

The Children in the Bog

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It is better not to beg [ask for something]
Than to sacrifice too much [to the gods]:
A present given always expects one in return.
It is better not to bring any offering
Than spend too much on it.
(*Hávamál* (145), in Mauss 2001, 3)

The disposal of children in water

The exposure of the human body to a variety of elements such as air, fire, earth and water is well attested within the mortuary record (*cf.* Montandon 1934, fig. 29). Amongst these, the immersion of the human body in water is of special interest to the archaeological study of children. With regard to the estimated mortality rate of children in prehistoric societies (Chamberlain 2000) and the question of the unusualness of those children buried in the same way as adults (Parker Pearson 2003), the phenomenon refers outsiders to other realms of social expression (Crawford 2000, 2010; Lillehammer 2002, 2005, 2008a, 2008b, 2010a). From a Scandinavian perspective, among these are the places less visible in the environment (Björkhagar 1995), such as the wetland places (Formisto 1993; Berggren 2010; Monikander 2010; Bergerbrant 2011) or their relationships to settlements (Ullén 1994) and rock carvings (Thedéen 2002; Wahlgren 2002).

In a nature and culture relationship, water is the breeding area of many species in nature. In developing young humans, from the fertilized egg to the ultimate birth of offspring, water is an essential part of the liquid contained in the nurturing space of the embryo, within the uterus of the maternal body. Within many past cultures water is often associated with perceptions of life and death, to rituals and rites of passage of the body focusing on fertility in humans as well as in nature (Metcalf and Huntington 1991[1979]), and to supernatural worlds (Bradley 2005). In the landscape the wetland was a passage to another world (Kaliff 2001). There is an element of interface between the real world and the metaphysical one; the water in lakes, rivers and bogs was bringing human beings in closer communication with the gods (Brink 2001). The places of fertility sacrifices and offerings were often some distance away from the settlement, or relocated to central places, often to the farm of the chieftain (Fabech 1994), or to wells, the place of a miniature wetland (Kaliff 2001). In South Scandinavia these activities can be evidenced as far back as the Late Mesolithic (Berggren 2010) and the Early Neolithic (Stjernquist 1998), but are a typical expression of practices during the Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age (see Kaliff 2001). On the long-term scale, and as deposition of wealth in the cultural landscape changed from the 5th and 6th century CE (Fabech 1991, 291-294), depositions in liminal areas such as the wetland continued until the medieval period (Hedeager 1999a; 2010, 172-173).

Over a long period of time the disposal of humans in bogs was part of a common tradition among the peoples around the North Sea. However, the archaeological bog-finds of human bodies and skeletal remains have many origins. Human remains have been discovered all over Europe; from Crete in the south to Norway in the north and Russia in the east (Ebbesen 1986, 20); especially in Denmark, the Netherlands, and North Germany; to a lesser extent in Britain and Ireland (Dieck 1972; Stead *et al.* 1986; Turner and Briggs 1986; Turner & Scaife 1995; van den Sanden 1996; Coles *et al.* 1999; Bradley 2005). In the 1980s, European museum collections had over 1,500 human remains (Ebbesen 1986), representing both sexes and a wide range of ages, including babies (Turner and Briggs 1986, 156-161). Some of the finds have been dated by pollen analysis, C14 and associated artefacts (Turner and Briggs 1986), covering a wide span of time from the Neolithic to recent times (Dieck 1972; Glob 1969; Turner and Briggs 1986; Pieper 2002). The majority of the finds date from the late pre-Roman to Roman Iron Age (Bradley 2005; see also Monikander 2010, table 5).

Due to the natural conditions of the Norwegian bogs the human finds are unusual, in the form of skeletal remains and hair. A revised distribution list recorded fifteen individuals from nine localities in 2011 (Sellevold *in press*, fig. 7; 2005). The skeletal remains date from the Neolithic to the Medieval period and include both children and adults. Five of the finds date to the pre-Roman period and are located to the same region. The Norwegian material consists of either the bones from the whole skeleton or the cranial parts of the body. In one case the cranial part is missing. Causes of death have not been established, although no traces of violence have been found on the bones. Therefore there is no circumstantial evidence indicating what may have caused death. The individuals may have come to the bogs for a variety of reasons. According to the conclusions of the human osteologist and the archaeologist who first revised the Norwegian finds in 1991, little could be gained by searching for one single or uniform theory on bog bodies (Sellevold and Næss 1991, 441).

Then how to approach the archaeological find of bog bodies of children in general? On one side are the contextual factors such as circumstantial placing, retrieval of the finds, deposition of the bodies and associated objects. On the other are the biological and social factors

such as age, sex, gender, genetic anomaly and pathological evidence based on the analyses of their bones in relation to the contextual evidence. These are aspects of vital importance in order to explain the character of the human individual in the archaeological find. In this relationship the individual is classified according to the condition of the corpse versus the skeletal remains and their contextual content on the basis of the archaeological evidence. The definition indicates an interdisciplinary field of research covering a wide spectre of disciplines.

In the following paper I am going to demonstrate why this approach is important to the archaeological interpretation of the bog-children. I am searching for cultural theories on ancient child treatment in order to explain the contextual evidence, looking for alternative interpretations of the remains in a landscape perspective and, in particular, the wetland environment. A specific case from Norway serves as a starting point to approach the children and the theories based on Scandinavian bog-finds. A variety of literary sources, such as Ancient World narratives, Norse mythology, legends and sagas, Scandinavian medieval laws, Nordic folk belief, Scandinavian place names and Norwegian folksongs are included in the analysis. The interval between my paper at the Kent conference in 2006 and this publication has seen an advancement in the literature dealing with childhood and children in the past, which is of particular interest to approach wetland children in a wider cultural-historical perspective (for overviews, see Brockliss and Montgomery 2010; Mustakallio and Laes 2011). On the various levels of mortuary behaviour and child treatment, the ideology, attitude and practice may have continued or changed, respectively, covering a wider area in time, space and structure. The written sources are to be applied and treated cautiously as the fragmentary remains of the past and a critical approach towards the types of literature is recommended (for further discussion, see Vuolanto 2011).

In this approach towards child treatment in the past, a deliberate attempt is made with regard to considering material and immaterial culture interwoven with practice on a long-term scale. On the critical level of analysis, the literary sources are used as comparative models and analogies in order to bring together and highlight the phenomenon of wetland children in the archaeological record. In this respect my concern is continuity and discontinuity in the cultural transference of practice and the transformation into writing of traditions passed down in myths, legends, sagas and folklore from one generation to the next. To a certain extent textual sources may contain fragmentary reminiscences of ancient narratives with a degree of relevance to finding models about historical events and practices of the past. Similarly, laws and regulations may hold contradictory information about the past, in order to prevent unwanted or unlawful practices from continuing in the future. By doing so, I claim the Norwegian remains of bog-children as part of the ancient cultural-historical traditions of practice, which are consistent with the long-term forces of dominant and

slowly changing cultural features of *long durée* such as ideologies and world views (Bintliff 1991, 7).

