

Chapter 3: At the Water's edge by Julie Lund,

Introduction

One area of correspondence between Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse mentalities and world-views lies in the central role of rivers and lakes. While the role of waterways was probably not identical for each area, similarities in the source material – both in terms of archaeological finds and written sources – suggest that one way of grasping the role of water in the Anglo-Saxon landscape is to study the better documented Scandinavian perspective. The source material comprises descriptions and references to waterways and wetlands in texts, and archaeological evidence in the form of the deposits of tools, weapons, jewellery and ritual objects that are found in them. Accordingly, in this chapter I will first examine the wetland deposits and the role of lakes and rivers in Scandinavian cosmology with a focus on the Viking Age – using them then as analogies for practices and beliefs in Anglo-Saxon England. This will be an attempt to gain insight into Anglo-Saxon attitudes towards artefacts and landscape. The connection between the legendary smith and the bank of waters will be touched on. Finally, the role of the wetlands in a Christian context will be debated.

The interpretation of depositing artefacts in wetlands has long been debated in archaeology. The topographical context was used as the main criteria for this division, in which the wetland finds and finds in the close vicinity of large stones were interpreted as offerings, whereas the major part of the finds from dry land were considered to be stored artefacts – treasures, stocks and scrap metal. This dividing line between the sacral and the profane hoards established by Sophus Müller in 1886 was maintained in large parts of the research of prehistoric acts of depositions in the following 100 years (Müller 1886; Karsten 1994:24; Bårdseth 1998:12; Melheim 1999; Needham 2001:278). From the 1980ties and onwards a gradual transition can be identified from seeing the hoards – including many of the finds from dry land – as *offerings* towards interpreting them as traces of *ritual actions* (Levy 1982; Bradley 1990:23-24). This has meant a shift from discussing to which *gods* the depositions were intended towards focusing on *the social consequences and the praxis aspect* of the ritual acts of depositions (Berggren 2006). Ritual acts of depositions include a variety of hoard categories, and the motives for the act can be numerous. The hoards from the period from 500 and onwards, and in particular the hoards from Viking Age Scandinavia, have been placed within

quit a different frame of interpretation than the prehistoric ones – as either treasures or accidental losses. In the last ten years even these hoards have however now been categorised as traces of ritual actions (Zachrisson 1998; Hedeager 1999; Andrén 2002; Lund 2004; Ryste 2005; Spangen 2005). The acts of deposition in the Viking Age and Late Anglo-Saxon Period were not isolated in history, but represented the prolongation of a very long tradition. It should be noticed that rituals are not always religious, but can be political or judicial acts (Detienne 1989; Rappaport 1999:24-25, 31; Habbe 2005). This is seen clearly in the Old Norse sources where oath taking and the opening of the assembly meetings are accompanied by ritual actions (Habbe 2005). Even acts of deposition have been seen in this light, being interpreted as actions relating to boundary disputes or oath taking (Blair 1994: 104, see even Semple this volume).

The alterations in the studies of deposits was part of the general changes in landscape studies from the 1990s onwards, which gave a focus on the landscape as a media rather than as a scene for human actions – where humans formed, but were also being formed by the landscape (see for instance Barrett et al. 1991; Welinder 1992; Bender 1993; Bradley 1993, 2000; Tilley 1994; Thomas 1996). In other words, the use of space has social consequences, as it constitutes social structures. Structuring the landscape can be a means to create and maintain the identity of individuals and groups. This realisation gave even rise to recognizing that acts of deposition create and provide meaning attached to specific places (Brück 2001:297; Osborne 2004:7), and that the location of the depositions in the landscape is connected to mental structures and perceptions of world-views which is interwoven in the landscape and consolidated through the use of it (Zachrisson 1998:93-122; Hedeager 1999:241-243; Ryste 2005:59-67; Spangen 2005:33). The study of acts of depositions is a study of the cultural landscape, as the depositions bear witness to social relations between humans, artefacts and places. Since acts of depositions stress particular features in the landscape, they should enable us to get a glimpse of how the cognitive landscape was structured. A ‘cognitive’ landscape refers to the layers of knowledge intertwined in the use of the physical landscape, knowledge that has its roots in the mentality, world-view and cosmology of the people who used it. The cognitive landscape can be approached through studies of the archaeological material, the place-names and the narratives connected to places.

