 2). Intriguingly, the rider has baggy trousers similar to the clothing characteristic of Eurasia and depicted on a number of Gotlandic picture stones (e.g. Thunmark-Nylén 2006:439; Oehrl 2019b). Usually on the right, facing the rider, is a standing figure clad in a trailing garment and equipped with a round shield which covers the mid part of the body. Since this figure has a horn or cup in the left hand (from the viewer's perspective), we may surmise that rather than being held the shield is actually suspended from the shoulder.

The rider's hair is always long and tied into a knot. The standing figure, by contrast, appears to have a wavy hairstyle or to be wearing a special kind of headgear, perhaps a helmet (Petersen 1992b:43) (Figure 3). The eyes of both figures tend to be large and pronounced but other facial features are rarely depicted – only in some cases can their mouths and noses be seen (e.g. Tissø KN 563).

A puzzling but probably significant detail visible on virtually all finds from this group and located directly underneath the horse's belly is a square-shaped object divided into nine (or occasionally twelve) fields of equal size. Over the last three decades, a range of different ideas have been offered to explain its meaning (e.g. Petersen 1992b; Gardeła 2015, 2022; Pentz 2017; Wamers 2017a). Today, using iconographic parallels and Old Norse textual sources, some scholars interpret it either as a special kind of cloth or a gaming board. Although opinions are still divided on what this motif actually represents, it has been argued that it is semantically associated the idea of shaping or altering human or divine fate. Whatever its precise meaning, the presence of nine fields supports this motif's special significance; in Old Norse belief the number nine is often linked to Óðinn and other individuals who perform magic and/or possess supernatural powers (e.g. Sołtysiak 2003; Simek 2006:232–233; Price 2014; Gardeła 2022).

Among the unique features visible only on a select few figures from this group is an additional round shield carried on the horse's back. In some cases, the shield is faintly marked by grooved and/or concentric lines, while in other instances it is shown more clearly – the ornamental pattern on its board either takes the form of swirls and dots (Tissø KN 855) or has a swirled, radial design resembling a wheel (Bylaugh). The decoration of the shield carried by the standing figure is also varied: the board is either completely plain, or has a radial motif, or a single grooved line

Figure 3. Heads, hairstyles and head-coverings of the double figurines. Image design by Leszek Gardeła.

Figure 4. Details of the round shields shown on the double figurines. Image design by Leszek Gardeła.

along the rim (Figure 4). Although the board decorations display considerable diversity, all shields have a prominent round boss in the centre which corresponds in terms of shape and size with the bosses commonly used in Viking Age Scandinavia (e.g. Rygh 1885; Petersen 1919). Interestingly, in some cases also the horses appear to have armour or caparison, perhaps imitating coverings made of textile or leather – this peculiar detail is clearly marked with rows of parallel lines on the figures from Bjergegård, Fausing, Havsmarken, Ribe, Sønder Tranders and Tissø (KN 855). Alternatively, as some scholars have suggested, this motif can be interpreted as a saddle (Petersen 1992b:43).

Even though the majority of artefacts portray the rider on the left and the standing figure on the right, two specimens from Fjelsted and Truso diverge from this pattern and show a mirror variant of the scene – the rider is on the right and the standing figure on the left. The schematised decoration of these two finds also distinguishes them from the rest of the corpus but whether this had any deeper meaning is difficult to gauge.

STANDALONE ARMED FEMALE FIGURES

While the corpus of double figures is fairly homogenous, with only some examples displaying rare or unique features, the corpus of standalone armed 'female' figures is remarkably diverse. Even though it appears that the overarching idea that guided their creation was to present a (probably) female shield bearer, close analysis shows that this idea was executed in a number of different ways. At the current stage of research, it possible to distinguish at least six different variants of this type of artefact (Figure 5):

- Variant 1: Standalone left- or right-facing (from the viewer's perspective) figure armed with a round shield and sword. The figure holds the shield by the handle
- Variant 2: Standalone left-facing figure armed with a round shield probably suspended from the shoulder. The figure holds a drinking horn in the left hand
- Variant 3: Standalone left-facing figure armed with a round shield and sword. The figure holds the shield by the handle but with the boss facing the body
- Variant 4: Standalone left-facing figure armed with a round shield and sword. The figure holds the shield by the boss and under the arm
- Variant 5: Standalone left-facing figure armed with a round shield and sword. The figure holds the shield under the arm and has a drinking horn in the hand
- Variant 6: Standalone right-facing figure armed with a round shield (held in the right hand), a sheathed sword and a spear

VARIANT 1
Standalone left- or right-facing figure
with a sword and a shield.
The shield is held by the handle

VARIANT 2
Standalone left-facing figure
with a shield and a horn

VARIANT 3
Standalone left-facing figure
with a sword and a shield.
The shield is held by the handle with
the boss facing the body

VARIANT 4
Standalone left-facing figure
with a sword and a shield.
The shield is held by the boss
and under the arm

VARIANT 5
Standalone left-facing figure
with a sword and a shield.
The shield held under the arm; horn in the hand

VARIANT 6
Standalone right-facing figure
with a sword, a shield and a spear

Figure 5. A typology of stand-alone figurines. Image design by Leszek Gardeła.

Most of the presently known standalone armed figures represent variants 3, 5 and 6. The specimens belonging to variants 1, 2 and 4 are the rarest in the corpus.

Despite their typological diversity, all standalone figures share common features in terms of their physique, clothing and armament. They are all clad in trailing garments and have wavy hairstyles or the same kind of head coverings, perhaps helmets. All of them are also equipped with round shields (albeit with different board decorations) with prominent bosses in the centre. The standard equipment combination is sword and shield, but figures representing variants 5 and 6 also have drinking horns and spears respectively. It is noteworthy that in addition to a sword and shield, the figures from Gl. Hviding and Rostock-Dierkow (Messal 2019), which represent variant 1, appear to also have scabbards, a detail most of the other figures lack (but see the figure from Vrejlev). The unique figure from Søllested – which we consider as being semantically linked to variant 1 – also has uncommon features; although it is reminiscent of figures representing variant 6, it carries a sword in the right hand and a shield in the left. Variant 2 figures are the only ones that do not have any offensive weapons and are equipped just with shields and drinking horns. Since these figures are shown facing left and hold the horns in the left hand, it is possible to surmise that rather than being carried, the shields are suspended from their shoulders.

Concerning the shields, it is worthy of note that the figures representing variants 1 and 6 are actually the only ones that hold both the shields and the swords in what may be regarded as a 'combat-ready position'. One unique figure from Lykkegård, which escapes classification due to its abraded and schematised decoration, may also be interpreted as carrying a sword and shield in a similar manner (Figure 6).

All remaining figures are portrayed holding or carrying their shields in somewhat awkward or unconventional ways (e.g. by the central boss or with the boss directed towards the body) and in manner that would have made these defensive weapons completely inefficient in a martial context. It appears that, in contrast to the 'battle-ready' figures of variants 1 and 6, the figures representing other variants display no intention of employing the shields in armed conflict. By way of analogy, some female figures portrayed on the Oseberg tapestry give the same impression – for instance, one of the women holds a sword by the blade rather than by the hilt, suggesting that she is about to place it somewhere or pass it on to somebody (Hougen 1940; Christensen & Nockert 2006; Mannering 2017:122–148; Gardeła 2021). If we decide to view this imagery as telling a story, with the figures having their own agency and performative capacity, one could speculate that at least some of them are not the actual owners of the weapons they carry. They may, for instance, be seen as participants in some kind of ritual, using weapons as 'theatrical props'.

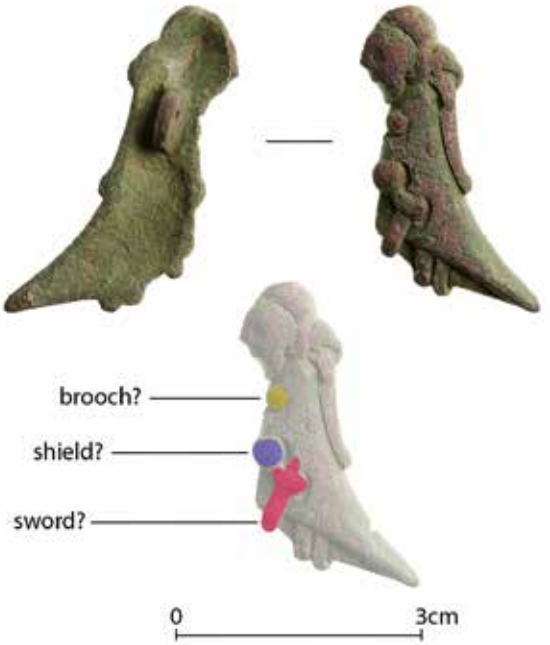


Figure 6. Unique stand-alone figurine from Lykkegård. Photo by Nationalmuseet. Image design by Leszek Gardeła.

THE HÅRBY FIGURINE

A small anthropomorphic stray find discovered in 2012 in Hårby on Fyn, Denmark, also falls into the broad category of armed 'female' figures, although it must be regarded as a special type (Henriksen & Petersen 2013; Price 2019:279–280). Being three-dimensional, this find is different from the figures discussed above in terms of both appearance and function. The area in which it was found has yielded dozens of other metal objects such as Arabic silver coins and bars of silver and gold, as well as several brooches together with lumps of melt, slag, bars, weights and worn-out jewellery. Such an array of finds in one context implies the existence of a workshop zone dating from the Late Germanic Iron Age, the Viking Age and the High Middle Ages.