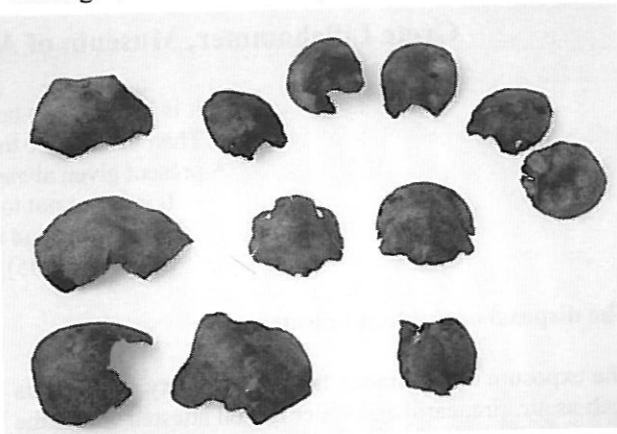


Fig. 1. Bone remains of approximately four infant cranials from early Iron Age (calibrated CE 90/120-410/430) from a bog at Bø, Hå municipality, Rogaland county, south-west Norway (Sellevold and Næss 1991). (Photo: Terje Tveit, Museum of Archaeology, University of Stavanger).

The little children – wetland children and bog body theory

The Norwegian bog bodies include a single find of infants representing the only children in the collection. In 1984 the remains were found by a farmer in a bog at Bø, Hå municipality, Rogaland County, south-west Norway. The experts, a zoologist and a human osteologist, who first examined the content, concluded that the bones were from various parts of the cranial of at least four children (Fig. 1). The size and development of the bones indicated newborn infants, but their biological sex could not be established on the basis of the macro-analysis. The bones had been disposed before the flesh disintegrated. In infants the cranial bones would have separated easily had the bones not been disposed in a manner that made them look like coconuts. There was no evidence of the skeletal remains from the rest of the corpses; the condition in the bog could have resulted in the disappearance of weak bones and cartilages. No traces of illness, disease or injury afflicted upon the bodies were found on the bones. Therefore the cause of death of the infants is stated as unknown (Sellevold 1987; Sellevold and Næss 1991).

The bog find had been discovered at a marginal place in the outland at a higher altitude. From the spot in the present there is an outstanding view downhill of the landscape and further beyond to the North Sea (Fig. 2). Between 1984 and the delivery of the find to the museum in 1987 the area had been drained and cultivated, but the bog had been small at the time of the discovery. The local name of the place was 'Tvioldlo', referring to two natural springs formerly swelling in the bog. The bones were found together with as little as 30 cm between them at approximately 1 metres depth, at the bottom of the ditch in an area half a meter in diameter, and at the level between the bog and the layer of clay beneath. No

artefacts accompanying the skeletal remains were found in the digging. The C-14 dating of five of the bones gave the calibrated age between CE 90/120 and CE 410/430 (see Haavaldsen 1989; Lillehammer 1989; Sellevold and Næss 1991).



Fig. 2. Location of the Bø-find is facing south and looking down onto the lowland and the North Sea. Modern cultivation has transformed the bog environment to a pasture in the outland. (Photo: Aage Pedersen, Museum of Archaeology, University of Stavanger).

The bog-find refers in general to early Iron Age (BCE 500-CE 550); in particular to the Roman period (CE 0-400) and the earliest part of the Migration period (CE 400-550) in Norway. It relates to the outland of one of the central farmsteads in the region, and to the outskirts of prehistoric settlements which, during the Roman and Migration periods, reached an elitist level of richness and power (cf. Myhre 1978, fig. 19). The circumstantial evidence points to a disposal of the infants prior to, at death or not long after their deaths. Whether their partial remains of cranial bones represented decapitated corpses or not, the children had been placed in an environment where there were natural springs of water. At the time of the disposal the springs were located on marginal land at a distance from the settlements in the landscape. With respect to the circumstantial evidence of the find a variety of interpretations are called for with regard to discussing disposal of children in water and bog body theory in general, which include the achievement of socio-cultural and political goals in Iron Age society (BCE 500-CE 1030).

In 1983, Danish bog-finds included the skeletal remains of seven children and sub-adults (N=19, 4%) from two disposals C-14 dated respectively to pre-Roman period (BCE 475) and late Germanic period (CE 675) The youngest children (neonates and infans I) were found together with adults, two of which were male (Sellevold *et al.* 1984, 64-65, 241-242, table 9-10-1), and the pre-Roman male was also with the remains of a newborn and a container ((Thorvildsen 1952, 39-40; Sellevold *et al.* 1984, 242, table 9-10-1, Bergerbrant 2011, table 1). With the exception of the Finnish material, this pattern of disposal is partly confirmed by some recent surveys of wetland finds from the Iron Age in Northern Europe. These finds include 17 individuals between the biological

period of infants and 14/15 years of age. The infants have been found together with adults or they have been located to the same bog. These infants represent the majority (41%) in the material evidence of bog children in the survey. Among these finds are the skeletal remains of fetus and neonates which have been discovered mainly with other objects at localities classified as sacrificial bogs (Bergerbrant 2010, table 1 and 2; see also Monikander 2010, 79-81, table 5, 86-91, table 7-8, appendix 1). Compared with the adult remains, the lack of violence on most of the children's bones is significant (Monikander 2010, 90). An osteological study of a Finnish Iron Age bog locality dated between 5th century BCE and 7th century CE (Monikander 2010, 83-84) indicates that the disposal practice included a high amount of children. Among the skeletal remains are 37% children and four children are infants under the age of one year (Formisto 1993, 85, fig. 16).

The finds of bog corpses are part of a wider pattern connected with Iron Age use of watery locations (Bradley 2005). Many of the best preserved bog bodies have had violent deaths, capturing the imagination of archaeologists. Corpses held in position by pieces of wood have involved an awareness of the supernatural pointing at criminals and outcasts (Bradley 2005, fig. 3.1; van den Sanden 1996). In his book 'The Bog People' P. V. Glob selected a collection of individuals to support his theory on bog bodies from the Iron Age. The bodies shared a similar fate; the archaeological remains were the evidence of ritual sacrifice to a goddess of fertility. Glob pointed at the long tradition of disposing of food vessels and objects of great value in Danish bogs (Glob 1969; Turner & Briggs 1986). His sacrifice theory has been linked with bog ore and precious iron extracted from the depths of the earth. A connection in time and place has been made between contemporary bog ore digging and the performance of sacrificial rites at places hiding the earth's riches ruled by Mother Earth (Fischer 1980). This is an argument of economical importance scarcely to be overestimated (Ström 1986).