Personality of objects

The choice of artefacts for deposition was hardly accidental. Janet Hoskins states that "things tell the story of people's life" (Hoskins 1998), but based on the Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse written sources it could equally be stated that in England and Scandinavia "people were telling the stories of things' lives". Most of these texts were written down after the conversion, and some of them arguably contain traces of Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse attitudes towards artefacts and landscape which could fuel interpretation of the hoards. In these texts we hear of swords and pieces of jewellery being acquired, passed on as gift or heritage, being buried in a mound with the latest owner, and regained by new owners by breaking into the mound and fight the spirit living in it. Weapons could bear names, such as Arthur's sword *Caliburnus*, and his spear *Ron* (*Historia Regum Britanniae*, book VII, 189-190), or the stout sword *Mimming* in the Old English poem *Waldhere* stanza 2-4. The sword *Skovnung* in *Kormaks Saga* complains loudly when it is not treated properly (Drachmann 1967:28-30). A sword with the same name in *Thord Hredes Saga* is described as a cool-headed sword (Drachmann 1967; Idsøe 2004:62). Even where swords were broken and forged into new weapons, they are described in a way that indicates that they were believed to have their own personality which survived through this transformation (Davidson 1962:171-173). If we look at the archaeological material, some specific artefacts were either hoarded or buried in mounds that were reopened soon after the burial. It does seem possible that similar ideas could have existed for weapons in the real life of the time when these stories took place, in the Anglo-Saxon period and Viking Age.

Possessing an object include the creation of a social relation between the person and the artefact – and in this process the artefact becomes more than its own materiality (Weiner 1985:212; Gosden 1999:120). It can consequently come to possess the quality of a social agent (Gosden 1999:120). In that perspective the act of deposition can be seen as the final stage of the social life of the artefact. The reason for this ending can be that the identity of the artefact was bound to the identity of a person, so that if for instance the owner died the deposition of his sword could be a way of dealing with this object. The sword would in this sense be an inalienable object, connected to its original owner even as it circulated between men (Mauss 1954 [1924]; Weiner 1985:210; Fowler 2004:57) – an heirloom that brought along the stories of the previous owners. This means that even the character of the deposited artefact can give us an insight in the mentality and world-view of the Anglo-Saxons. A central aspect of such inalienable artefacts is that they cannot be destructed (Weiner 1985:210). The acts of depositions could in this sense be a way of handling an object with a complex social

biography – taking them out of the everyday life, but keeping them at specific places which bore special meaning.

If we compare the stories of the artefacts in these sources with the way material culture was handled in England and Scandinavia it is likely that *some*, but certainly not *all* artefacts were considered agents with their own name and identity. It should be noted that the concept of personified objects was still appreciated in the 10th century, as the Christian poem *The Dream of the Rood* demonstrates. Here, the story of Christ is told to the poet by the wood of Christ's crucifix itself. The animation of objects in the early medieval world indicates a deep mind-set towards the character of specific objects – artefacts with complex social biographies, inalienable artefacts such as heirlooms, bride-silver or religious artefacts. In what follows, we should view the objects as having personality and biography, thus broadening the significance of their deposition in wet places.

Objects in the waters

Prior to the Anglo-Saxon period, acts of deposition consistently took place in wetlands in both Britain and Scandinavia. The Scandinavian depositions from the first centuries AD consist of huge amounts of destroyed weapons laid down on different occasions. The large weapon sacrifices are part of the extensive water cult that can be found throughout most of Northern European prehistory – in Neolithic sacrifices of meals and humans, the impressive Bronze Age hoards with weapons, jewellery and cult objects, and in the Pre-Roman Iron Age depositions of cauldrons, wagons and humans (Fabech 1991; Kaul 2003; Koch 1998). The large Iron Age weapon sacrifices of weapons – mainly spears and swords – shields, tools, and other equipments for an army from South Scandinavian represent some of the most spectacular wetland finds, interpreted as sacrifices of the weapons of a defeated enemy (Ilkjær & Carnap-Bornheim 1990; Ilkjær 2003; Kaul 2003; Dobat 2008). They are dated to the period from the 4th century BC to the 5th century AD, with the majority of the deposits placed in the 3rd and 4th century AD. The material consisted of thousands of weapons and the ritual acts included deliberate damage of the artefact and in many cases even the sacrifice of animals (Ilkjær & Carnap-Bornheim 1990; Ilkjær 2003).

Compared to this material the finds from wetland from the later period are clearly limited in numbers, though as it will appear in the following, not in quality. In Scandinavia fibulae and bracteates were placed in wetlands or at the edge of wetlands during the 5th to first half of the 6th century (Hedeager 2003). Depositing ceased in the 6th century, but reappeared in the late 8th century (Fabech 1991; Hedeager 1999; Lund 2004). From the late 8th century until the beginning of the 11th century weapons, jewellery, coins and tools were again deposited in bogs, lakes, rivers and in the sea (Geißlinger 1967; Hines 1989; Zachrisson 1998; Hedeager 1999; Andrén 2002; Lund 2004, 2005, 2006). The wetland deposits from the 8th – 11th century are of a quite different character than those of the earlier periods: successive large scale depositions in the same place are relatively rare, and most of the material consists of artefacts laid down either singly or as small hoards. These artefacts only very rarely show any signs of being damaged prior to the deposition. They tend to cluster in rivers and lakes. A significant number of river finds come from places with sacral names, such as Gudenå in Jutland, Denmark, a name meaning ‘stream of the gods’ (Lund 2004, 2005, 2007).