The Hårby figurine is not complete, now having an overall length of 34mm and a weight of 13.4g (Figure 7). It is made of cast and gilded silver, with inlay of black niello. It has a socket, into which a circular shaft or pin must have been inserted; the socket is now broken and the lower legs and feet of the figure are missing (if it ever had them).

The ovate head is over-proportioned in relation to the body. Some facial details are seen, such as the wide-open eyes, slightly lentoid in shape and

Figure 7. The Hårby figurine. Photo by Arnold Mikkelsen/Nationalmuseet. Drawing after Henriksen & Petersen 2013. Used by kind permission.

defined by prominent encircling grooves. No pupils are seen. The flattened but well-defined nose is broad and only slightly raised. The incised mouth is straight above the slightly pointed chin. The figurine's hair is parted in the middle and neatly tied into a very long ponytail forming a loop at the nape. This loop shows wear patterns in its lower internal rim, indicating that something – possibly a chain or organic string – was suspended from it. Despite initial appearances, the Hårby figurine is not a pendant, but its actual function is unclear. As noted above, the fact that it has a socket may lead to the speculation that it was once part of a pin made of metal or organic material (wood, antler or bone) that has now deteriorated. This would explain the presence of the loop at the figurine's nape, through which a string could be drawn to keep the pin in place. A fastening system of this kind – involving an organic string – was fairly common in the Viking Age and was used in connection with various ornaments, especially ringed pins but also penannular brooches (see Fanning 1994). The idea that the Hårby figurine was originally part of a pin or some kind of utensil (e.g. tweezers) is further supported by the occurrence of pins and/or tweezers with anthropomorphic motifs in the Viking Age material record, especially at Birka, Sweden, but also in other localities, for instance on Vendsyssel and southern Jylland as well as on Bornholm (e.g. Arbman 1940: Taf. 170–173; Petersen 2020:222–223). The main difference between the Hårby find and these pins and tweezers, however, is that the latter terminate with only a human head rather than a 'complete' three-dimensional standing figure.

The Hårby figurine is rendered with rounded shoulders and possibly bare arms. Perhaps significantly in terms of its gender, the figure has no visible breasts and the chest area is flat. The right arm, with a smooth bracelet around the wrist, is bent 90 degrees and the hand grips a short sword with the point of the blade touching the upper part of the right cheek. The double-edged blade is now partly eroded away, but details of the sword grip are marked; thus, both the upper and lower guards are seen, while the pommel is indicated by a D-shaped groove. If one dares to deduce anything from the rendered shape of the pommel, Jan Petersen's (1919) types X, U, V or X come to mind, suggesting a tenth-century date. The figure's left hand is holding a circular shield, apparently not gilded but decorated with the usual swivel ornament, such as the one seen on several of the shields of the two-dimensional figures and on miniature shield pendants (Gardeła & Odebäck 2018).

The Hårby figure wears a long garment characteristic of many other representations of female beings in Viking art, but unlike most of these it seems not to be wearing necklaces or any other jewellery, perhaps with the exception of the possible bracelet or armring on the wrist – if this is not a kind of a cuff or sleeve and thus part of the dress. This particular detail brings to

mind some of the aforementioned two-dimensional figures that also seem to have armrings (i.e. the figure from Skodsebølle and its analogies). Seen *en face*, the tunic looks fairly plain with a deeply plunging V-neck.

Below the obliquely cut off tunic, with cut-outs under the arms very well adapted for fighting unlike the rest of the clothing, the Hårby figure wears what seems to be a skirt of pleated fabric. The reverse as well as the sides of the costume are lavishly decorated in niello with dots and patterns. Easily discernible are repeated knots in the shape of looped squares. The looped square – also known as the Gorgon knot – belongs to a class of interlaced symbols comprising triquetras, interlocked triangles and more. Such knots appear on a variety of objects from the archaeological record of the Viking Age, and of particular interest here is a small figure found at Tissø depicting a woman wearing a dress with a large triquetra (Wamers 2017b).

In Viking jewellery, knots can appear as standalone motifs, while knots on picture stones and tapestries often accompany other figures. On the Oseberg tapestries, for instance, several looped squares are seen alongside wagons, close to warriors and near a staff-bearing person (Vedeler 2019:42–43, 116). Scholars interpret knots, occasionally labelled *valknútr*, in various ways: as representing the fallen in battle, the giant Hrungnir's heart, or as a means of fastening or undoing the bindings of a god (see Hellers 2012 and Westcoat 2015 for the latest overviews). The knots could merely serve an ornamental purpose, but since they often seem to be deliberately placed – the Oseberg tapestry being the best example – it is more likely that the motif had a specific intention. Perhaps these symbols served as 'visual aids' that helped the viewers identify which or what kind of supernatural entity the artist had in mind? However, considering the abundance of knots in Viking art, there were probably even more meanings to them, and the significance of a given knot depended on a kind of contextual symbolism.

Overall, and if we accept the feminine identification that most scholars have attached to it, the Hårby figurine does not seem to depict a wealthy Viking Age woman, a *husfrue*. Neither is she shown as an armoured warrior, and unlike the two-dimensional figures she wears no helmet. Her uncovered head and the elaborate garment would probably be limitations on the battlefield, as would her long ponytail. The figure may be more symbolic than realistic, though some researchers have concluded that it supports the notion that women warriors might well have existed in the Viking Age (e.g. Wihlborg 2020:34).

Having now presented the different groups and variants of armed figures that make up the corpus, we can proceed to discuss their functional aspects. This will be followed by an investigation of the poses and gestures the figures display, and what these might have communicated to the people of the Viking Age.

ARMED FEMALE FIGURES – BROOCHES, PENDANTS OR MOUNTS?

When the first examples of double figures were discovered in Denmark and Germany in the 1990s, they were immediately regarded as brooches (e.g. Petersen 1992a, 1992b, 1996:236; Vierck 2002:24). However, they all lacked the typical needle and catch-plate mechanism on the reverse that would support this interpretation. Largely on account of their iconography – reminiscent of images on Gotlandic picture stones and other non-ferrous 'female' figures from Denmark and Sweden, typically shown holding horns – a special term for them was coined: 'valkyrie brooches/fibulas' (German *Walkürenfibeln*, Danish *Valkyriefibulaer*). After nearly twenty years, this term is still widely employed today, even though it authoritatively imposes an overarching explanation of the figures' function and meaning and leaves no room for alternative interpretations. 'Valkyrie brooch' (*Valkyriefibula*) is also the preferred label used in various *Danefæ*-related official documents and it is commonly encountered on internet pages and fora dedicated to metal detecting in Denmark (e.g. Detective People nd. & www.fibula.dk the Detektor Danmark nd).

Although the 'valkyrie' nomenclature has a fairly strong foothold in academia and among non-professional history aficionados, over the course of the last two decades several scholars have expressed their concerns about its appropriateness (e.g. Price 2006; Helmbrecht 2011; Gardeła 2015, 2018b, 2021). Strong arguments against the brooch interpretation were first presented in Michaela Helmbrecht's (2011) dissertation on late Iron Age anthropomorphic imagery. Having examined a substantial part of the find corpus, Helmbrecht convincingly demonstrated that all of the armed figures are actually devoid of the 'needle and catch-plate' mechanism typically seen on Viking Age brooches (Figure 8; see also Figure 2). Instead, the figures have two parallel loops on the reverse, implying that rather than serving as brooches, they were probably worn as pendants or appliques (Helmbrecht 2011:68).

The form and size of the figures also speaks in favour of the pendant interpretation. Although at first glance the presence of two loops on their reverse may seem awkward and impractical (most Viking Age pendants and presumed amulets have just one loop), this design probably results from the figures' considerable width (on average *c.* 3.5cm) – with only one loop on the reverse, they would not hang straight and would likely tilt to the side.

It is also possible that the figures served as appliqués or mounts, with the loops or eyelets passed through holes in textile or leather and then secured in place with a thread or thin wire – the same method as used for fastening many badges and fittings on military uniform fabrics today.

The standalone armed 'female' figures tend to have just one loop on the reverse, a feature which clearly suggests that – similarly to other Viking

Figure 8. The reverse of the figurine from Tissø (C 34048 / FB 1004) showing two parallel loops. Photo by Nationalmuseet.

Age miniatures – they were intended to be worn primarily as pendants. Regrettably, none have been found in a funerary context (perhaps, for some reason, they were inappropriate for burial?) and, as yet, they all come as stray finds. This significantly hampers our ability to determine who used them and if they were worn singly or suspended from a necklace together with other adornments and amulets.

The figures as a meaningful motif: a brief research history

The first detailed discussion of the iconography of the double armed figures was released in 1992 by Peter Vang Petersen. In trying to explain their meanings, Petersen situated them in the context of Old Norse textual descriptions of the *valkyrjur* (valkyries), supernatural female beings who collected the dead from the battlefield and served alcohol to the warriors gathered in Óðinn's hall. The textual *valkyrjur* have seen a multitude of readings over the decades, and now appear as a nexus of gendered violence in scholarly perceptions of the Viking mind and its problematic intersections with medieval Old Norse literature; for a selective array of interpretations from the past two decades, see Præstgaard Andersen 2002; Quinn 2007; Egeler 2011; Murphy 2013; Boyer 2014; Self 2014; Näsström 2016; Price 2019; Friðriksdóttir 2020. As we have seen, by the 1990s the idea that all kinds of non-ferrous miniature 'female' figures discovered in Denmark and Sweden (typically long haired, clad in trailing garments and carrying horns) depicted valkyries had already been firmly established in academia and this assertion paved the way to interpret their completely new and armed variants in a similar vein (Petersen 1992b:41).