The views on Danish bog bodies as the remains of executed criminals, sacrificial victims or as both, are divided into two camps (Munksgaard 1984, 121; Turner and Briggs 1986; Hultgård 2001, 537). The research has led the interpretation of bog bodies to develop into a sacrifice-theory (Thorvildsen 1952; Glob 1969; Fischer 1980) and a punishment-theory (Dieck 1965). In 1986, five hypotheses were presented concerning the deposition of human bodies in bogs, on the basis of the text of Tacitus in *Germania* part I (Tacitus 1923, 22). As an historian on religion, Folk Ström (1986, 234-136) concluded that the analysis of peat bog bodies, based on Tacitus, lead to a dead end. Alternatives had to be found, and he came up with the following list:

- Human sacrifice
- Death penalty
- Sacrifice and penalty
- Burial

- Apotropaic measures (threats of ghosts)

As seen in the list above there is a third possibility representing the cases of both sacrifice and penalty (cf. the third). These are references to Germanic death penalty 'as of a sacral nature' representing sacrificial religious rites as the Gods have been severely angered. There is no solid basis for this theory, but in a modified form it remains incompatible with disposals after death (Ström 1986).

In her discussion of bog-finds Elizabeth Munksgaard (1984, 122) has claimed that the human sacrifices from the early Iron Age are essentially different in character from that of bog bodies. The remains of human sacrifice are always accompanied by domestic animals, pottery or sometimes parts of wagons, whilst the places in the landscape are sunken bogs, which most likely were open lakes at the time of the religious activity. Among the skeletal remains from the sacrificial bogs are found the bones of children. The fact that children really never occur in the finds as bog bodies argues against the sacrifice-theory being applied on bog bodies. The few examples from Germany are possibly the circumstantial evidence of accidents, as the bodies are found in raised bogs that defiled the valuable land.

A review focussing on the relationships between social organisations, religious ceremonies and regional variations in Southern Scandinavia has led to a division of the sacrificial finds from wetlands into three categories: fertility sacrifice, human sacrifice and booty sacrifice. Fertility sacrifice is carried out by the individual, family or society and includes deposits of pottery, food, vessels, animals, tools and ornamental garments. Human sacrifice is the collective act of depositing individuals in peat bogs. Depending on the pH value of the bog, the bodies or skeletons appear also in booty sacrifices and most show signs of violent death. Booty sacrifice is performed after victory over an intruding enemy. The archaeological finds contain a representative choice of the equipment of an Iron Age army (Fabech 1991, 301).

The no-children argument by Munksgaard (1984) reveals the difficulties in analysing similarity and difference between the circumstantial evidence of humans and human skeletal remains from wetland areas compared to bodies, to raised and sunken bogs, and to fertility, human and booty sacrifices. It has been suggested that the Scandinavian bog-finds from the early Iron Age represent women, men and children who have been killed deliberately as the result of punishment for crimes committed, penalty, or sacrifice to the gods such as battle tributes of victory at war (Hultgård 2001, 537, 545). According to Bergerbrant's survey (2011), children were also disposed in the wetlands due to burial or accidents. The intentions and ideologies behind the practices are ambiguously difficult to penetrate due to the fragmentary and secondary state of the literary sources (Hultgård 2001). However, it has been noted that the sacrificial

bogs were situated close to the pathways of people in their everyday life (Christensen 2003).

In her study on sacred topography Lotte Hedeager (1999a) has stressed the perceptions of the landscape defined by people themselves, and shared in a common cosmology of mental division and constituted by physical boundaries reflecting the organization of the landscape. The division of the world in the Old Norse cosmological concept of *Midgard/Asgard* and *Utgard* reflects the division between infield and outfield in the organisation of the landscape (Gurevich 1985, 47; Hedeager 1999, 246). In drawing the attention to the facts and perceptions connected to the wetland, Monikander (2010, 24-38, 98-99) has concluded that it was a borderland between life and death. In order to bind their possible influence on the living, people may have been separated from other dead people and put in wetlands.

If differences are seen in time and place between the deposition and the associated content of human bodies and skeletal remains in lake and peat bog, compared to their location far or adjacent to the habitat or the pathways of people, these differences are vital to explain the type of activity taken place in the landscape. Therefore the following circumstances have to be added to the Ström list:

- Murder
- Suicide
- Accident
- Natural death

The discussions are relevant to the classification of the Norwegian find. The location of the find is a sunken bog, formerly the location of two springs. The disposal of the infants in the spring was only in the form of bodies or body parts and the causes of death of the newborn are unknown. By taking into account the circumstantial evidence in relation to the theories of sacrifice or punishment, it is clear that the Norwegian find did not hold the remains of animals or other objects accompanying the infant bones. According to ancient tradition in the Hebrew Scripture, animals could be replaced in the substitute of children as sanctuary gifts (Stavropoulou 2010, 23). The substitute aspect is difficult to substantiate as the lack of objects in the Norwegian find may speak in favour of historic circumstances, which relate these remains to punishment rather than supporting a sacrifice theory.

By asking the question of whom, for and by whom the punishment was enacted, the evidence of the newborn infants speaks for itself: Newborn children are not adults who may determine their own lives and their ability to stand up for themselves is very limited. As minors, infants have no authority over their social conditions (Barth 1976; Lillehammer 1989). However, they do represent the potential of something new (Lillehammer 2002, 2005; 2010a, b), and biological social and cultural expectations may have related them to connections either

promising or threatening within the society. Noteworthy is the fact that the newborn infants in the Norwegian find were not found with adults, but that their skulls were found together. These factors suggest the activities of disposal may have taken place either at the same time, or with only short intervals between them. The contextual evidence suggests both single and/or repetitive events that could indicate isolation and dislocation of individuals in relation to social groups in the early Iron Age society.

The first interpretation suggests an event that required as many as possibly five newborns at one time. In a single stroke this was either a vast tribute contributed by society, or a heavy penalty on an individual. However, in regard to infants, other circumstances have to be considered. Could the bog-find represent the bones of stillborn, twins, and even quins? These questions point to a variety of logics represented in traditions from many parts of the world (DeMause 1974; Boswell 1991; Lohrke 1999; Scott 1999; Milner 2000; Bremmer 2007; Ceruti 2004, 2010). In a cross-cultural perspective, abortion, birth of twins and infants with body deformities or disabilities (Devlieger 2000) have been put in the discussion on the social difference and anomalies in the inclusion and exclusion of children. Amongst the ancient peoples of Scandinavia the various cultural customs of infant treatment (Mejsholm 2009) and abandonment of children (Pentikainen 1968; Vuolanto 2011), circumstantial practices necessitated by anomalous conditions have been noted, especially in relation to childbirth and birth control in the cases of rape and in times of famine (Näsström 2001; Steinsland 2005; Mejsholm 2009).