One way of approaching an interpretation of the Scandinavian river finds is to examine the role of the watercourses in the Older Edda, Snorri’s Edda and the Skaldic Poetry. Especially some of the poems in the Older Edda – including *Völuspá*, *Hávámál*, *Grímnismál* and *Völundarkviða* – and the Skaldic Poetry are considered to have a consistent core of pagan myths and beliefs. In the early Middle Ages, rivers and streams were often used as administrative borders for ownership of land (Øeby-Nielsen 2005:130). This resembles the Old Norse texts, where the watercourses work as borders, where groups of beings – men, gods and giants – lived on different sides of a river (Østmo 2005:64). In this sense the rivers organised the different types of beings spatially in the cosmology. Mythical watercourses are listed in *Grímnismál* and Snorre’s *Pulur* with names referring to the very special character of the waterways in question (Vigfusson 1991; Simek 1993). Several of these have names related to warfare and battle, for instance *Gunnþró* (meaning *the groove of battle*), *Gunnþorin* (meaning *eager for battle*), and *Ormt* (meaning *the one that divides armies*) (*Grímnismál*, stanza 27-29; Simek 1993). Another theme in the same poem is the description of watercourses, which contain or ‘flow with’ weapons, such as *Geirvimul* (meaning *the one bobbling with spears*), *Not* (meaning *the stinging*) and *Sliðr* (meaning *the dangerously sharp*). The latter appears in both *Grímnismál* and *Völuspá* stanza 36, where it says that “from East comes a river through *Eitrdalar* (meaning *the valley of poison*), it falls (that is *flows*) with swords and saxes, *Sliðr* is its name” (*Völuspá* stanza 36, my translation).

It has been stated that the concept of rivers with weapons in this Old Norse poem is simply an adaptation from Christian visionary literature (Simek 1993 [1983]:294). But as the philologist Jonas Wellendorf points out, the concept of weapon-loaded rivers in Christian visionary literature appears later than in the Old Norse poetry and is presumably an adaptation of a pagan concept (Wellendorf 2006:23-24). This interpretation is indeed supported by the existence of the material counterparts, real, physical rivers containing weapons. According to *Grímnismál* the weapon-loaded rivers, *Geirvimul* and *Not*, run around the sanctuaries or homes of the gods, whereas *Sliðr* runs through the area of the humans, but falls from here to *Hel*, the land of the dead. Thus, the weapon-loaded watercourses are also described as borders.

It is clear that oral or written metaphors in Old Norse literature have equivalence in Late Iron Age and Early Medieval material culture – in the sense that the landscape, the material culture and the poems contain intertwined metaphors (Tilley 1999:4; Domeij Lundborg 2006:40). The presence of names and description of watercourses ‘running with weapons’ indicate that people who produced and heard the poems represented in the Old Norse sources knew of real watercourses containing weapons. The ritual acts of deposition and the names and descriptions of watercourses in the Skaldic and Eddic poems are in this sense expressions of the same material metaphor: the concept of the sharp, dangerous weapon-loaded watercourses running through the world.

Rivers in the Anglo-Saxon cognitive landscape

Ritual deposits in the wetlands of England show continuity from the 4th to 11th century. Roman lead baptismal tanks, pewter vessels, and tableware mainly from the 4th century were deposited in wells, fens and rivers. It has been debated whether these depositions represent contemporary Christian acts or pagan rituals. It has even been suggested that they are expression of religious belief common to pagans and Christians (Petts 2005 [2003]:110-111). Not only liturgical objects, but even spearheads were deposited in rivers in this period (Swanton 1974). The material shows that the concept of wetlands as sacred places was present in the mentality of people living in England on the eve of the Anglo-Saxon era.