In his work, Petersen (1992b:41) focused on two finds from Stentinget in Vendsyssel and Ribe in south-western Jylland. The former was discovered using a metal detector in 1989 while the latter was found during an excavation campaign in 1991. Both were cast from copper-alloy, but the Stentinget example had additional traces of gilding. Although nothing particular could be revealed about the immediate context of the find from Stentinget, the miniature from Ribe came from a spot that showed traces of craftworking, implying that it might have been deposited, discarded or lost inside or close to a workshop.

Although the two finds were not in the best condition, with some of their details completely abraded, it was clear to Petersen that they had corresponding imagery and represented the same type of artefact. He compared them to well-known motifs from the Gotlandic picture stones which show a rider being 'welcomed' by a standing figure holding a horn (Lindqvist 1941, 1942; Petersen 1992b:43; cf. Oehrl 2019a, 2019b), but noted that while the rider on the stones appears to be male, the rider on the miniature finds from Denmark might actually be female, as implied by the long hair tied into a knot. The potential implications of the fact that the rider on the metal finds is wearing baggy trousers were not discussed by Petersen, but one should note that the rider figure shown on the Stenkyrka, Lillbjärs III stone actually has the same kind of clothing (Figure 9).

In order to substantiate the valkyrie interpretation even further, Petersen (1992b:44–45) situated the finds from Ribe and Stentinget in the context of a poem known as *Darraðarljóð*, which is preserved in the thirteenth-century *Brennu-Njáls saga* (ch. 157). According to the saga, the words were sung by twelve supernatural women while they were weaving on a special loom constructed out of weapons, their actions determining the outcome of a faraway battle; in the text, several are referred to with valkyrie-names, and described using kennings for valkyries. The macabre effect of the whole scene was enhanced by the women's use of human entrails for warp and weft and severed heads as loomweights (for further details and discussion on *Darraðarljóð*, see Poole 1991; Price 2019:276–277, 319–320). As soon as their work was complete, the women tore the textile apart – each retaining the piece they were holding – and rode away on unsaddled horses, six to the north and six to the south. Drawing on the vivid scene from *Darraðarljóð*, Petersen arrived at the conclusion that the curious square-shaped motif with nine fields placed underneath the bellies of the horses depicted on the metal figures from Stentinget and Ribe represents the cloth from the poem (see Figure 2). He argued that this might indicate that the poem had been known to Ribe's inhabitants as early as the ninth century.

Another detailed and noteworthy investigation into the meaning-content of the double figures was published in 2002 by Hayo Vierck. Like Petersen

Figure 9. Picture stone from Stenkyrka, Lillbjärs III. Note the 'welcoming motif' with a rider and standing figure holding a horn. Photo by Leszek Gardeła.

before him, in his study of two such finds from Hedeby, Vierck (2002:24) acknowledged the striking similarity of the figures' imagery to the motifs depicted on the Gotlandic picture stones from Alskog, Tjängvide 1, När, Bosarve and Stenkyrka, Lillbjärs III which are conventionally interpreted as portrayals of fallen warriors who are being welcomed by valkyries in Valhöll (cf. Oehrl 2019b:25–26).

Rather than simply viewing the imagery of the figures in exactly the same way as other scholars tend to perceive the imagery of the Gotland stones, Vierck chose to investigate its deeper meaning and origin. His research led him to the realisation that the 'welcoming motif' is rooted in antiquity and that – due to its remarkable popularity and resonance among the Germanic social elite – it continued to find different material expressions all the way into the Middle Ages.

Some of the earliest variants of the rider and standing figure motif – reminiscent of the imagery of the 'valkyrie brooches' – are known from Roman gold medallions dated to the fourth century AD. The medallions are believed to portray the so-called *adventus* ceremony, essentially an act of triumphal reception of the lord that would take place on memorable occasions, for instance on his arrival at the city gates (e.g. Lundin 2006; Klose

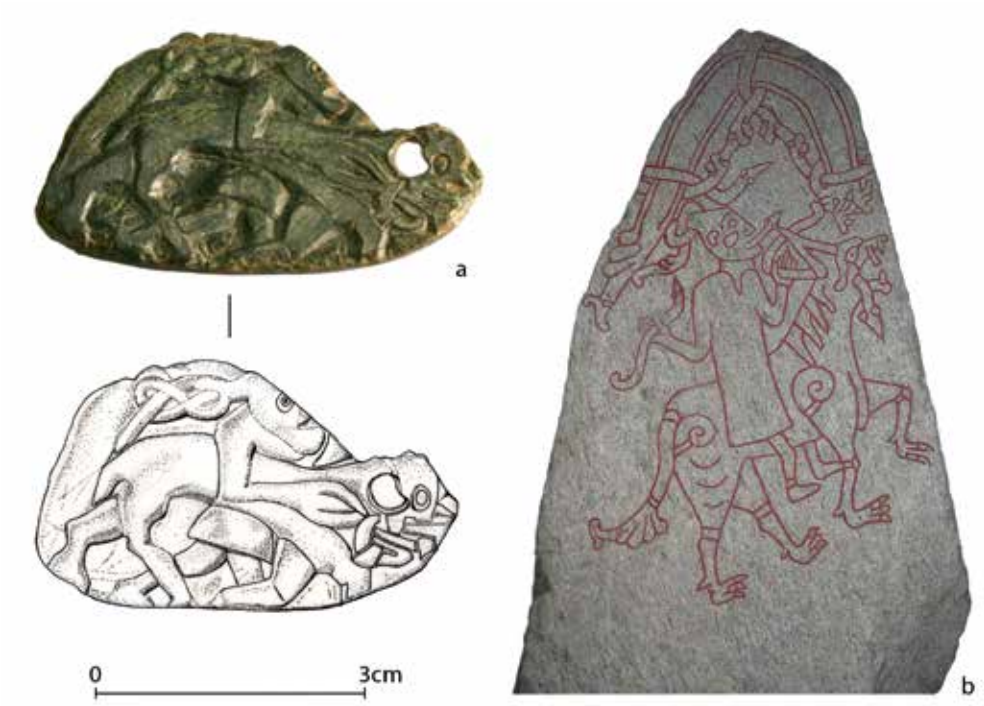


Figure 10. Figurine from Oswestry (a) and the Hunnestad stone (b). Image (a) from the Portable Antiquities Scheme database. Image (b) in the public domain.

2015; see also Oehrl 2019a:25–26). According to surviving accounts, these were grand public events when people – often dressed in white clothes and with wreaths on their heads – would pay their respect to the leader by carrying torches, burning incense, pouring aromatic oils and reciting poems. The splendour of the *adventus* tradition fired the imagination of rulers in later periods, especially in Merovingian and Carolingian times, who sought to emulate the grandeur of the Roman Empire. Imagery likely related to the *adventus* tradition also found a foothold in Migration Period Scandinavia, as seen in the motifs adorning high status items like the famous Gallehus horn from Jylland, Denmark or the medallion from Mauland, Jæren in Rogaland, Norway (Vierck 2002:27; Heizmann 2015). In the course of time, and partly as a result of the process of religious conversion, the antique *adventus* motif acquired new layers of meaning and began to be linked with Christian concepts, for instance referring to Christ's (or his heroes') triumph over evil.

It is not unlikely, as Vierck believed, that it is the prolonged echoes of the *adventus* tradition that have inspired Gotlandic and other Scandinavian artists to depict 'welcoming scenes' in their artwork. More recently, Andreas Lundin (2006:373) has argued that the motif might have reached Viking Age Gotland as a result of the island's multifaceted contacts with

aristocratic circles of Continental Germanic groups during the Vendel Period. He observes, however, that the portrayals of the motif on the Gotlandic picture stones could have been variously understood by the people of the time, depending on the socio-cultural background of the viewers. It is thus not unlikely that several competing interpretations of the imagery were actually in circulation.

Returning to the double figures, Vierck suggested that in this case the late antique *adventus* motif was adapted to reflect the Germanic mindset:

> Darin spiegelt sich deutlich der Bedeutungswandel hin zum germanisch interpretierten adventus-Schema wieder: Weist doch die neue Sinngebung der Frau als Psychopomp-Gestalt und damit in gewisser Weise als engelhafte Vertreterin des Haupt- und Totengottes Wodan/Odin eine weit größere Bedeutung als dem Reiter zu.
>
> (Vierck 2002:28)

> This clearly reflects the change in meaning towards the Germanic interpretation of the adventus scheme: after all, the new meaning of the woman as a psychopomp figure, and thus in a way as an angelic representative of the main god of the dead Wodan/Odin, is much more important than the rider.
>
> (Translation by Leszek Gardeła)

In this way, as Vierck (2002:30) argued further, the Viking Age figures would have become an expression of the continuity of Iron Age beliefs referring to Wodan on the one hand and would have testified to the prevalence of these beliefs at the time of religious conversion on the other.

It is noteworthy that in reading Vierck's ideas surrounding the figures from Hedeby, one may get the impression that he was quite convinced about the male gender of the rider. Likewise Sue Margeson (1997:17), who wrote about a similar find from Bylaugh in Norfolk, England, held the opinion that the rider was a male 'Viking warrior'. These readings come as no surprise in light of the state of research in Vierck's and Margeson's time, since at that point most of the hitherto known double figures were relatively poorly preserved and some of their fine details were illegible. To Vierck, therefore, the male gender of the rider made perfect sense because in this way the whole scene would have mirrored the antique iconographic archetypes with the *adventus* motif, while at the same time serving as an expression of the way any Viking warrior would have wanted to be welcomed in Valhöll.