The disposal of infant bodies in places such as latrines, wells, house foundations, post-holes, hollows, pits and ditches have been recognized in the archaeological evidence (see Sellevold *et al.* 1984; Wahl 1991; Lee 1994; Cueni 1995; Scott 1999; Lillehammer 2000, 2008a, 2008b, 2010a; Lohrke 2004; Bielke-Voigt 2008; Mejsholm 2009; Crawford 2010). As pointed out by Crawford (2010, 60) there are a number of problems in interpreting the archaeological evidence. In this respect, one important question concerns how to define the similarity and difference between sacrifice and birth control in the disposal of dead children outside the sphere of grave burials both inside and outside the vicinity of prehistoric settlements. With respect to the variety visible in the archaeological remains of children, it seems relevant to ask how newborn children were valued and acted upon as individuals in the power-related hierarchies between parents, relatives and other groups in society

The practice of sacrifice – the powerful children

The cultural practice of human sacrifice is mentioned in regard to the Iron Age people of Northern Europe including the Vikings in Scandinavia (Turville-Petre 1964; Hultgård 2001), and based among others on written narratives about official pagan cults among the Swedes in Rus 10th century CE by the Arab Ibn Rustah and *ca.* CE 1070 by the German bishop Adam of Bremen (for

overviews, see Bøe 1966; Steinsland 2005; Hedeager 2011, 100-104). Various forms of ritual communication with the other world through sacrifice or in burial are well attested during the Iron Age (Hedeager 2011, 103), and in the literature the sacrifice of children generally in relation to religion. These descriptions refer to myths and legends originating during or after the transition from the Norse religion to Christianity in the 11th century CE. In this relationship there are difficulties with the historical sources in determining between sacrifice as a gift to the gods and infanticide as a regulation of population growth (Näsström 2001, 26-28, 45). The part sacrifice played in the cults to the gods is not easy to define (Davidson 1993, 97), and though it was considered common and played an important role, its role in the Norse religion remains enigmatic (Hedeager 2011:100, 103).

The sacrifice of infants, defined also as sacrificial infanticide, is connected to public manifestations of beliefs and vows and practiced according to religious obligations to Gods/deities or spirits (see Scott 1999, 81, 89). The ideology behind child sacrifice appears to be related to fertility and to creating or maintaining a balance between cosmological powers and humans in times of crises and therefore not thought to be an ordinary event. The sacrifice of the firstborn child is known from the Old Testament in relation to fertility rites (Stavropoulou 2010; Francis 2010). In Scandinavia the prehistoric bog-finds of humans, animals and objects have been linked to religious beliefs in and worship of several female deities (Globe 1969; Näsström 2001, 2004, 55-56, 2010; Steinsland 2005:147-149; Monikander 2010, 34). In this respect we are dealing with the complex relationships of origin and transformation attributed to both male and female powers in the Iron Age. At the centre of the discussion is the relationship between the fertility goddess 'Nerthus,' referred to in *Germania* part II by Tacitus (Tacitus 1923, 48) in the 1st century CE, and the Vanir deities. In the Norse mythology (CE 700/750-1300), the three goddesses Freya, Frigg and Saga, and Urd are all connected with childbirth, children and wetland places of the earth.¹

¹ The fertility goddess Nerthus lived on a sacred island in the middle of a sacred sea. The natural habitats of three female Norse deities Frigg, Saga and Urd are connected with the wetland. Frigg lived in Fensaler (the houses by the fen (Näsström 2001, 82, 2004), or the sea (Branston 1955, 88), Saga in Sökkvabekk (the sunken beck or stream (Branston 1955, 88, 156, Näsström 2001, 82, 2004), and Urd, Verande and Skuld, the three norms in the well beneath the ash-tree Yggdrasil, the world tree (Branston 1955, 88-81; Näsström 2001, 82, 2004). In the discussions on the origins of the Norse mythology, Nerthus is linked with Frigg as well as Freya (Branston 1955, 158-159, 162, 301). Frigg is the wife of Odin (Branston 1955, 158-159, 204, 259) (see also note 6), the mother of the gods (Branston 1955, 117, 158-159) and of Balder (Branston 1955, 124, 127, 159). She plays an important role in relation to love, sexuality and fertility (Branston 1955, 158). Frigg was thanked for giving help in birth (Bæksted 2002, 61, 75) and couples as an alter ego with the fertility goddess Froya (cf. Branston 1955, 133, 135, 156). Saga is one of Frigg's shadows and her eke name. Her home in the beck is undoubtedly the same place as Frigg's dwelling Fensalir (Branston 1955, 156-157). Among the norms, Urd is the greatest of the goddesses of fate (Branston 1955, 208, Bæksted 2002, 287). She decides on the length of life becoming to a child (Steinsland & Sørensen 1994, 32). Her name is linked with both death (Henriksen 1993, 61) and one of the moon's phases, the period of the crescent (Branston 1955, 208-209).

During the Iron Age a successive change of world view took place between CE 400-500, from the collective fertility Vanir cult of female deities to an individually-inclined practice linked to the Asir cult of Odin, the one-eyed god and all-father and the principal group of benevolent Norse deities in the pantheon. The ruler of war and death, and above all the great shaman of inspiration and magic, he performed the legendary act of hanging himself from a tree in exchange of almighty wisdom (1999b, 79-81, 2011; see also Davidson 1993, 78). In the mythical cycle of Odin, the Hunn king Attila amalgamated with the already existing pan-German god Wotan/Odin and Odin's *Asir* with his entourage of warriors (Hedeager 2011, 227-228). Concurrent with the development of an aristocratic society based on a warrior ideology (Gräslund 2005, 377-378; Fabech 1991), therefore a new symbol-system emerged which was linked to a fundamental change in social practices and social memory in the sense of what was considered reasonable and what was unreasonable (Hedeager 2011, 16-17).

With regard to sacrifice, there were strict rules attached to the performance of the act. Two types of human sacrifices have a specific position in the Norse myths: children and kings. The sacrificial ritual was a purification process of the world kept in accordance with the norms of perfection, and the sacrificed was usually a young man, woman or child. Parents offered their sons and daughters (Peel 2010, 5) or kings sacrificed sons as gifts to the god Odin (Näsström 2001, 26-29). By regarding sacrificed children in this perspective, the child treatment is linked to socio-religious identity and value in death on the same level of included members of a social group in the society (Lillehammer 2008b). It points to a society where contradictive structures were kept together by rituals to prevent the social system falling apart; i.e. where dangers were threatening to human life, the family or the community, and children were used as weapons in the ideological strive for dominance (cf. Douglas 1966).