The number of artefacts from the Early Middle Age found in the English rivers is far too high to represent accidental losses. As in Scandinavia the dominating part of the material is weapons, yet jewellery and tools are also represented. The number of hoards in England decreases in the 6th- 8th century, but is far from lacking as in Scandinavia. For instance in the river Thames more than one hundred spearheads of Anglo-Saxon types have been found, spread over 25 places (Swanton 1974:31-89). The Early Anglo-Saxon spearheads from the 5th and 6th century are dominating (Cohen 2003:11), but spearheads from the previous and following centuries are represented (Swanton 1974). The deposition of Anglo-Saxon spearheads took even place in the Rivers Cherwell, Kennet and Way (Swanton 1974:59,75, 88-89), though in far lesser numbers than in the Thames. Particularly 9th-10th century swords, spearheads and axes of both Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian type have been recovered from the English rivers, mainly in the Thames, Lea and Witham (O'Neil 1944; Davidson 1962:xviii-xxi, 56, 64; Wilson 1965:32-44,50, 1981:15). Examples include the sword of Petersen's type X with silver inlays found in the river Thames at Battersea (Wilson 1964:107), the sword of type O/M found in the Thames at Kew (Peirce 2002:90-91), a spearhead from the River Thames (BM M&ME 1893,7-15,2), a scramasax, sword and tools found in a hoard in the bank of a small stream flowing past Greencroft in Lancaster (Wilson 1964:135-136), and a sword with an inlay of Latin letters, found in the river Witham opposite Monk's Abbey (Wilson 1964:143).

Not only weapons, but riding gear, tools and jewellery have appeared in these contexts in significant numbers. For instance a number of bronze stirrups with inlays in copper and silver have been discovered in the rivers Thames, Witham, and Avon (Shetelig & Bjørn 1940:58, 88, 99; Hinton 1974:48-50; Backhouse et al. 1984:105-106). Ornaments in Anglo-Saxon as well as Scandinavian style are also represented in the wetland finds. For instance a gold finger ring with engravings was found in the River Neve, an ornamented bone pin in Ringerike style and the 11th century Hammersmith plaque were recovered from the River Thames, and the so-called Witham pins – a set of three silvergilted, linked pins with circular heads from the 8th century were found in the River Witham (Shetelig & Bjørn 1940:92; Wilson 1964:132-134, 158-159; Backhouse et al. 1984:109). The finds of ornaments, riding gear, and tools underlines the interpretation of the finds as being ritual depositions and not traces of battle. The majority of finds has been identified in parts of England where Scandinavians had a strong impact in the Viking Age. Yet, wetland depositions were definitely not introduced by the Scandinavians to the Anglo Saxons as the finds of 5th and 6th century spearheads and the

Witham pins underlines; but the practice seems to have been revived in the Viking Age in the meeting and fusing of people and traditions in Early Medieval England.

Like the weapon depositions from South Scandinavia, the English river-finds include a high number of unique artefacts. One example is the scramasax of Anglo-Saxon type from the River Thames found at Battersea, London from the 9th – 10th century. It has inlays in copper, bronze and silver. Runes forming the *futhorc* alphabet and the masculine name *Beagnoth* are inscribed on the blade (Wilson 1964:144-146; Owen-Crocker 1981:72). This could indeed be the sort of artefact that was believed to have identity and agency in the Anglo-Saxon world. The name on the sword has so far been interpreted as either the name of the producer or the owner of the sword. The inscription on the blade can however just as well have been the masculine name of the sword itself. The name *Beagnoth* is Anglo-Saxon. It consists of two sections, the first meaning either ring- or crown- and the other meaning either –boldness or –booty (Michael Benskin, pers. comment). This was rather the name of the sword itself than the name of the owner. As the name possibly signifies that it was a gift from the crown, it indicates that social relations materialised in the sword were central. This sword could indeed be a name object, possessing a social identity that included personality and agency, just as we know them from the Old Norse and Anglo-Saxon sources.

The quality of the finds in terms of detailed decorations, the use of silver and golden inlays, and the presence of objects carrying inscriptions clearly exceeds the quality of weapons and jewellery in most of the contemporary graves. The objects found in the rivers were definitely not rubbish thrown in the river, but of the first water. On the contrary they represent some of the highest level of the craft of the time, such as the richly decorated silver-gilded Witham pins, a silver-gild binding strip with an animal head and a runic inscription dating it to the late 8th century found in the bank of the River Thames near Westminster Bridge (BM M&ME 1869,6-10,1), or a pair of stirrups decorated with inlaid brass wire found at the bank of River Cherwell, near Magdalen Bridge (Hinton 1974:48-50). The concept of weapon-loaded watercourses is not found in the Anglo-Saxon texts, but the material from the English rivers does demonstrate that their material counterparts existed – rivers ‘running with unique objects’.