As the corpus of armed figures began to grow, a number of well-preserved examples emerged with details that were much clearer than those of the finds earlier available to Vierck and Margeson. Some scholars began to question the former reading of the riders' gender. In 2013, for instance, James Graham-

Campbell (2013:163) interpreted one of the Tissø finds as depicting 'a shield-bearing woman [who] faces a female rider, with braided hair, armed with sword and spear'. He emphasised the point by referring to the rider as the standing figure's 'sister'. One year after the release of Graham-Campbell's study of Viking Age art, however, Jayne Carroll, Stephen Harrison and Gareth Williams returned to Vierck's and Margeson's idea, now suggesting that the scene portrays two figures of opposite gender, with the rider being male. In their view: 'this may well be an image of a Valkyrie welcoming a hero to Valhalla, the hall of the slain presided over by Odin' (Carroll et al. 2014:76).

It is interesting that while the gender of the standing figure is generally uncontested, researchers tend to have different opinions on the identity of the rider. This probably results from the fact that the hairstyle and clothing of the mounted figure can be ambiguous. Before attempting to interpret the entire scene, it is therefore necessary to discuss and deconstruct this ambiguity. As we shall demonstrate further below, the overall interpretation of the double figures may vary considerably depending on how one chooses to see the rider's gender.

TROUSERS AND LONG HAIR – DECONSTRUCTING AMBIGUOUS GENDER CHARACTERISTICS

In every example of the double figures in the current corpus, the rider has long hair tied into a knot. As noted above, in Scandinavian Viking Age art this feature is conventionally regarded as a typically female trait (e.g. Mannering 2017; Petersen 2020). Images of presumed women with long hair tied into the same kind of knot are well-attested on Gotlandic picture stones, especially from Alskog Tjängvide I (e.g. Lindqvist 1941, 1942; Thunmark-Nylén 2006:432–438; Oehrl 2019a, 2019b). Here, however, in contrast to the metal figures, the long-haired figures are *always* shown in long trailing garments. Other examples of long-haired anthropomorphic beings can be seen on the Oseberg tapestry where they appear with either domestic or military attributes (lamps, spears, swords, and shields) but again they are *always* clad in long, trailing dresses (Christensen & Nockert 2006; Hougen 2006; Mannering 2017:123–148; Vedeler 2019).

Is there any way we can be sure about the consistency of iconographic conventions that Viking Age artists adopted to portray women and men? Should long, knotted hair and trailing garments always be seen as characteristic of women, with loose hair and trousers being typical of men? And what are we to make of images in which someone is portrayed with a combination of these features? For instance, a figure with trousers and long hair tied into a double knot is depicted on an eighth- to eleventh-century Anglo-Scandinavian copper alloy pendant discovered in Oswestry, Shropshire, England (see the Portable Antiquities Scheme portal: Unique ID HESH-

4844A4). The rider on the Hunnestad stone, conventionally but not necessarily correctly interpreted as the giantess Hyrrokin, also wears trousers and has a hair knot (Figure 10).

One scholar in particular has addressed both hair and clothing conventions. In her 1999 thesis, Eva-Marie Göransson employed a form of curvature analysis to study the figures depicted on Gotland picture stones, concluding that the primary feminine signal was the S-shaped body line, formed in part by the sweeping profile of the clothing including the trailing garment and possible shawl. The curve could be accentuated by the depiction of an outstretched arm, sometimes holding an object. Interestingly, Göransson also observes that long hair can also be a masculine characteristic, but the 'ponytail' knot is purely feminine. Long, loose hair may be taken, she argues, as a potentially androgynous signal.

Another way to tackle these questions is to turn to Old Norse and other medieval texts pertaining to Viking Age Scandinavia. Poetry, sagas, eyewitness accounts, and chronicles have the capacity to provide fairly comprehensive information regarding social norms, behaviour and different ways of manifesting or performing identity and gender. In approaching these diverse texts, however, one should bear in mind that most of them were put to parchment several hundred years after the Viking Age they claim to describe. Although it is beyond doubt that authentic elements of pre-Christian customs, worldviews and beliefs have survived in some of these accounts, we must be wary of the fact that Old Norse texts – broadly understood – do not mirror the past in undistorted ways. It is often challenging to determine which of their elements are 'authentic' and which reflect the vivid imagination of medieval writers and their own or their patrons' agendas. This is not the place for a comprehensive discussion of archaeotextual problems or the arguable historical veracity of the sagas and poems, but several key works summarise the issues effectively – see Meulengracht Sørensen 1993; Heide & Bek-Pedersen eds. 2014; Larrington et al. 2016; Jakobsson & Jakobsson eds. 2017; Phelpstead 2020; Sävborg ed. 2022.

Overall, surviving Old Norse accounts lead us to believe that Scandinavian societies of the Viking Age essentially adhered to a binary gender model, and that people were generally regarded as either male or female (see, for example, Clark & Friðriksdóttir 2016). This does not mean that other genders did not exist, however, or that it was impossible to occasionally step in and out of the masculine or feminine role or sphere (e.g. Clover 1986, 1993; Mayburd 2014; Price 2020, ch. 5). Some such acts of transgression were associated with gods like Óðinn, Þórr or Loki, who cross-dressed or even transformed into women to gain certain advantages, with varying degrees of sanction on the part of those around them. In the human world, some practitioners of *seiðr* magic seem either to have shifted their gender

or through their actions drawn upon themselves severe social approbation (cf. the *ergi* complex: Meulengracht Sørensen 1983; Solli 2002; Dillmann 2006; Tolley 2009; Price 2019). Some of the most memorable literary episodes demonstrating social approaches to these issues are illustrated in *Laxdœla saga* (ch. 35) where one of the protagonists – a woman named Auðr – is seen wearing breeches. As we read in the saga:

> Slíkt víti á konum at skapa fyrir þat á sitt hóf sem karlmanni, ef han hefir höfuðsmátt svá mikla, at sjái geirvörtur hans berar, brautgangssök hvárttveggja.
>
> (Text after Sveinsson ed. 1943:96)

> If women go about dressed as men, they invite the same treatment as do men who wear shirts cut so low that the nipples of their breasts can be seen – both are grounds for divorce.
>
> (Translation after Kunz 1997:48)

Indeed, Auðr's husband soon divorces her on the grounds of her apparently inappropriate behaviour. It should be pointed out, however, that although in Norse society (as portrayed in the sagas) wearing breeches by a woman might have been regarded as controversial, the motivation that drove Auðr's husband was *not* really his wife's cross-dressing but the fact that he had fallen in love with another woman. It is possible that in the ninth to eleventh centuries, beyond the saga-reality, the wearing of trousers by women was nothing unusual, especially in areas where people rode horses on a regular basis and in view of the fact that Viking Age saddles were generally not suited to sitting sideways in a dress.

While in the world of Old Norse literature female cross-dressing could potentially lead to dire consequences, the wearing of long hair by men was clearly not a controversial issue in itself – it is mentioned in numerous sagas and also depicted in Viking Age iconography.

In light of the above, while generally portraying a society composed of people gendered as either men or women, Old Norse accounts and archaeological evidence give reasons to believe that acts of cross-dressing and gender transgression did occasionally occur (e.g. Back Danielsson 2007; Mayburd 2014; Price 2019; Gardeła 2021). Indeed, as we have seen, there are at least a couple of images besides the double figures that also seem to depict individuals in trousers who also have a complex, knotted hairstyle. Overall, the wearing of long hair by men was not seen as an offence, but rather seems to have reflected individual style and preferences. We should perhaps also revisit the idea that trousers were only worn by the male part of Norse society; for purely practical reasons women might have occasionally worn them too, especially when riding on horseback and when using a saddle.

In view of these observations, the gender of the rider shown on the double figures – depicted with long hair and baggy trousers – is inevitably a matter of interpretation. Depending on how we choose to perceive them, the reading of the whole scene of which they are part is bound to remain fluid. With this in mind, and referring to an array of different sources, we can approach the interpretation of the figures afresh.

Who, or what, are they? Two text-based case studies

An essential starting point in approaching the armed 'female' figures is the realisation that we do not know if they represent humans, divinities, or other types of being. The variations in the designs and motifs may well reflect a similarly broad spectrum of meanings, some of them functioning as a collectively-understood icon, while others might depict once-named individuals whose identities are lost to us. We should also not forget the other elements of the compositions. What is the meaning of the horses, their presence or absence? What about the varied equine caparisons? And what about the 'decorative' elements such as the grid-formed panels, some of which are found cast alone as pendants in their own right (Gardeła 2022)?

Surveying the corpus as a whole, and to the extent that we can be confident of the figures' gender, it is surely likely that at least some do depict valkyries. There are sensible reasons why this has been a default reading for so long, notwithstanding the unsupported generalisation of its application. If this is the case, we can consider what tableaux might be represented in the images: can episodes from known Norse myths be identified, or are we looking at something else entirely? As three scholars collaborating on this study, we find ourselves divided on the topic – LG and PP broadly support the interpretations below, NP is sceptical of them – but this discussion in itself can be healthy and productive. Here we present two detailed case studies relating to material from the written echoes of Norse mythology, as examples of the varying directions that such paths can take.

AN ARMED WOMAN ENTERING FÓLKVANGR?

The last two decades have witnessed increased academic and popular interest in the idea of 'the armed woman' in the Viking Age (e.g. Præstgaard Andersen 2002; Klos 2006; Gardeła 2013, 2018a, 2021). As we have seen, the recent reinterpretation of a lavishly equipped chamber grave Bj. 581 from Birka in Uppland, Sweden has ignited the discussion, suggesting that rather than being merely figures of myth and medieval fantasy, female warriors might have been present in the Viking Age sphere of war (Hedenstierna-Jonson et al. 2017). The armed figures that occupy us here have also been

included in contemporary debates surrounding warrior women in the Norse world, and while some scholars tend to perceive them as possible representations of the supernatural valkyries, others have expressed alternative views on their identity (e.g. Gardeła 2018a, 2018b, 2021; Price et al. 2019).

