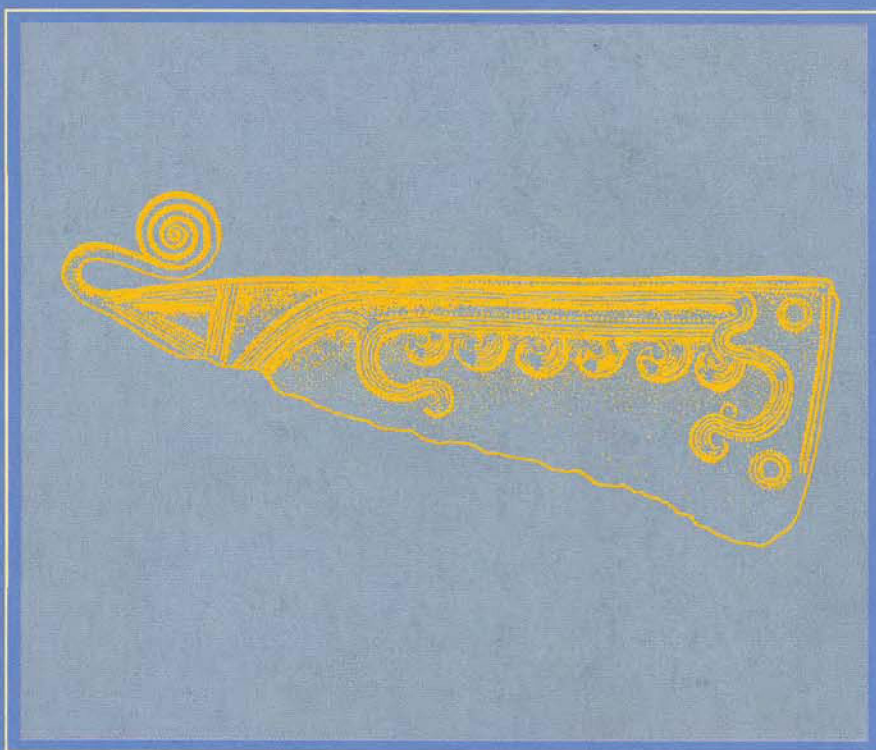


# *in Situ*

Västsvensk Arkeologisk Tidskrift



2003

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Institutionen för arkeologi  
Göteborgs universitet  
Box 200  
405 30 Göteborg  
Tel: 031 773 46 14  
Fax: 031 773 5182  
E-mail: [info@archaeology.gu.se](mailto:info@archaeology.gu.se)

**Ansvarig utgivare**  
Kristian Kristiansen

**Redaktion**  
Åsa Gillberg  
Håkan Karlsson  
Kristian Kristiansen

**Layout**  
Håkan Andréasson

**Framsida**  
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nedvända skeppsperspektivet på  
bronsföremål från yngre bronsåldern.  
Se vidare artikel av Joakim Goldhahn.

**Tryck**  
Billes AB, Mölndal

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## Från redaktionen

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*in Situ* har fått nya redaktörer, och som vid flertalet redaktionsbyten leder detta till att nya ambitioner och målsättningar testas, samtidigt som de tidigare volymerna av tidskriften analyseras. I vårt fall kommer redaktionsbytet att leda till vissa förändringar, där somligt kommer att vara sig likt, som att vi fortfarande vill försöka spegla frågor och verksamheter som berör västsvenska arkeologer, medan annat kommer att förändras, som att de flesta nummer i framtiden får ett mer tematiskt innehåll. Det kommer också att ges utrymme till debatt och recensioner. Dessa ambitioner har inte förverkligats i detta nummer då vi ”ärvt” innehållet efter föregående redaktion. 2003 års volym behåller därför sin tidigare karaktär.

Några analyserande kommentarer kan ändå vara på plats. Fram till utgåvan 2002 har 74% av författarna varit män, en trend som förstärks genom detta nummer där samtliga artiklar är skrivna av män. I fortsättningen kommer redaktionen aktivt att försöka få fördelningen mellan manliga och kvinnliga författare jämnare. Vid en hastig översyn över författarnas institutionstillhörighet kan konstateras att nästan 70% har sin hemvist vid universitet och/eller Riksantikvarieämbetet. Detta innebär att redaktionen i framtiden gärna ser bidrag från regionens museer och länsstyrelser.

Vid valet av teman kommer redaktionen i fortsättningen att välja dessa på ett sådant sätt att personer verksamma vid olika institutioner i regionen kan ha något att tillföra. Det är vår förhoppning att de ambitioner och målsättningar redaktionen har med *in Situ* i framtiden skall leda till att tidskriften fortsätter att utgöra ett levande forum inom den västsvenska arkeologin.