The sacrifice of children as part of fertility rites in the Iron Age has been contested on grounds of the interpretation of sources (Hultård 2003). The historical myths are legends usually told in order to describe what happened in the past, but often found to have a base in references to the critical circumstances of maintaining power, such as during war or in the ruler's desire for a long life, victory and peace (Näsström 2001, 26-28, 45-46). As the narratives about myths and legends were later transformed into writing in the medieval period after Christianisation, the texts may represent Christian polemics to contrast pagan chaos with the Christian order of the world (Näsström 2001, 44-45). A significant similarity and difference existed between the two

The most important clues to these wetland relationships are the norms and their connections with the ash-tree Yggdrasil, with childbirth and the creation of life and with the tree as the symbol of life. The well of the norms is a symbol of the spring, the resource supplying the roots with saps of life in order to preserve the tree to ensure continuance and maintain life in the universe (Branston 1955, 81-82).

religions. According to the Christian doctrine mankind is a subject to God's omnipotence, and the believer is God's obedient child or slave. The Norse language uses the concept *siðr* in the meaning of those manners and customs that the individual had to conduct as an inevitable part of the cult community. The relationship with the gods was a pact of friendship between man and deity, the god as being the best and faithful friend (Steinsland 1990b, 127, 129). Also worth noticing is the central role of sacrifice in Christian ideology; particular the crucifixion of Christ (Maskel 2010, 43). The transition from a pagan to a Christian ideology in the attitude and practice of child treatment may overshadow the scholarly debate. The references in the medieval literary sources concentrate on turning against infanticide, motivated foremost by the saving of children's souls (Mejsholm 2009, 82, 98-99).

The practice of infanticide – the unwanted children

Infanticide, abandonment and the abortion of infants are known from the Graeco-Roman and Early Medieval world (Crawford 2010) and beyond (Milner 2000). Infanticide, the concept of killing of newborn children, has been defined somewhat unclearly, as a primitive method of birth control or removing excess children either through actively putting them to death or allowing them to die (Encyclopædia 1974; on active and passive infanticide, see Crawford 2010, 66, note 42). In this relationship, to explain the ideology, attitude and practice behind the social exclusion of children, we have to differentiate between child abandonment and deliberate infanticide (see Vuolanto 2011). In the discourse on ancient child abandonment in Scandinavia, the focus is on how to apply and interpret the textual sources written down after the introduction of Christianity, and on the Christian influence upon the pagan right to carry the child out. In what manner these activities was based on pre-Christian traditions have, to some extent, been disputed and are difficult to penetrate on the basis of literary sources (see Vuolanto 2011). According to Mejsholm's (2009, 90) comprehensive study of infant treatment in the Scandinavian transition period to the early-Christian era, the pagan practice of carrying out children is not to be doubted.

Firstly, the Norwegian and Icelandic medieval laws give examples (Mundal 1988, 11, note 4), which throw light upon the social aspects of inclusion and exclusion of newborn children in early Christian society. These can be traced in the dialectical variations of concepts, which describe the process of dislocating the children. The concepts differ between the child being carried out (*bera út*), slain out (*slá út*) or thrown out (*kasta út*). The concepts are linked with acts, which describe the process of letting the child being lost (*spilla*), in the meaning of getting the child killed by someone (Mundal 1989, 130). The concepts form the background for explaining the Norse type of infanticide. It is an act of actively killing the newborn, and therefore it differs from the practice of

taking care of foundlings (Mundal 1989, 130), and the sagas mention several cases.² What, then, were the attitudes towards the practice of infanticide in Norse society? In *Germania* part I written in ca. 98 CE, a time corresponding with the Norwegian bog-find, Tacitus (Tacitus 1923, 22) informs us that the death penalty for adults, men as well as women, was the drowning in a morass. The punishment was looked upon as a shameful act in the society (Ström 1986, 231). In the Norse world practicing infanticide was regarded as shameless among the rich Icelanders (see Mundal 1989, 132-133; also Mejsholm 2009, 82-83; Vuolanto 2011, 12, 18 note 51 and 53), and therefore not on the level of severe crimes requiring the penalty of death.

Secondly, it is important to admit that the motives behind these practices are based on oral traditions passed and written down hundreds of years after the introduction of Christianity. Several of the Norwegian medieval laws contain prohibition acts against the cultural practice of infanticide. The texts instruct people on how to ensure the survival of newborns (Mundal 1988, 10, note 3). The need to recommend methods to ensure survival may indicate the cultural continuity of infanticide (Mundal 1988, 11-12). The literature does not deal with the normal cases of infanticide, as the content describes the methods, which deal with saving the children (Mundal 1989, 122) (see note 2). As with the biblical legend on the daughter of pharaoh's saving of baby Moses floating on the river Nile, the idealistic model of this type of Christian practice is reflected in the Norwegian medieval folk song *Agnus dei* (the Lamb of God) where the Virgin Mary finds a child who has floated ashore and takes care of it. As an intercession the child asks the Virgin to defend its parents for fear the deed would lead to their expulsion from heaven (Liestøl *et al.* 1946, 13-14, 113).

In the Norse tradition of childbirth, the duty of the parents was to decide on keeping the newborn or not. The poems and sagas mention water as part of an initiation rite in the social process of welcoming the new child into the family. The initiation ritual was the act of 'pouring the water', and the ceremony was followed by the father (or sometimes the mother) giving a name. In the sagas the kings were naming children of the aristocracy (Näsström 2001, 115-116, 2002, 71). How severe, then, was the practice of exclusion before the child had become socially alive (Beausang 2005, 119)? The extended Norse

² In one of the tales a newborn girl is not given a name since her parents have decided to get rid of her. A man finds the infant, takes care of her and gives the child a name. The parents later recognize the child, but they are not allowed to get rid of the girl and put an end to her. According to the rules this would mean the same as committing murder upon the child after it had been sanctioned with water (Näsström 2001, 115-116). The child found by someone who felt sorry for the baby, or by someone rich and wealthy. The child is placed between two stones and a slab put on top, and a piece of pork is put in the mouth before the people go away. Or the piece of pork is put in the mouth, then a shelter is made beneath a root of a tree, the child is carried out and left. This type of caretaking has been compared with the handling of slaves (Mundal 1989, 123-124). Behind these contradictive motives there are the thoughts of letting the child die without the participation of the parents, or in spite of their participating in the event (Hovstad 1956, 347).

family structure counted children born by wives, frills (legitimate lovers of the husband) and the household slaves as legitimate, and the father, parent and family could have had a say depending on circumstance and tradition. Circumstances included social class and gender (Mundal 1989, 123-126; 1988) (Table 1), and both men and women took part in the act, freeborn as well as slaves. The literature (for overview, see Hovstad 1956) refer to the biological, social and economical motives behind infanticide, such as disability, poverty, hunger, population growth, family honour, jealousy and revenge.