Bridges, fords and crossings point – thresholds and passages

The hoards of weapons, jewellery, keys and whet stones from South Scandinavia are often found clustering around fords and bridges, a phenomenon that can relate to the role of the bridge in the cognitive landscape, being a threshold and a passage between the living and the dead (Lund 2005). The 5th – 10th century settlement and cemeteries of South Scandinavia are often divided by a watercourse and connected by a bridge or a ford (Hedeager 2002:14; Adamsen 2004:22ff). This has its counterpart in the Old Norse texts, where the land of the living and the land of dead is divided by a river and connected by a bridge (Hedeager 2002:14; Lund 2005). The same line of thought seems to have been expressed in the structure of many of the Viking Age rune stone inscriptions. The word ‘bridge’ are often placed at the top point of the arch of the inscription, dividing the name of the bereaved on the one side from the name of the deceased on the other side of the arch (Lund 2005:126-127). The same structure can even be identified on stones that do not include the word ‘bridge’ in the inscription. Thus, the placing of the inscriptions seem to be expressing a general metaphorical thinking of living and dead being placed on each side of a border, such as a watercourse. After the establishment of Christianity in Scandinavia the bridge maintained its role as a threshold for the dead – with a shift from having the dead *body* crossing the bridge to a concept of the *soul* of dead crossing the bridge on its journey. In continental Christian sources the bridge was also described as a place for judgement or trial of the soul (Lund 2005). The rituals of depositing artefacts at the bridges and fords in Scandinavia are presumably actions that referred to these specific layers of meaning connected to these crossing points – being a threshold and a passage between living and dead.

Archaeological material and place names indicate that the bridges and fords were also central part of the cognitive landscape in Anglo-Saxon England. Many of the described finds from the English rivers are found in close vicinity to bridges and crossing points. This was not only the case for the deposition of weapons and tools deposited in the period under strong Scandinavian influence in the 10th century, but also for the hoarding of spears from the previous centuries in the river Thames, in the River Wey at Weybridge, Surrey (Swanton 1974:88), and in the river Witham where swords, long knives, axe heads and spearheads are found clustering around crossings and causeways (Stocker and Everson 2003:280). Place-names also indicate that crossings were important in the Anglo-Saxon cognitive landscape, namely Weeford in Staffordshire, and Wyfordby in Leicestershire. The first part of the names comes from *wēoh*, meaning idol, shrine or sacred place (Wilson 1985:179-181). These sacral names show that the role of the bridge in the world-view and possibly also in the cosmology

was not simply passively adapted from the Scandinavians in the Late Anglo-Saxon period, but must have already been part of the Anglo-Saxon mentality. In areas with Scandinavian influence the bridge was significant, as indicated by the archaeological material. At an excavation at Skerne, East Yorkshire, the oak logs of a wooden bridge were discovered along with four knives, a spoon bit, an adze, a sword, and the bones of several animals (Dent 1984:253). The sword was of JP type V / X, dating from the 10th – early 11th century (Petersen 1919). The bones represent more than 20 animals – horses, cows, sheep, and dogs. They showed no traces from slaughtering or consumption but one: a horse was stroke down with in axe in the forehead (Richards 2000:33). The combination of the weapon and tool deposition, the animal bones and in particular the handling of the horse also indicates that this material represent a religious ritual – a sacrifice.

The role of the bridges and crossing points as passages has other facets. In many cases Swedish as well as English assembly places use monuments and specific landscape features in the creation of the place. The assembly place can be bordered and shielded by a watercourse so that the journey to the assembly places often includes crossing a bridge (Sanmark & Semple 2008, forthcoming). This placing forms a striking parallel to the Old Norse *Grímnismál*, which states that the god *Pórr* every day crosses the rivers *Kormt*, *Ormt* and *Kerlauger two* on his way to the assembly place at the life tree *Yggdrasil* (*Grímnismál*, stanza 29). According to Snorri the Asir goods ride across the bridge to the assembly place at *Urðar brunni* every day (Edda Snorri Sturlason, *Gylfaginning* 14). The bridge is also the centre of a number of battles described in a number of Early Medieval written sources, such as the Norwegian Sagas of the Kings. This could be due to the fact that watercourses often formed administrative borders for ownership, parishes and counties – borders that could have older roots (Øeby-Nielsen 2005:130). Yet, the artefacts found in the vicinity of the bridges and fords can hardly be objects lost during battles, as they as we have seen include jewellery, keys, mounts, tools and decorated stirrups.

The aspect of the bridge as an entry gate to the settlement is clearly expressed in the spatial structure of the significant Viking Age settlement, trade and cult place of Tissø on Zealand. The only access to this spectacular site is reached by crossing the stream Halleby Å by the 50 m long wooden bridge dated to the Viking Age. Close to the bridge an unusual double grave has been excavated, containing the skeletons of two men, who were both decapitated. Their heads have been placed between their legs facing upwards. These skeletons have been carbon

dated to 1030 – 1040 AD (Jørgensen 2002:221), forming the youngest finds from the Tissø complex. The liminal place of the bridge apparently formed a suitable place for burying the executed men. Thus, on many levels the bridge or ford formed a central point in the cognitive landscape, as moving from one bank to the other could include crossing from one area of ownership, to enter an assembly place or to enter the land of the dead.