Åsa Gillberg

Håkan Karlsson



# Points of Interest and a Point of View

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*Lou Schmitt*

## Abstract

This paper provides for a number of insights that attempt to move beyond regional perspectives. In doing so, the term “culture”, for example, is briefly touched upon along with tanged points that have been found on the west coast of Sweden. In addition, “long range” seasonal rounds and eventual points of departure on the Continent have been taken into account.

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## Introduction

Since about 1910 the presence of tanged points in the archaeological record of the west coast of Sweden has posed a research quandary that - even today - leaves many questions to be answered. Although, during recent years, the door to the Paleolithic domain has become ajar, it is only with the utmost of precaution that we may “meander” along an avenue of approach that - in the end - will most likely lead us to the North European Plain.

Fundamental to “meanders” of inquiry into the Late Paleolithic, or for that matter - early Mesolithic, is a basic knowledge of “who” is “who” (typologically) on the North European Plain between 15,000 - 10,000 bp. However, in this paper, we will not depart on a journey that includes such an itinerary. Instead, we will discuss some of the “potholes” in our avenue of approach and various “detours” around the same.

## Research constraints

Inadvertently, a common source of research constraint concerns the use and/or misuse of the term “culture”. Analytically, we all know what we are talking about; however, this - as it would seem - is a significant problem. Ethnocentricity, derived from our own experience, as well as *relevant* ethnographic examples, can not be applied to social actors in prehistoric times who were not - in part at least - conscious of the “meaning” behind their behavior that *we* - thousands of

years later - set “cultural labels” on. Fabricating a point that renders a hunter “successful” is not, necessarily, dependent upon the cultural “roots” of the individual in question. Indeed, the comparative viability of the point - in regards to the point(s) of “other” successful hunters - must also be taken into consideration. In short, the notion of being “unsuccessful” has, most likely, never been a popular social concept.

In consequence then, the significance of “otherness” (deviating from socially accepted norms) on the cultural level (conscious) reflects, in part, the goal orientations (subconscious) of social actors; in brief, social interactions are the milieu of transactions (see Barth, 1966 & Riches, 1982). This being the case, obliges us not only to take into account environmental adaptations, but social adaptations involving principals of decision making as well (Kapferer, 1976).

How then do we recognize contextual transactions contra “interactions” within the archaeological record? Quite simply; we can not - since they are one and the same within the domain of culture. This has resulted in a research focus that only considers “interactions” and, therefore, subscribes to the delineation of - more or less - homogeneous ethnic groups within specific geographic areas. Clearly, this research propensity has led us to believe that artifact similarities reflect regionally relevant culture groups. While this may very well hold true when we relate to sedentary groups; it seems rather deterministic if we take into account the mobility of hunter/gatherers.

Another “pothole” in our avenue of approach are cultural notions contrived on a conscious level within the agency of social reproduction. Clearly, they can be a source of