CIRCUMSTANCE	CLASS AND GENDER
Disability	All classes
Poverty and hunger	The poor, servants, slaves, the fatherless
Family honour	Freeborn women of the elite
Population surplus	Females and males

Table 1. The circumstances related to the practice of infanticide according to the Norse sagas and the medieval Scandinavian laws (based on Mundal 1988, 1989).

The newborns in the spring – rite of sacrifice versus infanticide

In order to come to terms with the somewhat confusing and contradictive aspects appearing in the analysis, and to explain the context and circumstance of the Norwegian bog-find, we need to discuss the type of placement in the location and the problematic use of the term *sacrifice* in relation to ritual in the literary sources. We will consider how these aspects are implicit or integrated in the analysis of mortuary treatment of the bog-children, and how this may influence the explanation of the bog-find.

Narratives about human sacrifice of children occur in the legends and myths of the Norse, and seem to indicate continuity in the ideology of Iron Age society. In these narratives children function as idealistic models, given away as valuable gifts to deities. The importance of water has been established to define and explain the practice of children in bog-finds, and the practice of performing human depositions in lakes seems to culminate between BCE 300-CE (Näsström 2001, 54). In part this period of the early Iron Age overlap the dating of the Norwegian bog-find, but children in bogs have also been attested to the late Iron Age (CE 500-1000) in the archaeological evidence (Monikander 2010, 80, table 5).

The Norwegian bog-children were discovered in a wetland place, formerly a spring in the landscape, which were located away from the settlements. Seemingly, the newborns had not been accompanied by adults or material objects at the disposal. However, they were exposed to the element of water. A watery placement is reflected in the early Medieval literary sources dealing with infanticide. According to the Medieval Norwegian

Christian laws, the carrying out of children was forbidden (Mundal 1988, 10, note 4), but people were instructed to place disabled children under heaps of stones by the sea at the high mark of water (Mundal 1989, 132). The practice of watery placement for children differ from the treatment of the dead of all kinds stated in the Medieval Norwegian prohibition acts; i.e. covering corpses by stones or digging them down into the earth (Mundal 1989, 132). Similarly, the sacrifice of humans in springs or wells has been considered a religious activity by Tacitus (see also Sundquist 2007, 121). The discussion regarding the relationship between pagan fertility beliefs, fertility goddesses (*cf.* note 1) and Christian polemics towards continuing folk custom are centred around the use of springs within the landscape for various offerings (Bøe 1967, 58; Näsström 2001, 82-84, 2003, 26-72; Sundquist 2007, 116, 120-122; see also Semple 2011).

In her review on the use of the term sacrifice in anthropology and other academic fields Åsa Berggren has discovered some problematic issues related to implicit Judeo-Christian values, unclear categorization, and the inclusion of a greater variety of rituals. Sacrifice is often regarded as a universal and taken for granted. It is sometimes used as a covering term which may homogenize our understanding of varying practices. The offering concept and the term 'ritual deposition' have been brought forward to compensate for the awareness of problems among scholars, but also shown to be problematic, such as in the use of the term ritual; i.e. actions considered ritual by the participants may fall outside of the definition (Berggren 2010, 378-379, see also Bell 1992).

In general an initiation rite is a critical event for the individual, the family and the society; a crossing into the world of the family and a symbolic act of accepting or refusing its humanity, gender and affiliation. The practices surrounding the circumstance of childbirth have much in common with formalised religious and ritual behaviour (Beausang 2005, 126). The first time a newborn was put to the breast to be fed may have represented an important social rite to mark the choice between whether the infant should live or die (Mundal 1989, 131) as the Medieval Norwegian laws indicated clearly the proper time to get rid of the newborn. The correct time to remove the baby was the hour after delivery before the first feed.

The question of manipulation in order to create and transform individuals from one state of being to the other through rites of passage elucidates why the context of the bog-find is difficult to explain on the religious level of sacrifice. The critique of the application of terminology in relation to concepts of sacrifice, offering and ritual makes it clear that the bog-find may represent the outcome of ritual or non-ritual behaviour following childbirth, but which material remains have been difficult to observe at the time of retrieval or found without circumstantial evidence in the archaeological material at the time of analysis. Based on the circumstantial evidence, and granted the lack of objects in the Norwegian bog-find, we

have to ask whether the bodies of the newborns had been ritualized; i.e. decapitated or not? Could the rest of their corpses have been buried elsewhere? According to the study of Iron Age Man in Denmark, only children of high social rank were given burial treatment in contrast with children of lower ranks. These children were not disposed in graves, and only a few have been discovered in pits, wells and bogs (Selleveid *et al.* 1984, 282). Therefore we will approach the ideology and practice of mortuary treatment of the newborns on the general level of inclusion and exclusion of human beings as biological and social bodies in early Iron Age society.

In a life and death perspective, given the time gap between the date of the bog-find and the literary sources applied in the analysis, it is important to consider both the development of settlement patterns and ideology, attitude and practice of mortuary treatment of the Iron Age society in the Jæren region of south-west Norway. At the time of disposal of the newborns in the spring, the coastal region was transformed by cultural change due to extended agricultural and settlement expansion and population growth CE 200 and to CE 530/550. Due to the position of 'northway' – the seaway along the coast of Norway –, the development of an expanding warrior society with a chiefdom organisation representing a redistributive coastal economy, reflected a manifold trading system of production surplus from local and regional areas in exchange with luxurious goods from the Roman areas on the continent (Myhre 1978; 2003, 70-72). A set back in climate and settlement occurred around the time between CE 531 and CE 536 and again after the Justinian plague (CE 541-542) (Myhre in prep.). Following the breakdown of the chiefdom organisation and restructuring of the farm settlements in the 7th century CE, a state society with expanding centralised settlement patterns and petty kingdoms was established in the Viking Period (CE 700/750-1030) (see Myhre 1978, 2003).