If we decide to see both the rider and the standing figure as female, then we have to explain how this reading affects the interpretation of the whole image. Assuming that Vierck (2002) is right in his claim that the crucial impulse that led to the creation of the double figures was the artistic appeal of the *adventus* motif (in its 'classic' form illustrating the welcoming of a male rider/ruler), we must still seek answers to the question of why Norse artists decided to show a female rider instead of a male one. One way to tackle this issue is to speculate that the figures were intended to portray the ideal female ruler who – like her male counterparts – is a guarantor of victory and prosperity. An alternative interpretative avenue is to situate this curious imagery in a mythological context and to find out if it resonates with motifs and ideas recorded in Old Norse literature.

If we choose to follow this latter path of inquiry, one possible way of reading the scene is to view it in light of a passage preserved in the Eddic poem *Grímnismál* (st. 14). In a series of gnomic stanzas demonstrating his profound knowledge about the shape of the mythological world, the protagonist of the poem, known as Grímnir (in fact Óðinn in disguise), describes a special otherworldly place known as Fólkvangr:

> Fólkvangr er inn níundi,
> en þar Freyia ræðr
> sessa kostom í sal.
> Hálfan val
> hon kýss hverian dag,
> en hálfan Óðinn á.
>
> Field of Battle is the ninth,
> and there Freyia determines
> the right rank of seating in the hall.
> Half of the slain
> she selects every day,
> and half Óðinn has.
> *Grímnismál* (14)
>
> (Text and translation after Dronke ed. 2011:115)

The information conveyed by this verse is admittedly vague, but it states that (apart from the well-known Valhöll) there existed a belief in an alternative otherworld for the slain. What the poem does not explain is how

exactly they were selected – in other words, which of the fallen were chosen to join Óðinn in Valhöll and which of them joined Freyja in Fólkvangr. Was this a completely random procedure, or did other factors come into play? Were all warriors male, or were women present among them? In discussing the identity and gender of those who joined Freyja in the afterlife, we can perhaps refer to another Old Norse source, namely *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* (Nordal 1933). In chapter 78 of the saga, Þorgerðr, the daughter of the main protagonist Egill, announces she will starve herself to death 'until she joins Freyja'. This unique passage clearly suggests that (at least in the mind of the saga-writer) Freyja's otherworldly domain was a place where women would go after they died, but it certainly does not imply that the women who went there were warriors. Regardless of the fact that Þorgerðr's father was a famed fighter and notwithstanding the fact that she herself grew up in a martial society, there is nothing to suggest that she herself was actively involved in warfare.

Despite the vagueness of the sources that are available to us, there are fairly good reasons to believe that Freyja was a goddess associated with the martial sphere. In *Brennu-Njáls saga* (ch. 78) she is even referred to as Valfreyja 'Freyja of the Slain' (Sveinsson 1954), though this may also be a valkyrie name. The very name of her otherworldly place – Fólkvangr – also has martial connotations and has been translated as 'field of the host' (Orchard 2002:114), 'people's field' or 'army field' (Lindow 2001:118; see also Simek 2006:87 for a similar reading). Writing in the thirteenth century and drawing heavily on Old Norse poetic lore in his *Prose Edda*, the Icelandic intellectual, writer, and lawspeaker Snorri Sturluson also mentions Fólkvangr and explicitly Freyja's intriguing association with warfare:

> Annat barn hans er Freyja. Hon er ágætust af ásynjum. Hon á þann bǿ á himnum er Fól<k>vang<r> heitir, ok hvar sem hon ríðr til vígs á hon hálfan val allan en hálfan Óðinn.
>
> His [Njǫrðr's] other child is Freyja. She is the most glorious of the Ásynjur. She has a dwelling in the heavens that is called Fólkvangr, and wherever she rides to battle she gets half of all the slain, and Óðinn gets the other half.
> *Gylfaginning* (19)
>
> (Text and translation after Pálsson & Faulkes 2012:42–43)

In light of these sources, one can pose a careful hypothesis that to some viewers the double figures might have portrayed a scene whereby Freyja welcomes another (warrior) woman in her otherworldly abode. In this case – if we were to follow the principle of interpreting the imagery with the *adventus* motif – the rider would have to represent the slain (warrior) woman

and the standing figure would have to represent the goddess. Admittedly, this reading relies on a coarsely stitched patchwork of texts and archaeological material and should thus be regarded as highly tentative.

ECHOES OF THE SIGURÐR LEGEND?

Linking the imagery of the metal figures with ideas of Fólkvangr is contentious. However, if we choose to interpret the rider as a man then this opens up interesting possibilities to illuminate the meaning content of the whole scene in light of extant Old Norse accounts. One of the most memorable episodes involving a male rider and an armed woman is known from the thirteenth-century *Völsunga saga* and the Eddic poem *Sigrdrífumál*. Both sources recount the story of Sigurðr fáfnisbáni, one of the most renowned heroes of the Norse medieval world, who is said to have slain the dragon Fáfnir and to have tragically fallen in love with a beautiful valkyrie named Brynhildr/Sigrdrífa. It is noteworthy that before Sigurðr's deeds were recorded in medieval manuscripts, they had been widely transmitted orally and represented in visual form on runestones, wooden church portals and portable items across continental Sweden, Gotland, Isle of Man, Norway and the wider Viking world (Wilson 2008; Kópar 2016), a fact that clearly attests to the existence of the Sigurðr story as early as the ninth and tenth centuries, a period which dovetails with the dating of the metal figures that concern us here.

According to *Völsunga saga* (ch. 27), on his way to meet the valkyrie Brynhildr, Sigurðr rode his horse Gráni and held a sword in his hand. The saga also reveals that he had golden spurs on his feet, perhaps serving as symbols of his prominent social status. Upon arrival at his destination, Sigurðr saw Brynhildr behind a wall of fire. He then leapt forward over the flames and noticed that she was wearing a coat of mail and a helmet and that she also held a sword in her hand. Several years ago, Jörn Staecker (2013) observed that the motifs in this scene match the details of the double figures – both the rider in the saga and the one shown on the metal finds is armed with a sword; in one case we can even spot what looks like a spur on their right foot (Tissø KN 855; see Figure 2). The details of the standing figure, however, diverge from the textual account – instead of a sword the figure is holding a beaker or horn, and it is unclear if 'she' is wearing a helmet or has some special kind of hairstyle. Further differences include the presence of a spear under the rider's leg and occasionally a shield on the horse's back; this kind of armament is not mentioned at all in *Völsunga saga*.

The Eddic poem *Sigrdrífumál* presents Sigurðr's meeting with the valkyrie (here appearing under the name Sigrdrífa) in a slightly different way and includes interesting details which *Völsunga saga* lacks and which deserve further exposition. As we read in the prose introduction to the poem:

> Sigurðr reið up á Hindarfiall oc stefndi suðr til Fraclanz. Á fiallino sá hann liós mikit, svá sem eldr brynni, oc liómaði af til himins. Enn er hann kom at, þá stóð þar scialdborg oc up ór merki. Sigurðr gecc í scialdborgina oc sá, at þar lá maðr oc svaf með ǫllom hervápnom. Hann tóc fyrst hiálminn af hǫfði hánom. Þá sá hann, at þat var kona. Brynian var fǫst, sem hon væri holdgróin. Þá reist hann með Gram frá hǫfuðsmátt bryniona í gognom niðr, oc svá út í gognom báðar ermar.
>
> Sigurðr rode up onto Hindarfell and headed south towards the land of the Franks. On the mountain he saw a great light, as if fire were burning, and gleaming up against the sky. And when he came there, there stood a shield-wall with a banner flying over it. Sigurðr went into the shield-wall and saw someone lying there asleep and fully armed. First he took off the helmet, then he saw that it was a woman. Her corslet was tight, as if it had grown into her flesh. So with his sword Gram he cut from the neck of the corslet downwards, and so along both the sleeves.
> *Sigrdrífumál* (introduction)
>
> (Text after Kuhn & Neckel eds. 1983:189; translation after Larrington ed. 2014:163 with minor amendments)

Here, instead of a wall of fire from *Völsunga saga* we have a wall of shields, and there is also mention of a banner raised over the spot where Sigrdrífa lay sleeping. We could perhaps speculate that the shield on the horse's back – as shown on some of the metal miniatures – refers to the shieldwall Sigurðr has passed and that the spear shown under the rider's leg is symbolic of the banner. Both the shield and the banner might have been deliberately depicted on the metal miniatures to indicate that Sigurðr has completed his quest and awoken Brynhildr/Sigrdrífa. As the second prose interpolation – following the first two stanzas of *Sigrdrífumál* – makes clear, after Sigurðr sat down and asked the woman for her name, 'she took a horn full of mead and gave him a memory drink' (Larrington 2014). In some regards, the horn motif thus matches the imagery of the double figures.