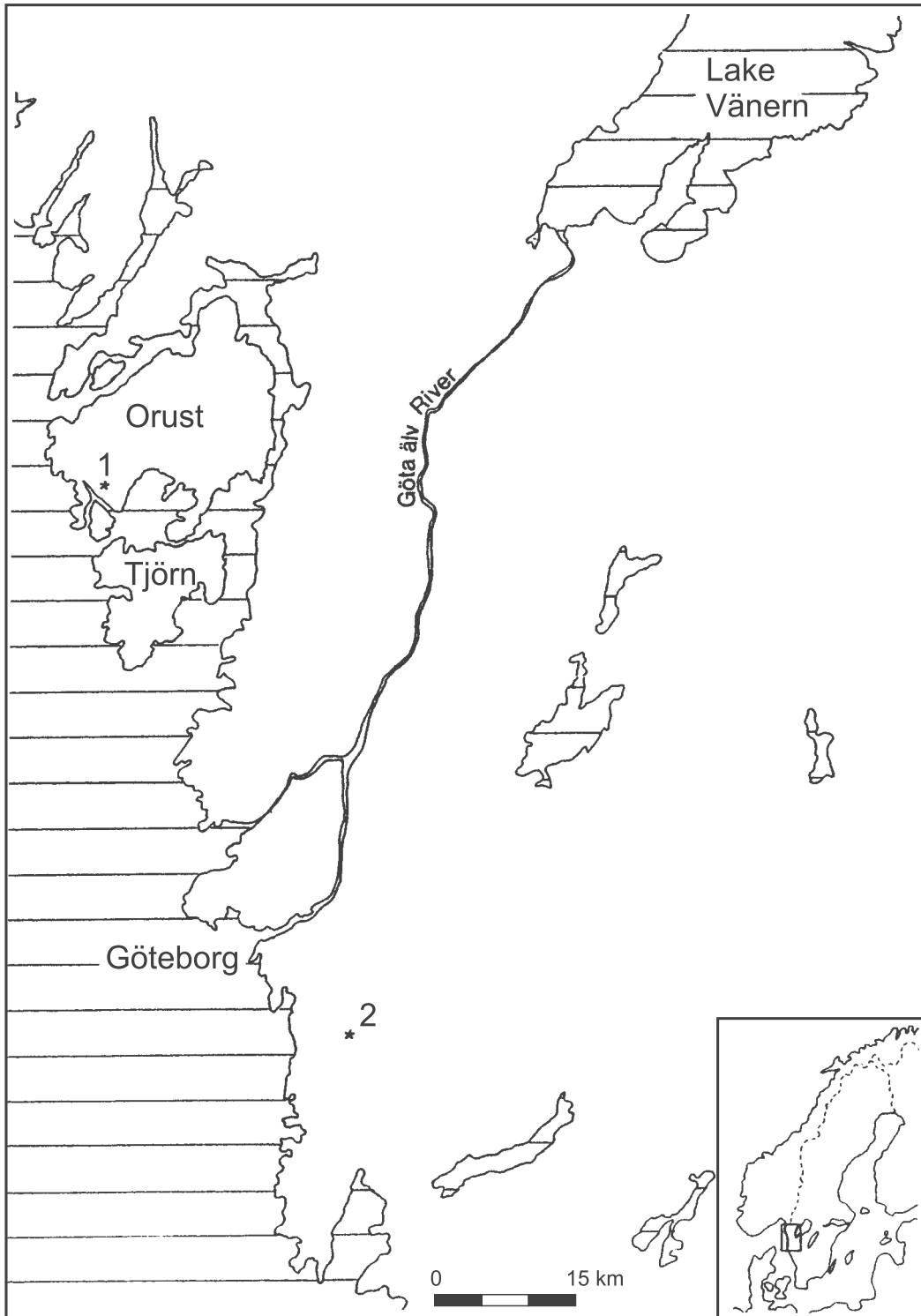


Fig. 1. A generalized map of the Swedish west coast showing the two sites mentioned in the text. 1, Nösund. 2, Källered.