In the world view of the Nordic religion, the dead were seen as possessing a higher degree of numinous power stronger and different than the living (Schjødt 2008, 2010, 175). The Iron Age society was based on family estates held together with a belief system in which the grave cult of family ancestors and the descendants played an important part. With regard to mortuary treatment, the Iron Age population practiced a selective burial custom of family representation mainly in the form of cremation graves in burial mounds. A comprehensive study of burial treatment of children in the early Iron Age society in Norway indicates a socio-cultural selection of ranking based on the stratification of social status, position and worth of children in the society (Vik 2007). In the region from CE 200 onwards, variations in the form of inhumation graves, and also to some extent collectively in the representation of cemeteries, added to the burial custom which continued until the introduction of Christianity during the Viking period (Lillehammer 1996a, 1996b; Bukkemoen 2007). In the ancestor burial cult, re-use of burial mounds occurred (Lillehammer 1996a; Bukkemoen 2007), and during the late Iron Age

burials also occurred in the ruins of earlier deserted farm houses (Lillehammer 1996b; Thäte 2007).

Notwithstanding the cultural variations and change in settlement pattern and mortuary treatment, continuous relationships existed in the Iron Age between a family settlement system of ancestor warrior estates and the practicing of a selective burial custom of family members. In periods or at events when normal conditions in the society or the family were threatened by crises, it is relevant to consider the question of similarity and difference in the mortuary treatment of newborns and other age groups in the early Iron Age society. Population growth may have led to structural transformations such as diminishing land availability, violent competitions between families or interhousehold inequalities; comparable with what happened later in Iceland CE 1000-1050 (see Beck *et al.* 2004, 837). In a strict sense, both the practices of sacrifice and infanticide form part of a selection process of human offspring that are motivated by the overall goal of the household, family or society in order to survive. The early Iron Age in the Jæren region was a time of cultural change, and children's bodies, or their fragmented corpses, could have been disposed of otherwise than through burial.

In the Norse poem *Rigstula*, *Hávamál* (i.e. saying of the high one) gives the rules on how to conduct oneself and live a proper life. By breaking the rules on the level of practice adults may commit crimes by crossing the limits of acceptable conduct. But in times of crises there is the duty of gift exchange connected with keeping the rules in order to prevent the worst from happening, or hoping for a change of circumstance. The meaningful code of behaviour on exchange and contracts of gifts (see stanza 145 in the introduction) points out an obligatory relationship between the voluntary given and the reciprocated (Mauss 200, 3). In the ultimate matter of child sacrifice, the ritual means ensuring the contact with the gods through gifts in order to stave off or prevent accidents and pests, or to soften up the gods in other ways (Näsström 2001, 123).

In looking upon infant treatment in general, there is a contradictory aspect in the recognition of 'sameness' or 'otherness' by considering the biological and mental capacity and the social and cultural identity of the infant depending on perceptions of circumstance of and attitude towards children and childhood in the society. A strive for balance of normality is seen in the practice of behaviour. According to Scott's study of infancy and death (1999, 89, 127), societies manipulate codes of death and give them cultural meanings and acceptance which are associated with fertility and life. Sacrificed infants were 'given up' and tended to be older compared to the neonatal victims of domestic infanticide. Her study demonstrates an in-between position of the infant as something biological and social between agency, change and continuity.

In the Norse world, the literary motives in poems about gods and heroes and prose about myths (*Snorre-Edda*)

present the precocious child, a type of not-realistic narratives about children (Mundal 1988, 10), but which reflect the ideals of children and childhood (Lillehammer 2008b, 98). In representing the family offspring and the potential adults of the future, children were perceived as something becoming in faculty and function (Lillehammer 2010b, 13; for case studies, see Lewis-Simpson 2008). In the Norse lifecycle, the value set upon childhood was low (Mundal 1988, 10). The sacrifice of newborns may have served as the powerful act of connecting the valuable qualities of the firstborn's right in the family with the cosmological powers of origin and creation (*cf.* Helms 1998, 78-79; Lillehammer 2008b). But, if childhood was valued low in the life cycle of the early Iron Age population, the newborn had the lowest potential capacity compared to the physical and mental faculties and functions of older children. In a socio-functional perspective, the sacrifice of a newborn may have been the easiest way out; i.e. cheating the gods.

Is it possible to explain some of the newborns in the Scandinavian bog-finds to representing unwanted children? The occurrences of children in the wetlands of Northern Europe, and in particular those with the evidence of newborns (*cf.* Selleveid *et al.* 1984; Monikander 2010), indicate various positions of 'being' in the world. Infanticide is the ultimate exclusion of a form of otherness by dislocating newborns from the strings of biological and social bondage and material care. In the Norse society, a variety of beliefs and motives existed behind the act of exclusion from the initiation rites of new family members. As people brought unwanted children out far away in the fields and forests, it is claimed that the deserted locations were probably the result of restrictions set against the practice by the medieval Christian law (Mundal 1989, 131).



Fig. 3. The steep mountain Utburden located at the mouth of a deep fjord at the coast Ryfylke, SW Norway. (Photo: © Roy Mangernes).

The social displacing of children outside the vicinity of settlement is found in the distribution of Scandinavian place names. A type of place name distributed in the eastern and western parts of Sweden refers to 'Barnakälla', 'Barnasjön', 'Barnatjärn', i.e. children's spring, lake, and pool. According to Swedish folklore the

newborns were thought to originate from lakes, bogs, brooks and the likes in the natural environment, or lakes and pools were the places children had been drowned by an animal, 'Bäckahesten' (the brookhorse) (Monikander 2010, 34).

Another type of place name is 'Utburden', a Norwegian place name referring to the Norse concept 'utburð' (carry out) in relation to children being carried out in the landscape. The place name has a variety of connotations to Nordic folklore on the dead child being. The meaning of the concept varies in the circumstance of time and place in the encounters of the dead-child being, and in the origin, form, behaviour and removal from the scene. The concept equally refers to an aborted foetus, or to a child who has been carried out, abandoned, drowned, or unburied (Pentikainen 1968, 192-194), to a child baptised without a Christian baptism, and the ghost of such a child (Fritzner 1973, 815), or a child who dies without being christened (Heggstad 1958, 762). Also, the 'utburð' is a 'troll' (ogre, monster) in Norwegian folklore linked to child murder or the ghost of a clandestine childbirth. Sometimes the afterbirth was looked upon as the twin of the child. If the afterbirth was not burned, it could transform into an 'utburð'. Many legends tell the tales of the 'utburð' crying and whining, or hanging itself on people's back and asking for a name to be given in order to get peace (A and G 1991, 193).