One key problem with using Old Norse textual sources to interpret archaeological finds is the challenges they pose in establishing the date of their original (oral) creation. While the available manuscripts come from post-Viking Age times (often the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries), the origins of the stories they record can date back several hundred years. Regardless of the considerable difficulties in dating these accounts, however, there are good reasons to believe that *Sigrdrífumál* is actually older than *Völsunga saga* and thus truer to the 'original' variants of the story – this is mainly due to the fact that the former is written in a very particular Eddic metre which in the course of time would have been less prone to change than text in

prose. As such, *Sigrdrífumál* might represent a record of the Sigurðr legend that is closer to the poems and tales that had been in oral circulation in the Viking Age. It is striking to note that the details of Sigurðr's meeting with the valkyrie – as portrayed in *Sigrdrífumál* – correspond with the iconography of the metal figures *more closely* than the details conveyed by *Völsunga saga*. Of course, one should always remain cautious when attempting such comparative and cross-disciplinary interpretations and acknowledge the fact that there are points in which archaeology and texts do not converge at all. The discrepancies between the texts and artefacts are by no means surprising, given the fact that they are chronologically and geographically removed from one another. Over the course of circa. 400 years that stand between their creation, the details of the Sigurðr story were likely subject to transformations and there was probably never one widely accepted '*Ur*-version' in existence. It is nevertheless remarkable that even though the two roughly contemporary accounts of the hero's meeting with Brynhild/Sigrdrífa are different in some regards, their core elements (like the fact that Sigurðr rode a horse and that Sigrdrífa was armed) remain consistent and unchanged.

A maze of possibilities

Female warriors and valkyries feature in both of the tentative readings proposed above. However, even if those identifications are correct, the ways in which such beings (and other supernatural entities) were understood in the actual late Iron Age may have been subtly different to how they have come down to us in later written sources. Examples of this can be seen in recent discussions around imagery associated with the miniature seated figures, such as those from Lejre and Boeslunde, which appear to mix feminine gender signals with 'Óðinnic' attributes such as one-eyed symbolism: do they represent Óðinn in women's clothing, an Óðinnic sorceress such as a *völva*, or someone/something else entirely (Christensen 2013; Borake 2021)? An important conclusion is that these kinds of associative signals, ultimately derived almost entirely from texts, are very much more complex and perhaps deliberately ambiguous than they might initially appear (cf. Arwill-Nordbladh 2013; Borake 2021; for detailed literature reviews of ocular symbolism and the debates around seated figurines, see Price & Mortimer 2014 and Price forthcoming).

In all these debates, there has been little discussion of the figures' possible activities as opposed to their identity and character (but see Deckers et al. 2021; Gardeła 2021). With a few arguable exceptions, it certainly does not appear that the armed figures are using their weapons in active combat. Are these ritual actors, rather than professional fighters? We may now even have

illustrative depictions of such activities, following the ground-breaking new work done on the Oseberg tapestries (Vedeler 2019; Price 2022). At least for the more standardised motifs, such as the rider-pedestrian pairs, there seems little doubt that they encode a situation, an idea, a symbol, or some other image that was widely recognised, presumably involving equally recognisable individuals – or else it was the scenario itself that was important rather than the participants.

In this light, one must question whether it is wise to even attempt matching the figures with textual descriptions (as above, we three authors remain divided on this). If we are seeking to identify the armed figures, it should be borne in mind that the material culture of the Viking Age preserves many aspects of more everyday spiritual belief and practice that seem to have left no mark at all in the medieval texts.

Other, stimulating possibilities can easily be generated. Why not images of some non-Christian equivalent of saints, a phenomenon that has been proposed for burials attracting a form of 'pilgrimage' (Herschend 2012)? Or perhaps some of them are *dísir* or ancestors, a different kind of role model for the living and, perhaps, the dead (for extensive exploration of ancestor identities, see Nordberg 2013; Laidoner 2020)? Such explanations do not necessarily have to be particularly complex. They could even be saying something personally significant but relatively mundane and actually rather simple – 'my husband is off with the raiders, may the valkyries protect him', for example, the equivalent of a good-luck charm or a St. Christopher medallion.

This raises the question of what the figures were for. How were they worn, or displayed? How were they meant to be seen? Was there a preferred audience, or one with privileged knowledge to understand the figures' meaning? What did they signify to a viewer, did they communicate something about the wearer? Did they mark membership of a community, a group, or perhaps a sect; did they indicate adherence to a specific set of beliefs? Or were they more like badges, even fashion? At present it is difficult to reliably make any associations between the figures and those who used them, because all have come from metal detector finds or early towns (Hedeby, Ribe) rather than burials, but we can perhaps extrapolate from other, related finds categories. Though the corpus is not large, a few of the three-dimensional so-called 'weapon dancer' horned figures, similar to those seen on male-related helmet plaques and Gotlandic picture stones, appear to be connected with female graves (Lanz 2021). Two of them depicted on the Oseberg tapestries are actually wearing the sweeping gown that is often seen as a feminine marker (they appear on Fragment 16; Price 2022). Were the armed 'women' *for* women?

The possible scenarios are so many that speculation becomes almost redundant, but some features of the images are worth repeating for clarity. They certainly include female signalling but combined with arguably ambiguous elements; and they are doubtlessly martial, whether literally or referentially.

We have long known that there is a sophisticated symbolic language behind much of Viking Age 'art', and that it could encode mythological references of various kinds (for the latest survey, see Graham-Campbell 2021; for samples of these ideas in practice, see e.g. Neiß 2004, 2006; Pentz 2018a). However, we know very much less about the detail of these messages and there seems little reason to believe that their repertoire of meaningful imagery was any less sophisticated, subtle and varied than our own. Not least, we do well to remember that the visual world of the Viking Age Scandinavians was very much one of images, whether carved, engraved, cast, or painted, on almost any suitable surface including human skin. This is the context within which the armed female figures were activated.

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Table 1. Catalogue of armed standing figures.

Denmark

No	Location	Material	Weapons and attributes
1.	Arnøje, Hellested Sogn, Stevns Herred, Præstø Amt	Copper alloy	Shield
2.	Boeslunde, Boeslunde Sogn, Sorø Amt	Copper alloy	Shield, sword, horn
3.	Fæsted, Sønder Hygum Sogn, Frøs Herred, Haderslev Amt	Copper alloy	Shield, sword(?), spear
4.	Galgebakken, Vrejlev Sogn, Børglum Herred, Hjørring Amt	Copper alloy	Shield, sword, scabbard
5.	Gammel Hviding, Hviding Sogn, Hviding Herred, Tønder Amt	Copper alloy	Shield, sword
6.	Havsmarken, Rise Sogn, Ærø Herred, Svendborg Amt	Copper alloy, gilded	Shield, spear
7.	Hindsholm, Bjerge Herred, Odense Amt	Copper alloy	Shield, horn?
8.	Højehyld, Gammeltoften, Ladby Kølstrup Sogn, Bjerge Herred, Odense Amt	Copper alloy	Shield, sword
9.	Katrinelund, Voel Sogn, Gjern Herred, Skanderborg Amt	Copper alloy, gilded	Shield
10.	Lem, Lem Sogn, Støvring Herred, Randers Amt	Copper alloy	Shield, sword
11.	Nørre Felding, Nørre Felding Sogn, Ringkøbing Amt	Copper alloy	Shield, sword, spear
12.	Ringsted Landsogn, Ringsted Herred, Sorø Amt	-	-
13.	Skodsebølle, Landet Sogn, Lollands Sønder Herred, Maribo Amt	Copper alloy	Shield, sword
14.	Skørping, Rebild, Skørping Sogn, Hellum Herred, Ålborg Amt	Copper alloy	Shield
15.	Stausø, Henne Sogn, Vester Horne Herred, Ribe Amt	Copper alloy	Shield
16.	Søllested, Søllested Sogn, Lollands Sønder Herred, Maribo Amt	Copper alloy	Shield, sword
17.	Sønderup, Sønderup Sogn, Slagelse Herred, Sorø amt	-	-
18.	Tissø, Store Fuglede Sogn, Ars Herred, Holbæk Amt	Silver, gilded, niello	Shield, horn?
19.	Torpet, Ringsted Landsogn, Ringsted Herred, Sorø Amt	Copper alloy	Shield
20.	Tyskerbakken, Hørning Nørre Sogn, Sønderhald Herred, Randers Amt	Copper alloy	Shield, sword
21.	Vestergård, Bjæverskov Sogn, Bjæverskov Herred, Præstø Amt	Copper alloy	Shield, sword
22.	Åle Sogn, Vrads Herred, Skanderborg Amt	Copper alloy	Shield, sword
23.	Unknown findspot	Copper alloy	Shield
24.	Unknown findspot, Jylland	Copper alloy	Shield, sword, horn

Size	Museum number	References
Height: 3.6cm	-	Unpublished
-	-	Unpublished
Height: 3.2cm	HBV 1498 Fæsted I, X180	Unpublished
Height: 3.82cm	C37110	Pedersen 2009:296; Helmbrecht 2011:127–128; Varberg 2011:82; Williams 2013:79; Petersen 2016:43, 2020:221
Height: 4.4cm Width: 1.8cm	C37303	Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 20
Height: 3.2cm Width: 2.5cm	C57379	Unpublished
-	-	Unpublished
Height: 3.6cm Width: 1.7cm	C42796	Thøgersen 2015:17; Feveile 2018:41, 46; Refshauge Beck et al. 2019:25–26; Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 22
Height: 3.1cm Width: 2.2cm	C52654	Unpublished
Height: 4.1cm Width: 1.7cm	C52193	Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 25
-	-	Unpublished
-	-	Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 26
Height: 4.19cm	C40308	Pentz 2018b:93; Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 23
-	DIME 33651	Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 27–28
Length: 2.7cm Width: 1.6cm	C53056	Unpublished
-	-	Unpublished
-	-	Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 29
Length: 2.7cm	C32167 / KN 1591	Jørgensen 2005:138; Helmbrecht 2011:127–128; Meents 2017:160
Height: 3.0cm Width: 1.8cm	C56175	Unpublished
Height: 3.13cm Width: 2.11cm	C45178	Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 21
Length: 2.08cm	C49418	Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 19
Height: 1.9cm Length: 1.8cm	C53126	Unpublished
-	-	Unpublished
-	-	Unpublished