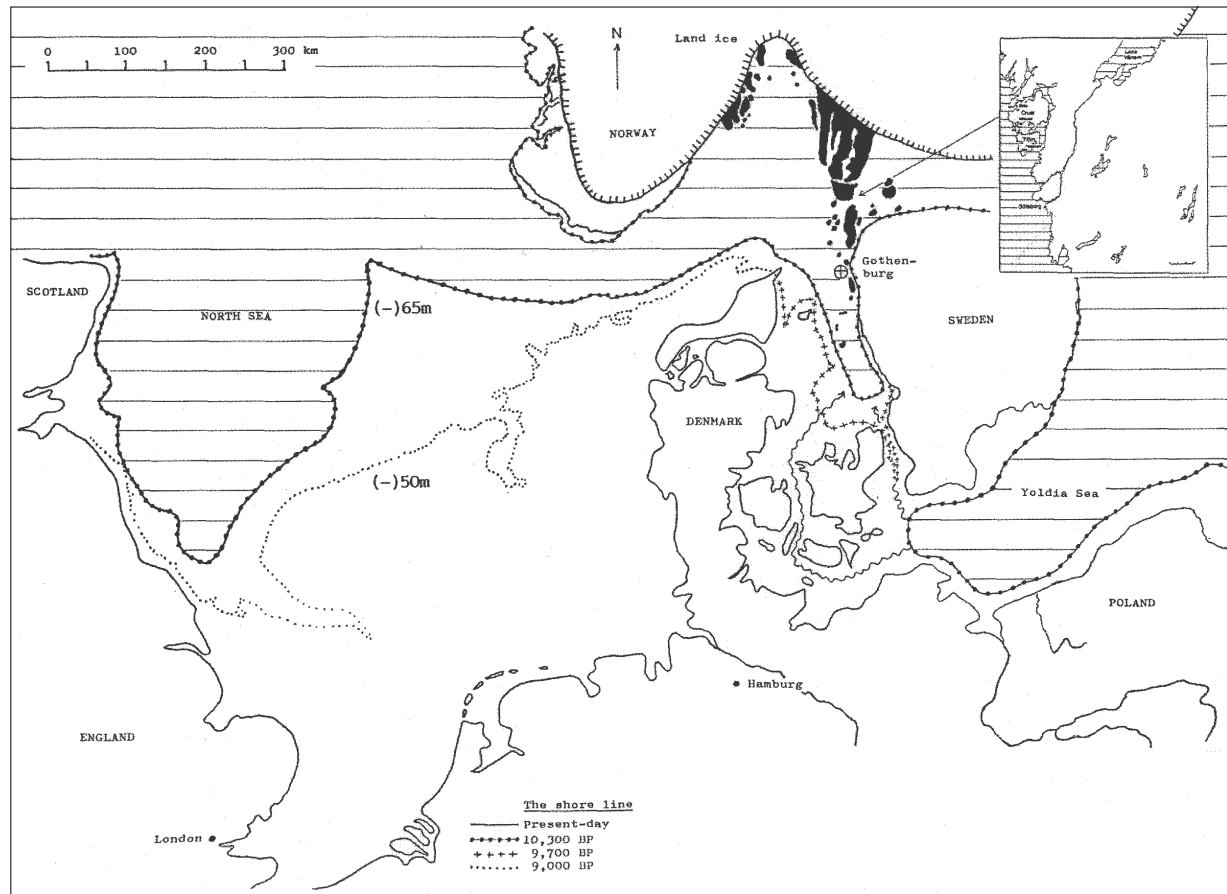


Fig. 2. A generalized palaeogeographic map of the North Sea and Kattegat/Skagerrak area showing approximate shore lines at c. 10300 bp and 9,000 bp (9,700 bp is only indicated in the Kattegat). Compiled from: Jelgersma 1979; Mörner 1969; Stabell & Thiede 1986; Fredén 1988, and Bergsten 1989.

disinformation within the “normal” framework of archaeological interpretations. A good example - concerning Eskimo concepts - is provided for by Marcel Mauss (1905!) and is substantiated by L. Binford (1978). Winter and summer gear (utilitarian items) are cached “on site” and not taken on trips between seasonal camps. This observation by Binford pertaining to the operational strategies of the Nunamiut, seems to be confluent with Mauss’s statements concerning Eskimo notions of “winter things” and “summer things”, and that *never* the “twain” shall meet (mix) in a seasonal camp. For example: the gear used to hunt reindeer on the tundra during the summer, should never be brought into contact with the items used to hunt walrus during the winter. In this case, as well as the former, the end result - or information going into the archaeological record - is not only

environmentally relevant, but mentally contingent as well. If one did not know otherwise, two excavations (one at each camp) would most likely reveal two independent “culture groups”.

In summary, we have discussed two reasons why the term “culture” can be misleading in archaeological interpretations. In the first room, we have the distinct possibility that individuals, in times long past, had personal goals manifested within their collective consciousness. These goals - in turn - required social adaptations (political behavior) in much the same way as we organize our own personal strategies today. One of these strategies, conscious behavior resulting from decision making, is culturally relevant; while the other, subconscious motivation(s) - is not. In short, the prehistoric material culture that we study is diachronic in nature, while



Fig.3. The Vänern basin shortly after the onset of the Younger Dryas (c. 10,800 bp). After Fredén 1988.

the motivations of the individuals *behind* the artifacts are - in part at least - synchronic phenomena. In the second room, we touched upon the significance of “scope of vision” within archaeological interpretations; that is to say, moving beyond that which seems obvious and, in most cases, expected.

## Modeling the past

So far, the purpose of our discussion has been to provide for a theoretical background for the cultural significance of tanged points that have been found on the west coast of Sweden (fig. 1). Before addressing this issue, however, a few words must be said as to why the west coast may have been attractive to Late Glacial hunters from the North European Plain.

In answering this question, it is necessary to consider two environmental features; the inundation of the North Sea basin (fig. 2) and hydrodynamic aspects of the Vänern basin (fig. 3) prior to the close of the Late Glacial. In this regard, it has been suggested that the land area that existed between the west coast of Denmark and the east coast of England was extremely rich in nutrient salts that had accumulated through

processes of decay (Schmitt 1991) since about the late middle Weichselian (Oele & Schüttenhelm 1979). Consequently, when the area was progressively transgressed, nutrient salts were mobilized by ocean currents moving in an easterly direction. It follows then, that the Swedish west coast became an “end station” for mobilized nutrient salts since a Danian west coast did not exist at this time.

Biostratigraphic studies that have been carried out in the Gothenburg area tend to lend credibility to our proposition. In brief, dramatic increases can be seen in the size of the foraminifer population (Bergsten 1989,96 & Pl.12). Accordingly, increases in the foraminifer population most certainly reflect increases in the size of the plankton community since plankton constitute the subsistence base of foraminifers (Murray 1973,212,216&229). In other words, increases in the biomass, brought about by an influx of nutrient salts (P, N, K, Ca, Mg), increased the carrying capacity of the area to such an extent that significant increases in the size of the foraminifer community could, and did, occur.