The dead-child images in the narratives, and whose ghost figures in a diversity of forms and shapes, especially animals, are perceived as representing beings of otherness in the world. In the transformation they are empowered with a fearful capacity to interfere in the human world of the living (Lillehammer 2008b, 101-102, table 1). This embodiment of a transformative existence in the different ways of otherness of the body and self in 'being in the world' (Hedeager 2011, 61-98, 99-104) is based on the ideas of a human/animal duality of soul-splitting and shape-changing central to the Nordic pagan tradition (see Mundal 1974; Steinsland 1990a; Hedeager 2011, 81-85), and which in particular has been explored in the development of Migration Period animalistic art (Kristoffersen 1995). The Norse saga *Flatøybok* deals with the childhood legend about a warrior to the first missionary king Olav Tryggvasson (CE 968-1000), Torstein Oksefot, who as a child was carried out, but found dying and taken care of by a farmer (see note 2). The saga relates the story about the little child Torstein who once stumbled and fell over his *alter ego*, a polar bear cub (Bæksted 1984, 200).

The circumstances of childbirth, nature of death, murder, and supernatural beliefs in apotropaic measures are connected with the word 'utburð'. The meaning is linked to the time, place and circumstance of being a social outsider, and not the opposite, as an insider and the one included into the human world by the performance of ritual acts. In particular it is relevant to speak of a common dead-child tradition of continuation covering the extreme northern and western parts of the Nordic area (Pentikainen 1968, 190-191). From two of the

neighbouring regions of the early Iron Age bog-find, two sets of high mountains with the place name 'Utburden' are known, one by the side of a deep valley, the other looking down at the steep side of a deep fjord (Fig. 3) and situated on the far outskirts of the largest excavated village location at present in Norway. The pre-historic settlement area of farmsteads is dated between the Bronze Age and Late Iron Age (BCE 1500/1400-CE 600/650) (Løken 1998, 107; 2005, 282-283, fig. 44). In the long-term aspect of 2000 years to suggest a link between settlement and mountain in the practice of carrying out of children in the landscape seems relevant.

By looking closer into the Nordic dead-child tradition in a landscape perspective the following spatial patterns emerge (Pentikainen 1968, 192-195, table 10) (Table 2). A major place linked to the encounter of the dead-child being is the deserted environment of a forest or a wilderness. The word refers also often to a hiding place of the child's body or a lake or water. Less represented are the places under a stone or a tree, a cattle shed or a deserted house. The least frequented place of encounter is the hill, such as 'Utburden'. The range and scope of these locations of encounter support the distribution indicating the disposal places of unwanted children in the landscape, and which are mentioned in the Norse and early Christian literary sources.

PLACE OF ENCOUNTERS	NUMBER OF REPRESENTATIONS
Forest, wilderness	15
Hiding place of child's body	12
Lake, water	10
Under stone or tree	7
Cattle shed or deserted cottage	6
Supra normal place name	3
Hill	2

Table 2. Place of encounter and number of presentations of the dead-child being distributed in the Nordic traditions (based on Pentikainen 1968).

Conclusion

The Norwegian bog-find of the early Iron Age is of an earlier date than the main body of literary sources brought forward here in order to explain the context of the find. The find is classified among the archaeological evidence of prehistoric human skeletal remains of wetland children from bogs in Northern Europe. In a Norwegian perspective, the bog-find is unique and the date gives rise to a variety of questions. On a long-term scale, compared with ideologies, attitudes and practices related to mortuary treatment of newborn children, the analyses have shown the contextual evidence to connect generally to wetland places of both sacrifice and infanticide in the location of the natural environment: a spring in the landscape. The marginal location of the infant remains in the landscape link the archaeological find to an environment represented in the traditions of Norse

literature, Nordic dead-child belief, Scandinavian place names and Norwegian medieval folksongs. As wetland places of both sacrifice and infanticide of children overlap to some extent, the interpretation of the bog-find is difficult.

The infant remains in the bog were discovered at the margins of a settlement area of central position in the late Roman and Migration Iron Age in the region. The disposals occurred at the onset of and during a period of cultural change in settlement pattern, population growth and mortuary treatment. If human sacrifice was an event caused by crises and not a common event in society, the amount of four to five newborns immersed in the outland spring may indicate circumstances of ritual communication in offering newborns to the gods rather than concealing them from every day walks of the living. By reconsidering the circumstantial evidence in relation to alternative cultural theories, the performance of familial sacrifice by giving away valuable offspring as tributes to the gods at times of unbalance and stress in society is possible to model. The main point of the sacrifice argument is the ritual act of immersing the newborns into a spring of water. The location is regarded as sacred in this relationship and considered a liminal place of transition on the travel through the landscape to the other world.

The Nordic dead-child belief seems to suggest circumstances where this motif was not fulfilled, which may indicate a location connected with the practicing of infanticide directed upon unwanted children. This argument is supported by the facts that the newborns were dislocated from the vicinity of settlement and not disposed together with adults and/or material objects. The location in the outland spring connects them as outcasts also to a liminal place in the landscape. In considering liminality a state between danger and purity (Douglas 1966), a third position is possible to suggest; the outland spring representing a transformative boundary between landscape and people, connects the newborn children to dimensions which signify them as powerful beings in-between nature and culture (Lillehammer 2000, 2008b, 2010a, 23, 2010b, 15).

A strong relationship between humans and nature is seen in the belief system of the Iron Age. This is found to be integrated in the questions underlining the narratives of children and child treatment in the relationships to existence and place on a long term scale: Where do children come from and where do they go to? In the narratives of place they are connected with watery locations in the natural environment; in the narratives of the dead-child their ghosts are represented in the shape of animals. From the perspective of rites of passage (van Gennep 1965), newborn children have passed the threshold of birth, but their existence are in the state of betwixt and between. Their nature of otherness separate and consign them outside the normal structures of society. In the handling of death (Bloch and Parry 1987), they may return permanently and naked from whence they came; to invisibility, to darkness, to the wilderness (Turner 1991, 95). Or to create a balance in the world's

cosmic order, they may return also for transformation and rebirth in the fertile and nurturing hidden depths of nature's womb guarded in the spring by a powerful deity (see note 1). As these hypotheses do not disconnect society's social memory from the use of liminal places in the environment for various purposes, the discourse on sacrifice versus infanticide in representing a social divide between normality and abnormality of children and child treatment becomes less futile and open for further discussions.

The bog-find of newborns from the early Iron Age is an important missing link in the discourse on continuity and discontinuity of the cultural practices of infant treatment in the Iron Age of Northern Europe during times of change. In a landscape perspective on a broader scale, in order to explain the appearance and background of wetland children from the territorial and seasonal boundaries and divisions of bogs, marshes, fens, wells, springs, pools, lakes, brooks, streams, rivers and seas, the inclusion of comparative and interdisciplinary studies of children remains inside and outside the vicinity of houses, settlements and natural environments in the landscape are recommended. Analyses of the infant bones, in order to confirm and establish their biological sex, and the origin and nutrition of mothers, have seriously to consider the unique material evidence in relation to scientific methods in the present.

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