Special type / three dimensional single figure / Denmark

No	Location	Material	Weapons and attributes
25.	Tjørnehøj, Hårby Sogn, Båg Herred, Odense Amt	Copper alloy, gilded	Shield, sword

Germany

No	Location	Material	Weapons and attributes
26.	Hedeby, Kr. Schleswig-Holstein	Copper alloy	Shield, sword(?)
27.	Rostock-Dierkow, Kr. Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	Silver	Shield, sword, scabbard

United Kingdom

No	Location	Material	Weapons and attributes
28.	Cawthorpe, Lincolnshire	Copper alloy, gilded	Spear, shield, sheathed sword
29.	Exton, Rutland, East Midlands	Copper alloy, gilded	Spear, shield, sheathed sword
30.	Wickham Market, Suffolk	Silver, niello	Shield, sword
31.	Unknown location near York	-	-

Size	Museum number	References
Length: 3,4cm	C39227	Henriksen & Petersen 2013; Henriksen 2020:39, 41; Petersen 2020:221

Size	Museum number	References
-	Hb 2003/4898	Helmbrecht 2011:127–128, 447; Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 32
-	-	Messal 2019

Size	Museum number	References
-	-	Leahy & Paterson 2001:192; Hall 2007:107; Helmbrecht 2011:128; Gardeła 2012:147–148; Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 34
Length: 3,5cm Width: 2,3cm	PAS Unique ID: LEIC-C58A13	Deckers et al. 2021: Cat. no 35
Length: 4cm	PAS Unique ID: SF9305	Helmbrecht 2011:127–128; Williams 2013:79; Pedersen 2014:248; Hines 2016:221–222; Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 36
-	-	Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 37

Table 2. Catalogue of double figures.

Denmark

No.	Location	Material	Weapons and attributes	
			Standing figure	Rider
1.	Allelev, Lyngby Sogn, Djurs Sønder Herred, Randers Amt	Copper alloy	Broken	Spear, sword
2.	Busenevej, Magleby Sogn, Mønbo Herred, Præstø Amt	Copper alloy	Shield, horn	Spear, sword, shield(?)
3.	Engløkken, Agedrup Sogn, Bjerge Herred, Odense Amt	Copper alloy, gilded	Shield, horn	Spear, sword
4.	Fausing Sogn, Sønderhald Herred, Randers Amt	Silver?	Shield, horn	Spear, sword
5.	Fjelsted, Mariager Sogn, Onsild Herred, Randers Amt	Copper alloy	Shield, horn, sword	-
6.	Fjelsted, Mariager Sogn, Onslid Herred, Randers Amt	Copper alloy	Shield	Broken
7.	Flakkebjerg Sogn, Vester Flakkebjerg Herred, Sorø Amt	-	-	-
8.	Gudme Sogn, Gudme Herred, Svendborg Amt	-	-	-
9.	Gudum N., Gudum Sogn, Slagelse Herred, Sorø Amt	Copper alloy	Broken	Corroded
10.	Hald Hovedgård, Dollerup Sogn, Viborg Amt	Copper alloy	Shield	Spear, sword, shield(?)
11.	Havsmarken, Rise Sogn, Ærø Herred, Svendborg Amt	Copper alloy, gilded	Broken	Corroded
12.	Havsmarken, Rise Sogn, Ærø Herred, Svendborg Amt	Silver, gilded	Broken	Spear, sword
13.	Hindsholm, Stubberup Sogn, Bjerge Herred, Odense Amt	Copper alloy	Shield, horn	Spear, sword
14.	Hjadstrup, Hjadstrup Sogn, Lunde Herred, Odense Amt	Copper alloy	Broken	Spear, sword
15.	Neble, Boeslunde Sogn, Slagelse Herred, Sorø Amt	Copper alloy	Shield	Spear, sword
16.	Neble, Boeslunde Sogn, Slagelse Herred, Sorø Amt	Copper alloy	Shield	Spear, sword
17.	Nonnebakken, Odense Sogn, Odense Herred, Odense Amt	Copper alloy	Shield, helmet(?)	Spear, sword, shield
18.	Ribe, Ribe Købstads Sogn, Ribe Herred, Ribe Amt	Copper alloy	Shield	Spear, sword
19.	Ribe, Ribe Købstads Sogn, Ribe Herred, Ribe Amt	Copper alloy	Shield	Spear, sword
20.	Rynkeby, Rynkeby Sogn, Bjerge Herred, Odense Amt	Copper alloy	Shield, horn	Spear, sword

Size	Museum Number	References
Height: 2.5cm Length: 1.6cm	C57621	Unpublished
Height: 2.00cm Length: 2.90cm	C49589	Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 51
Height: 1.87cm Length: 2.63cm	C42972	Runge & Henriksen 2018:38; Refshauge Beck et al. 2019:97, 99; Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 38
-	-	Unpublished
Height: 1.85cm Length: 2.3cm	C55496	Unpublished
Height: 1.9cm Length: 1.6cm	C57764	Unpublished
-	-	Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 44
-	-	Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 46
Height: 2.40cm Length: 2.55cm	C44496	Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 47
Height: 2.0cm Length: 2.8cm	C42194	Gardeła 2016:105; Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 43
Length: 2.52cm	C37408	Unpublished
Height: 2.48cm Length: 2.47cm	C39145	Agersø 2020:84
-	DIME ID: 8738	Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 41–42
-	-	Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 49
Height: 2.00cm Length: 2.80cm	C44739	Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 40
Height: 2.40cm Length: 3.70cm	C45055	Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 39
-	-	Gardeła 2016:105; Henriksen 2016:12, 18, 28–30; Runge et al. 2016:6–7; Runge & Henriksen 2018:38, 40; Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 53
-	-	Petersen 1992b:41–46; Feveile 2006, 2013:35, 58; Helmbrecht 2011:69; Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 54–55
Height: 2.2cm Length: 3.5cm	ASR 2165	Petersen 1992b:41–46; Feveile 2006, 2013:35, 58; Helmbrecht 2011:69; Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 54–55
-	-	Hansen 2017:176; Runge & Henriksen 2018:38; Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 58

No.	Location	Material	Weapons and attributes	
			Standing figure	Rider
21.	Sankt Thøgers Kirke, Gram Sogn, Gram Herred, Haderslev Amt	Copper alloy	Shield, horn(?)	Spear, sword
22.	Stentinget, Hellevad Sogn, Dronninglund Herred, Hjørring Amt	Copper alloy, gilded	Shield, helmet(?)	Spear, sword
23.	Store Rørbæk, Rørbæk Sogn, Gislum Herred, Ålborg Amt	Copper alloy with traces of tinning	Shield, horn	Sword
24.	Sønder Tranders, Sønder Tranders Sogn, Fleskum Herred, Ålborg Amt	Copper alloy, with traces of tinning	Shield, horn	Spear, sword, shield(?)
25.	Tissø, Store Fuglede Sogn, Ars Herred, Holbæk Amt	Copper alloy	Shield, horn, helmet(?)	Spear, sword, shield
26.	Tissø, Store Fuglede Sogn, Ars Herred, Holbæk Amt	Copper alloy	Broken	Spear, sword, shield
27.	Tissø, Store Fuglede Sogn, Ars Herred, Holbæk Amt	Silver, gilded	Shield, helmet(?)	Spear, sword, shield(?)
28.	Tissø, Store Fuglede Sogn, Ars Herred, Holbæk Amt	Copper alloy	Shield, horn	Spear, sword, shield(?)
29.	Tygstrup, Vestervig Sogn, Refs Herred, Thisted Amt	Copper alloy	Shield, horn	Spear, sword
30.	Vindeby, Vindeby Sogn, Lollands Nørre Herred, Maribo Amt	Copper alloy with traces of tinning	Shield, horn	Spear, sword, shield(?)
31.	Voel Sogn, Gjern Herred, Skanderborg Amt	Copper alloy	-	Broken
32.	Øster Lindet, Øster Lindet Sogn, Frøs Herred, Haderslev Amt	Copper alloy	Shield, horn	Spear, sword(?)
33.	Ågårdsmark, Kettrup Sogn, Vester Han Herred, Thisted Amt	Copper alloy	Shield	Spear, sword(?)
34.	Unknown findspot	Copper alloy	Shield	Spear, sword
35.	Unknown findspot	Copper alloy	Broken	Sword, spear(?)