In addition to “easterly moving nutrient salts”, the isostatic land uplift that was taking place on the west coast (Svedhage 1985b, 6-7) created a situation in which glacial melt water *within* the Vänern basin became constricted (see Fredén 1998, figs. 50-56). Consequently, the *velocity* of the reaction current was progressively increased due to greater energy factors within the water column. It can also be suggested that turbulence, or mixing within the reaction current, may have occurred in the vicinity of islands that were situated in the archipelago at the western end of straits oriented towards the NE. In short, there was a nutrient rich bottom current coming from the North Sea area while at the same time there was increasing velocities, and mixing, within the reaction current. These combined features, together with the duration of solar radiation at this relatively high latitude, created a biotope that was both unique and unparalleled.

With the above mentioned features and aspects in mind, it does not seem strange that subfossil finds of seals, dating to between 11,600-9,800 bp (Fredén 1989,76-79) and polar bears at 10,380 bp and 10,170 bp (Berglund, et al., 1992) have been recovered between the island of Orust and Lake Vänern. In this regard, it has been put forth that seals were a

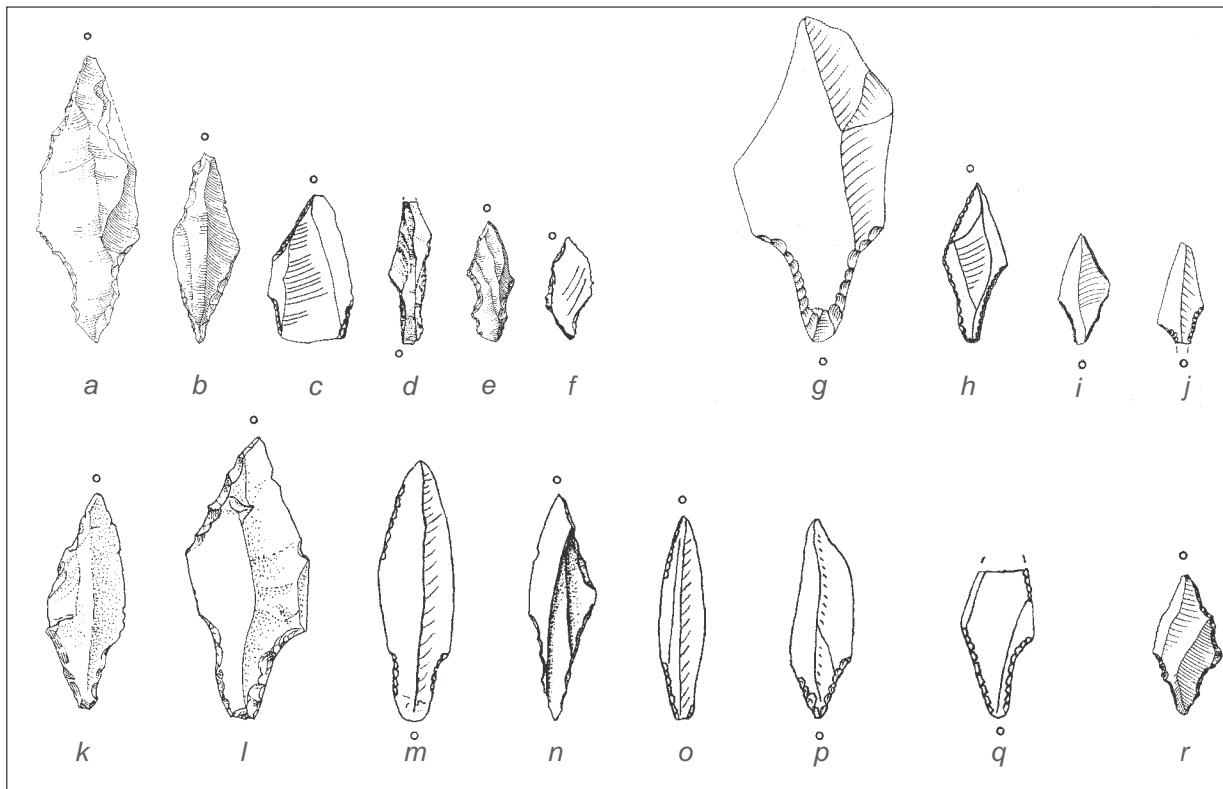


Fig.4. Tanged points that have been recovered during excavations on the west coast of Sweden. a -f, Nösund; g -j, Tösskärr; k, Gottskär. Points l - r, is a limited selection of tanged points that have been surface collected on, or nearby, various Hensbacka sites along the west coast. l, Hensbacka, Foss; m, Kaserna; n, Källered (stray find); o, Kaserna; p, Hogen; q, Samneröd; r, Ramsedalen. a - f, present author; g - r, after Fredsjö 1953, Alin 1955, and Niklasson 1965 (published posthumously in 1973). 2:3