Lakes in the Scandinavian cognitive landscape

When we turn from rivers to lakes we find quite a different pattern in the comparison of Scandinavian and English material. In South Scandinavia weapons and jewellery from the 7th – 11th centuries are found in lakes, clustering around the bank of the lake, for instance in Lake Tissø (meaning *the lake of the god Þýrr*) on Zealand, Denmark, in Gudingsåkrarna (meaning *the holy fields of the gods*) on Gotland, Sweden and in Råbelöv Sjö in Scania, Sweden (Müller-Wille 1984:188f; Jørgensen and Sørensen 1995; Jørgensen 2002; Lund 2007:106-108; Lund 2008). The later does not have a theophoric place-name, but its name presumably derives from **Ball* from Old Norse *ballr* (meaning *dangerous, damaging, or the one, which gives fear*) (Kousgård Sørensen 1968:114). An analysis of the distribution of deposited artefacts in the lake Tissø shows that the weapons and jewellery were thrown in the water from the bank (Jørgensen 2002). The tendency, that weapons and tools are found *at the bank* or have been thrown *from the bank of the lake*, also appears in several other places in south Scandinavia (Lund 2007, 2008).

In Old Norse texts numerous lakes and bogs are related to female gods, and are mainly described as their residence (Näsström 1997:96-97). One notion of a body of water, *brunnr*, appears in several different contexts in the sources. *Brunnr* has mostly been translated to 'a well' and only rarely to 'a spring'. However, *Brunnr* can also be translated as a spring, stream, water stream and a watering place, and actually the term *brunns-munni* means the bank of a pond (Vigfusson 1991[1871]). According to *Völuspá* (st 19-20) the *brunnr Urð* is termed both *brunnr* and *sæ*, meaning lake. The second *brunnr* in the Old Norse sources is *Mimisbrunnr*, appearing in *Völuspá* (st 28) and Snorri's Edda (Gylfaginning). The place-name *Mimirs Lake* occur several places in Scandinavia (Simek 1993:216f). This supports the idea that the *brunnr* of the Old Norse sources could signify a lake. A third *brunnr*, *Hvergelmir*, is in *Grímnismál* 26 described as the source of all rivers. According to the Eddic poems the third world has its roots in *Urð* and *Mimisbrunnr* and according to Snorri's Gylfaginning the third

root is in *Hvergelmir*. Thus, it seems possible to translate the concept *brunnr* as a body of water – a lake, a wetland, a pond – and not just to a humanly constructed well. This forms a much more useful connection to understanding which type of landscape the poems are actually describing (Lund 2008)-

Armed with this re-reading, I would suggest that deposition in lakes was part of pagan practice referring to the sacred *brunnr*. Several actions take place on the bank or *Urð* of the *brunnr*. According to Hávámál (st 111), the *Pulr* (the cult speaker) or the god Oðinn himself has his speaker's chair placed at *Urðar brunni*. The *Norns* who are in charge of fate live at or in *Urð*, as stated in *Völuspá* (st 19-20) and the Skaldic poem *Sigurðardrápa* (Jónsson 1967:69), and the gods place for judgement is at *Urð*, according to Snorri (*Gylfaginning*). This means that the bank of the *brunnr* was central in the Old Norse cosmology. Further indications come from Adam of Bremen's description of the pagan sacrifices in Uppsala, where it says "Ibi etiam est fons, ubi sacrificia paganorum solent exerceri" (skolie 138): "there is also a *fons* in which pagan sacrifices are made". The word *fons* is most often translated to 'a well', presumably to relate it to *Urðr* and *Mimis brunnr*. *Fons* could however just as correctly be translated to 'a spring' (Lund 2004:208). In this sense the skolie states that in Old Norse paganism, sacrifices were performed in springs. The hoards from lakes could be traces of this type of activity.

Even in a Christian context the bank of the water stands out. In *Heliand*, a Saxon Gospel from around 830 we find elements from the Palestinian landscape being replaced with more familiar northern European features. Christ consistently addresses his disciples at the water's edge (Murphy 1992:40, n.63). In the Skaldic poem *Kristið Kvæði* by Eilífr Goðrúnarson from the 10th – 11th century, Christ is placed at *Urðr* (Simek 1993 [1983]:243): "In this way the strong king of Rome has strengthened his power over the Pagan countries; it is said that he has his seat in the south at *Urðar brunni*" (Jónsson 1967:144; my trans.). This has a remarkable resemblance to the location of the seat of the *Pulr* or *Oðinn*. The poem indicates that as a pragmatic adaptation to local customs in the course of Christianisation, Christ was placed in an already established cognitive landscape. This implies that the bank of water was considered to be a liminal place, where god(s) and humans communicated. The bank of the lake thus formed a central point in the cosmology and consequently in the use of the landscape.