Size	Museum Number	References
Height: 2.49cm Length: 3.5cm	C32905	Petersen 1996:236; Helmbrecht 2011:439; Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 45
Height: 2.2cm Length: 3.3cm	C31438 / STT/119	Petersen 1992a:217; Petersen 2005:77; Nilsson 1992:7; Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 48
Height: 1.9cm Length: 3.0cm	C56198	Deckers et al. 2021
Height: - Length: 3.31cm	C42888	Gardeła 2018:405; Christiansen 2018:116–117; Pentz 2018a:18; Refshauge Beck et al. 2019:170–171; Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 60
Height: - Length: 3.5cm	C34048 / FB 1004	Petersen 1996:236, 2010:136, 2016:43, 2020:220; Pedersen 2009:296, 2014:247–248; Jørgensen 2005:137–138; Helmbrecht 2011:69; Graham-Campbell 2013:163; Price 2013:116; Williams 2013:79; Wamers 2017a; Wamers 2017c; Wamers 2017d; Meents 2017:160; Fabriciussen Nielsen 2020:263–264; Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 61–65
Height: - Length: 2.6cm	KN563	Petersen 1996:236, 2010:136, 2016:43, 2020:220; Pedersen 2009:296, 2014:247–248; Jørgensen 2005:137–138; Helmbrecht 2011:69; Graham-Campbell 2013:163; Price 2013:116; Williams 2013:79; Wamers 2017a; Wamers 2017c; Wamers 2017d; Meents 2017:160; Fabriciussen Nielsen 2020:263–264; Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 61–65
Height: 2.5cm Length: 3.5cm	C32167 / KN855	Petersen 1996:236, 2010:136, 2016:43, 2020:220; Pedersen 2009:296, 2014:247–248; Jørgensen 2005:137–138; Helmbrecht 2011:69; Graham-Campbell 2013:163; Price 2013:116; Williams 2013:79; Wamers 2017a; Wamers 2017c; Wamers 2017d; Meents 2017:160; Fabriciussen Nielsen 2020:263–264; Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 61–65
Height: 2.12cm Length: 3.10cm	C2167 / KN1828	Petersen 1996:236, 2010:136, 2016:43, 2020:220; Pedersen 2009:296, 2014:247–248; Jørgensen 2005:137–138; Helmbrecht 2011:69; Graham-Campbell 2013:163; Price 2013:116; Williams 2013:79; Wamers 2017a; Wamers 2017c; Wamers 2017d; Meents 2017:160; Fabriciussen Nielsen 2020:263–264; Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 61–65
Height: 2.2cm Length: 2.7cm	C46607	Gardeła 2016:105; Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 66–67
Height: 2.1cm Length: 3.0cm	C55028	Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 68
Height: 2,3cm Length: 1,7cm	C52640	Unpublished
-	-	Pers. comm Lars Grundvad
Height: 2.4cm Length: 3.4cm	C46937	Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 50
-	-	Unpublished
-	-	Unpublished

Germany

No.	Location	Material	Weapons and attributes	
			Standing figure	Rider
36.	Dannewerk	Copper alloy	-	-
37.	Ellingstedt, Kr. Schleswig-Holstein	Copper alloy	Shield	Corroded
38.	Füsing, Schaalby, Kr. Schleswig-Holstein	Copper alloy	-	-
39.	Grossenwiehe, Kr. Schleswig-Holstein	Copper alloy	-	-
40.	Hedeby, Schleswig-Flensburg-Busdorf, Kr. Schleswig-Holstein	Copper alloy	Shield(?), horn(?) Corroded	Shield Corroded
41.	Hedeby, Schleswig-Flensburg-Busdorf, Kr. Schleswig-Holstein	Copper alloy	Shield, horn(?)	Spear, sword, shield(?)
42.	Hedeby, Schleswig-Flensburg-Busdorf, Kr. Schleswig-Holstein	Copper alloy	Shield, horn(?)	Spear, sword, shield(?)
43.	Hedeby, Schleswig-Flensburg-Busdorf, Kr. Schleswig-Holstein	Copper alloy	Shield, horn(?)	Spear, Corroded and broken
44.	Hedeby, Schleswig-Flensburg-Busdorf, Kr. Schleswig-Holstein	Copper alloy	Shield, horn	Spear, sword
45.	Hedeby, Schleswig-Flensburg-Busdorf, Kr. Schleswig-Holstein	Copper alloy	Shield, horn	Spear, sword
46.	Selk, Kr. Schleswig-Holstein	Copper alloy	-	-

Poland

No.	Location	Material	Weapons and attributes	
			Standing figure	Rider
47.	Truso, Janów Pomorski, woj. warmińsko-mazurskie	Silver	Shield, sheathed sword(?), helmet or hat	Broken

United Kingdom

No.	Location	Material	Weapons and attributes	
			Standing figure	Rider
48.	Bylaugh, Norfolk	Copper alloy	Shield, helmet or hat	Spear, shield
49.	Fulmodstone, Norfolk	-	-	-
50.	Peterborough, Cambridgeshire	Copper alloy	Shield	Spear, sword
51.	Winterton, Lincolnshire	Copper alloy	Shield	Spear, sword(?), shield(?)

We have excluded the find from Parham, Suffolk (PAS SF10754; Deckers et al. 2021: Cat. no 82), as we believe it represents a different type of object.

Size	Museum Number	References
-	-	Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 71
-	-	Majchczack 2016:96–97; Siegloff & Wolpert 2018:184; Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 72
-	-	Dobat 2010; Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 73
-	-	Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 74
Height: 2.5cm Length: 3.8cm	Hb 2003/3783	Price 2002:337; Vierck 2002:20, 28; Maixner 2010:109; Helmbrecht 2011:68–69; Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 75–77
Height: 2.1cm Length: 3.1cm	Hb 2004/9178	Price 2002:337; Vierck 2002:20, 28; Maixner 2010:109; Helmbrecht 2011:68–69; Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 75–77
Height: 2.1cm Length: 2.9cm	Hb 2006/12406	Price 2002:337; Vierck 2002:20, 28; Maixner 2010:109; Helmbrecht 2011:68–69; Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 75–77
Height: 2.2cm Length: 2.3cm	Hb 2006/13629	Price 2002:337; Vierck 2002:20, 28; Maixner 2010:109; Helmbrecht 2011:68–69; Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 75–77
Height: 2.2cm Length: 3.1cm	Hb 2015/15137 and SH2015-160.18	Price 2002:337; Vierck 2002:20, 28; Maixner 2010:109; Helmbrecht 2011:68–69; Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 75–77
-	-	Price 2002:337; Vierck 2002:20, 28; Maixner 2010:109; Helmbrecht 2011:68–69; Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 75–77
-	-	Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 78

Size	Museum Number	References
Height: 2.2cm Length: 3.0cm	MAH 1578/2008	Trupinda 2004:97; Jagodziński 2010:106, 2015:93; Helmbrecht 2011:71; Gardeła 2014:78–81; Refshauge Beck et al. 2019:97, 99; Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 79

Size	Museum Number	References
-	-	Jagodziński 2010:106; Petersen 2010:76–78; Helmbrecht 2011:68; Refshauge Beck et al. 2019:97, 99; Deckers et al. 2021: Cat. no 80
-	-	Margeson 1997; Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 81
Height: 2.35cm Length: 3.35cm	1988,0407.1	Pestell 2013:243; Carroll et al. 2014:76; Deckers et al. 2021:Cat. no 83
-	-	Pestell 2013; Gardeła 2018:405; Pentz 2018a:18; Deckers et al. 2021:84

Plate 1. Double figurines: Busenevej photo by Nationalmuseet; Bylaugh photo courtesy of Norwich Castle Museum; Engløkken photo after Refshauge Beck et al. 2019: 99; Fausing photo courtesy of Henrik Brinch Christiansen; Fjelsted photo courtesy of Rasmus Gregersen; Gudum photo by Nationalmuseet; Hald Hovedgaard and Havsmarken photo from Detecting People nd. Image design by Leszek Gardeła.

Plate 2. Double figurines: Hedeby photo by Leszek Gardeła; Hindsholm photo courtesy of Henrik Brinch Christiansen; Hindsholm; Hjadstrup from Amatørarkæologi på Nordfyn; Neble photos by Nationalmuseet; Nonnebakken photo after Henriksen 2016: 12, edited by Leszek Gardeła; Øster Lindet photo courtesy of Lars Grundvad/Museet Sønderskov; Peterborough photo courtesy of the British Museum. Image design by Leszek Gardeła.

Plate 3. Double figurines: Ribe photo by Leszek Gardeła; Sankt Thøgers Kirke photo by Nationalmuseet; Stentinget photo by Nationalmuseet; Store Rørbæk photo by Nationalmuseet; Sønder Tranders photo by Nationalmuseet; Tissø photos by Nationalmuseet. Image design by Leszek Gardeła.

Plate 4. Double figurines: Tissø photo by Nationalmuseet; Tygstrup photo by Nationalmuseet; Truso photo by Leszek Gardeła; Vindeby photo by Nationalmuseet; Ågårdsmark photo from DIME; Unknown findspot photo from Detektor Danmark; Unknown findspot photo from Detecting People nd. Image design by Leszek Gardeła.


Rostock-Dierkow (no. 27)


Vestergård (no. 20)


Gammel Hviding (no. 5)


Søllested (no. 16)


Tissø (no. 18)


Hindsholm (no. 7)


Arnøje (no. 1)


Højehyld (no. 8)


Skodsebølle (no. 13)


Wickham Market (no. 30)


Torpet (no. 19)


Unknown findspot (no. 23)


Stausø (no. 15)


Galgebakken (no. 4)


Lem (no. 10)


Tyskerbakken (no. 20)


Unknown findspot (no. 24)


Åle Sogn (no. 22)


Boeslunde (no. 2)

< Plate 5. Single figurines: Rostock-Dierkow photo courtesy of Sebastian Messal; Vestergård photo by Nationalmuseet; Gammel Hviding photo by Leszek Gardeła; Søllested photo by Nationalmuseet; Tissø photo by Nationalmuseet; Hindsholm photo by Nationalmuseet; Arnøje photo courtesy of Simon Tinko Madsen; Højehyld photo by Nationalmuseet; Skodsebølle photo by Nationalmuseet; Wickham Market photo from the Portable Antiquities Scheme; Torpet photo by Nationalmuseet; Unknown findspot photo by Nationalmuseet; Stausø photo by Nationalmuseet; Galgebakken photo by Leszek Gardeła; Lem photo by Nationalmuseet; Tyskerbakken photo by Nationalmuseet; Unknown findspot photo by Nationalmuseet; Åle Sogn photo by Nationalmuseet; Boeslunde photo by Nationalmuseet. Image design by Leszek Gardeła.

Plate 6. Single figurines: Cawthorpe photo after Hall 2007. Exton photo after the Portable Antiquities Scheme database. Fæsted photo courtesy of Nick Schaadt/Museet Sønderskov. Nørre Felding photo courtesy of Henry Lauritsen. Image design by Leszek Gardeła.