primary quarry during the close of the Late Glacial here on the west coast of Sweden (Schmitt 1994, 1995). Let it suffice here by simply pointing out the reduced labor input in regards to the procurement of dietary fat in the spring when reindeer meat is very lean. The only other option, if seal blubber was not utilized, would have been the manufacture of bone grease immediately after the spring reindeer hunt. Since this enterprise is both labor and time consuming - at a time when seasonal activities may have been becoming “out of phase” (that is to say, one can not be in two places at the same time), any strategical innovation that would reduce labor/time costs would also be seen as being beneficial to the collective at large. Undoubtedly, the rapid amelioration of the climate during the late phase of the Younger Dryas (Strömberg 1994, 186) (see also Alley et al. 1993) led not only to changes in the behavioral patterns of the game being

hunted, but to changes in the seasonal round of hunters as well. This leads us into our next topic - tanged points.

If we include “reliable” fragments (butt ends), about 35 tanged points have been either surface collected or recovered during excavations here on the west coast (figs. 4 & 5). Points that can not be attributed to a “scatter” of Hensbacka artifacts have not been taken into consideration. “Hensbacka artifacts”, in this case, refers to the classification system that has been established by both Åke Fredsjö (1953) and Carl Cullberg (1972). Interestingly, many of these 35 tanged points display features that, in many cases, can be attributed to the Ahrensburgian of NW Germany such as an apex in the proximal end of the support on which they are made and the fact that they are often less than 5.5 cm in length (Fischer 1978:151, fig 4). Others, however, seem to display a greater amount of confluency with the tanged points that

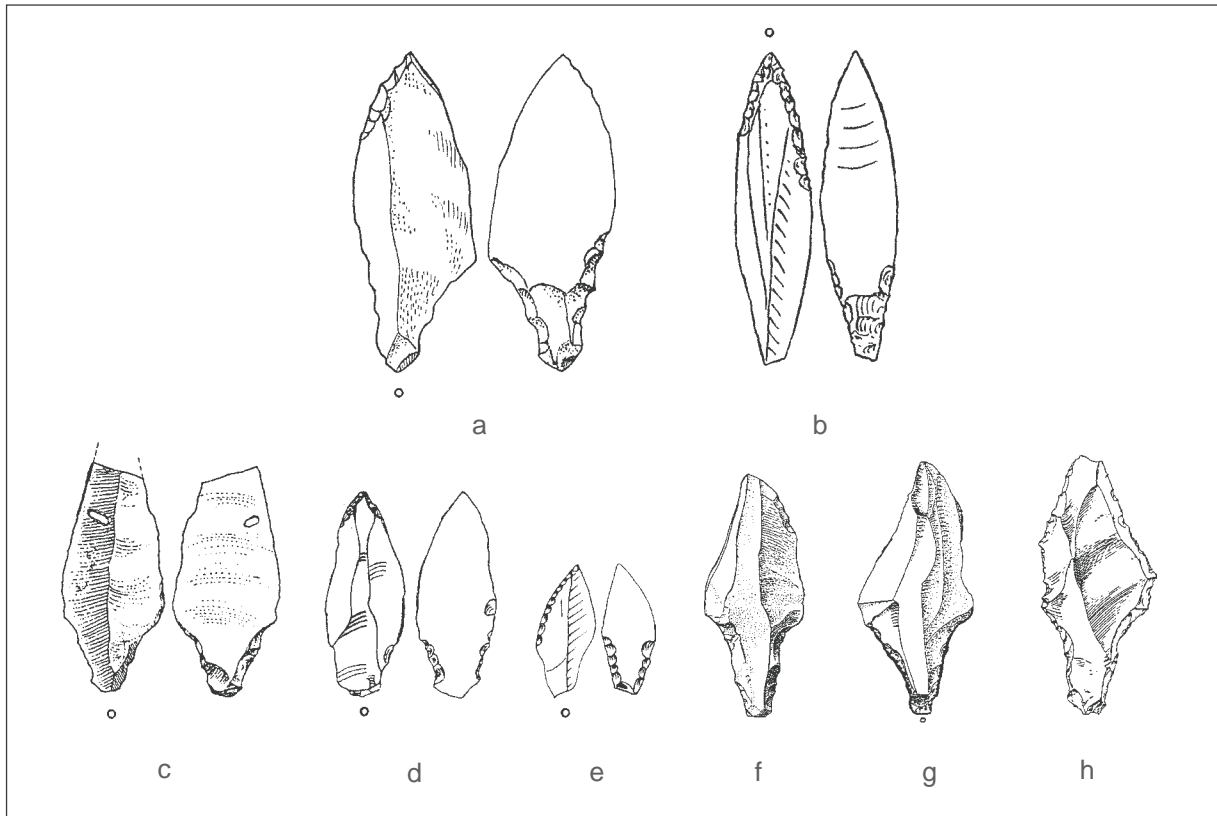


Fig. 5. Points displaying inverse and/or invasive retouch found on the west coast of Sweden. a, Hensbacka (Niklasson 1934, 132); b, Djupedal (Fredsjö 1953, 27); c, Gottskär (redrawn after Niklasson 1973, pl XI:69); d, Sötorp (Fredsjö 1953, 189, drawn by the present author); e, Tosskär (Fredsjö 1953, fig. 22). f-h, “Bromme like” points. f, Skogstuna; g, Nösund; h, Tosskär. All points, with the exception of (c) and (e), have been surface collected. Figs. a-e, 3:4. Figs. f-h, 1:2.