The lake in Anglo-Saxon mentality

The Anglo-Saxon epic poem *Beowulf* suggests that the lake was central to the Anglo-Saxon cognitive landscape. The action of the poem takes place in the 5th or 6th century, but the text was written down between the 8th and the 10th century and represents a fusion between Old Norse and Anglo-Saxon mentalities. Considering that the narrative was placed in Scandinavia, but written down in England, it is striking that the natural landscape described could as easily be England as South Scandinavia. Two episodes in the poem are worth noticing in this context: Firstly, Beowulf demonstrates his status as a hero by participating in a swimming competition holding his sword all the way and even killing nine beasts with it (*Beowulf* 538-541; 574-575). Secondly, to take the fight to Grendel's mother he goes to the moors and enters the lake she lives in (*Beowulf* 1492-1496). In her underwater hall he uses a huge ring sword from the hall to kill her (*Beowulf* 1557-1569). The strange sword then melts and is burned up from the hot blood of the beast (*Beowulf* 1605-1617). This sword could indeed be defined as a potentially dangerous artefact which could or should not leave the lake. Considering the long debate on the dating of the poem, it is interesting to notice that the idea of a dangerous lake that contains a remarkable and tabooed sword matches the type of hoards known from South Scandinavia in the 8th – 11th century rather than the 6th – 7th century.

In England there is at least one lake that has a theophoric place-name, Tyesmere in Worcestershire, a name meaning the pool of the God Tiw (Wilson 1992:13). In essence this place-name is identical to the Tissø, the lake of the God Þýrr, one of the most significant places of weapon depositions. But in contrast to Tissø, no weapons have so far been discovered in Tyesmere. This follows a general picture: whereas the English rivers contain a large number of weapons, as of today no weapons from the Anglo-Saxon period have been found in English lakes. Whether this represent a different pattern of ritual behaviour in Scandinavia and England, or whether it is due to a lack of survey in the lakes is unknown.

The smith on the bank

In the late 10th and early 11th century there were a number of depositions of smith's tool chests in South Scandinavia. These too tend to be found at the banks of waters – mainly lakes – but in a few instances they are placed at the banks of rivers (Lund 2006:323-326). In legend,

myth and saga smiths with supernatural powers are situated at a water obstacle separated from the settlement (Lund 2006:331-334). The social role of the smith has been a major focus of recent research, emphasizing the links between metal technologies and processes of transformation, the smith, so to say, giving life to the objects (Burström 1990; Hedeager 2002; Rønne 2002; Jakobsson 2003; Gansum and Hansen 2004; Barndon 2005). If certain special artefacts were considered in Late Iron Age as having a social identity, as stated earlier, the smith's kit were central in the processes of transformation. Depositing the tool chests could indeed be a way of handling potentially dangerous tools (Lund 2006:331-334).

Tool chests were also deliberately hoarded in England. The number of finds indicates that these hoards cannot have been lost accidentally or intended to be recovered. The Anglo-Saxon tool hoards are found at Hurbuck, near Lanchester, Durham (Hodges 1905:215), at Flixborough, Scunthorp (Leahy 1995:141), at Westley Waterless, Cambridgeshire (Wilson 1976:268), at Nazeing, Essex (Morris 1983), and in Stidriggs, Dumfries (Leahy 2003:170). The English hoards are dated from 8th – 11th century, in other words the analogous period to the Scandinavian immediately following the introduction of institutional Christianity. Some are found on dry land, but a few are placed in wetland contexts. The Hurbuck hoard was found in the stream Shallhope Burn, the Nazeing hoard at the bank of the river Lea. A tool chest found in a bog at Birsay (Orkney) was decorated in Anglo-Saxon style (Arwidsson and Berg 1983:26). It is even possible that the Westley Waterless hoard was a wetland find, as it was found while digging drainage (Morris 1983:37). The Flixborough hoard was found on dry land, but shows strong resemblance to the Scandinavian finds in terms of content. It consisted not only of tools, but even included large metal containers and an iron bell, just as the Scandinavian tool hoards from Mästermyr, Veksø and possibly Nosaby (Leahy 1995; Lund 2006). Legendary smiths had a central role in the Early Medieval world view. Regin and Weland appear in the iconography with pagan as well as Christian motifs (Hauck 1977; Müller-Wille 1977:131; Staecker 2004:57). As the smiths's use of the landscape in the legends matches the location of the deposits of tool chests this could be actions relating to the special role of the smith in the Early Medieval period. This material raises the question: could these customs survive within Christianity.