are found in the Masovian industry of NE Germany and Poland (Schild 1984) (fig. 5, a-e). Masovian refers to points that have a distinct, or indistinct, tang that displays either inverse (fig. 5, c-e), or invasive (fig. 5, a-b) retouch (see for example Kobusiewicz & Kabacinski 1992, p15:18, 19 & 20-25 and Taute 1968, Abb. 1:5) Indistinct tang means a diverging base (butt) end that meets with unmodified medial edges. It should also be pointed out that in contrast to Ahrensburgian points, Masovian points always display an apex that is distal in regards to the support on which it was made. In addition, it is interesting to note that “Bromme like” points (fig. 5, f-h) are sometimes found in association with Hensbacka material; this is also the case on the North European Plain but there, as could be expected, in association with Ahrensburgian/Masovian material (see Schild 1984, 257

& Terberger 1996, 115) Curiously, and not too distant to our discussion, microburins are also present in the Late Glacial material found on the North European Plain - as well as in Denmark in a Hamburgian context (Holm & Rieck 1992, 80, see also Taute 1968, tafel 39:21, 83:39, 109:19, 149:39, and Rust 1958, tafel 13).

## Discussion

In retrospect, and in light of the evidence that we now have, it seems as if the remarks made by Nils Niklasson in 1934 and further statements in 1962 by Troels-Smith in regards to Continental features within the Hensbacka material was - by and large - correct. The evidence, in addition to the

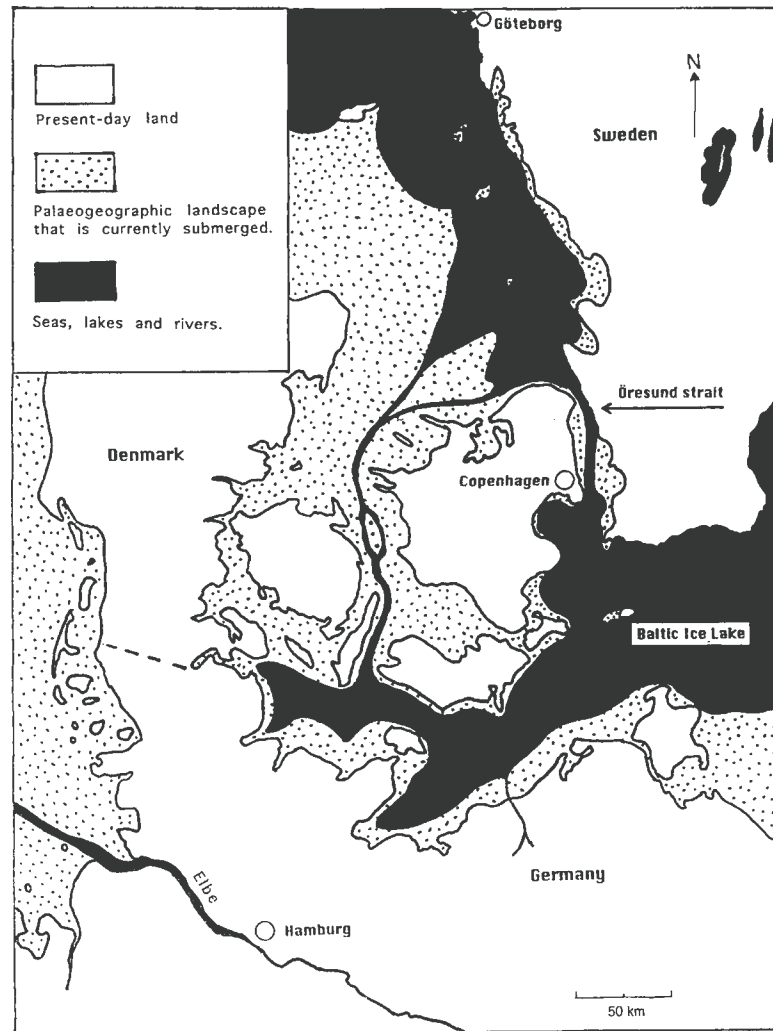


Fig.6. The palaeogeographic situation in southern Scandinavia shortly before the final drainage of the Baltic Ice Lake at about 10,000 b.p. Compiled from Mörner 1969, Bennike & Jensen 1995, Jensen 1994 (& pers. comm. 2003), and Björck, et.al. 1996.

Ahrensburgian/Masovian points already discussed, includes the chronological insights that have been gained from a recent excavation at Nösund on SW Orust. At this particular Hensbacka site, 10 tanged points of Ahrensburgian character were recovered in a geological context that was datable by means other than shore displacement (Svedhage & Schmitt 1995). C-14 dates, obtained from two shell-banks that are vertically separated by a layer of transgressional clay, indicate that *one* section (concentration) of this site was occupied at 9,900±100 bp. Accordingly, this dating agrees well with the dates that obtain from both the upper level at Stellmoor;

10,140 – 9,810 ±100 bp (Fisher & Tauber 1986), and the Masovian of NE Europe 10,500 - 9,700 bp (Schild 1989,95).

Due to our own ethnocentricity in regards to the western concept of time, it is difficult to envision a sociotechnocomplex in which the Swedish west coast is simply one - of many different - catchment areas. It should be kept in mind, however, that evidence from the Upper Perigordian of France indicates that seasonal rounds of up to 490 km (round trip) took place 25,000 years ago (Cleyet-Merle & Madeline 1995). Cave art from this period depicts both seals and

flounders at a time when the coast was 200 km away! There is, therefore, no reason to believe that seasonal rounds became shorter as we approach the close of the Late Glacial; especially if we consider the option that skin boats (umiaks) were, most likely, well known by this time. In addition, recent acoustical profiles from the Fehmarn sound and the Öresund area indicate that Sjælland and Lolland formed a large island in a SW outlet of the Baltic Ice Lake (fig. 6) (J. Jenssen, GSD, pers. comm. 1995). Consequently, both the Store Bælt and the Öresund could have been utilized by hunter/gatherers travelling towards the north by boat. In regards to “tricky currents” and/or eventual “waterfalls” in the Öresund; there is no evidence to suggest that this was the case. Indeed, over a relatively long distance, the difference in water level between the surface of the Baltic Ice lake and the sea in the west (c.22 m) would have been insignificant in that kinetic energy dissipates in proportion to the length of the channel in which the water is flowing, e.g. erosional resistance.

If we take into account the exceedingly large number of Hensbacka sites that we have on the west coast (see Kindgren 1995), and include a relatively “high lying” site that has been excavated in Källered (c. 2 km south of Gothenburg) that can be geologically dated to about 10,500 bp (Petterson 1993), it can be suggested that the west coast - in general - was utilized during seasonal rounds by hunter/gatherers from the North European Plain for a considerable length of time (10,300 - 9,700 bp) (HK-1). Since 15 % (5) of the 35 points already mentioned have tangs that display either inverse or invasive retouch, it has been put forth that Taute’s (1968) Stallberg-Münchehofe group from NE Germany is of interest when considering possible areas of departure during seasonal rounds (Schmitt 1994,1995). This Idea is also supported by the numerous distal tanged points in the Swedish material. In short, if we are to understand the Hensbacka, we must first investigate the relationship between the Ahrensburgian and the Masovian; the geographic interface, in this case, seems to be the Oder River. In this regard, it would be short-sighted if we were to assume that

extensive intergroup contacts did not take place. Indeed, if the final drainage of the Baltic Ice Lake was not complete until c. 9,900 bp (see Strömberg 1994 and Wohlfarth, Björk & Possnert, et al. 1993), which implies that the Öresund was not closed before this event some of these “intergroup contacts” may have taken place in spring/summer camps here on the west coast of Sweden. As a point of general interest, present day “paddlers” can cover about 50 km in one day (pers. comm.): 500 km, or the approximate distance between Uddevalla and Rügen for example, would take about two weeks.

## Conclusions

From our discussion in the preceding pages, six areas of interest have been brought into focus:

1. There is no reason to believe that intergroup competitiveness did not exist during the close of the Late Glacial; this point can be argued from a cultural frame, as well as from the premise of nature itself.
2. Environmental and ecological conditions here on the west coast were, most likely, both unique and rich.
3. There may have been a pragmatic need for the exploitation of seals (dietary fat) not to mention the white furs from pups and polar bears.
4. Socio-territories, or regionalism, is relative to our scope of vision.
5. There is more evidence for, rather than against, long range seasonal rounds.
6. A likely area of departure for these seasonal rounds may have been North-East and North- Central Germany.

The substantiation of these six propositions will not only help us in understanding the Hensbacka (as a regional phase), but also other researchers who see the Hensbacka as an “expression” (coastal sites) of the Continental Ahrensburgian/Masovian sociotechnocomplex.

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