Did Christianity dry out wetland thinking?

Early Christian laws from Norway forbid sacrifices to rocks, trees and shrines, whereas these texts do not mention sacrifices in wetlands. However, the prohibition of pagan ritual practices described in the English Laws of Knut included the veneration of rivers and wells (Sanmark 2004:151). In Latin versions, the rivers and wells are termed *aquam* and *fontes*; in the Old-English versions they are termed *flod* and *wæterwyllas* (II Cnut 5 – 5,1). Whereas both *aquam* and *flod* are clearly rivers, the term *fons* could (as discussed above) refer to a spring. The term *wæterwyllas* can also be translated as a spring of water (Bosworth and Toller 1898). Thus the sacrifices forbidden in the Law of Knut took place in the very type of wetlands where acts of depositions took place at this time.

The ritual use of wetland was not confined to Scandinavia or England. In Ireland, where no Nordic incursion is suspected prior to the 9th century, objects of the 5th – 10th century have been found in lakes and bogs. For instance has a sword dated to the 6th – 7th century been discovered in the river Lung, and a sword of a type known from the 7th – 8th century have appeared in the River Boyle at Tivannagh – both of them found at places where artefacts had been deposited in the previous periods (O’Sullivan et al. 2000:174; Fredengren 2002:259). In Ireland, a number of liturgical objects – books, book shrines, bells, and crucifixes – from the Irish Early Middle Ages have also been recovered from the wetlands (Fredengren 2002:259; Fredengren et al. in press: kap. 7). For instance at Clonmacnoise, a monastery in the inland of Ireland, were the finds from the vicinity of a wooden bridge included a liturgical copper plate from the 7th-8th century (O’Sullivan et al. 2000:174). As these finds predates the period of Viking influence, they could possibly be expressions of a pagan practice being incorporated in early Irish Christianity. Based on a combined analysis of the contemporary written sources and the archaeological material, it has been suggested that the Irish wetlands in this period were perceived as being inhabited by supernatural creatures, to which sacrifices should be made (Aitchison 1996; Fredengren 2002). The Christian religious objects found in Irish wetlands have been interpreted to represent blessings of the wetlands performed by clergymen, as is described in contemporary hagiographies (Fredengren 2002:259). This would mean that the act of depositing was maintained, but the meaning of the act was changed in early Medieval Ireland.

A similar mentality towards wetlands is present in the early Medieval England. According to ‘Vita sancti Guthlaci’ and the later poems ‘Guthlac A & B’, the Anglo-Saxon saint Guthlac chose to stay in a barrow on an island in a fen – a place conceived as the home of evil spirits

(Semple 1998:112-113). This indicates that the concept of supernatural creatures situated in wetlands was part of Anglo-Saxon mentality even within a Christian source. Many saints were also connected to specific wells and springs, and baptism could in some cases take place in rivers (Meaney 1995:35; Hines 1997:381; Stocker and Everson 2003:282). This use of the wetlands can have been a way of altering places already pervaded with layers of meaning and making it passable in a Christian context. In a sense Guthlac's placement in a dangerous, liminal landscape approached by crossing the fen inhabited by evil beings show concurrence to the use of water as a boundary, dividing living and dead, marking ownership or bordering the assembly places. Even the early monastic sites in England were often located on liminal places accessed by crossing a river (see Semple, this volume). In Ireland a large number of the silver hoards are found at the bridge or ford entering the monastic area (Krogsrud 2009). Thus, the use of waters as a division between 'them' and 'us' seems to have been fundamental in a Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon mentality, but was used in varying ways in the different contexts.

The conversion to Christianity was a long and irregular process, and institutionalised Christianity was not incorporated and established in England until the 10th century (see Carver this volume with references). The archaeological material of the previous periods shows a mosaic of different people, social groupings and varying rituals. As identity is created from the dispositions of the habitus of people, and the habitus is formed by and forms social practice (Jones 1997:90, 2007b:48-49), performing a ritual like the acts of deposition can be a means to create and maintain identity. Knowing where, how and why an object should be deposited in wetlands was the product of the group's habitus. By performing a ritual a group reproduces its identity and make a basis for the collective memory of the group (Assmann 1995:128-131). It has been suggested that the presence of the Scandinavians in England in the late Viking Age could have caused a resurgence of the Anglo-Saxon cult (Sanmark 2004:151). If we acknowledge that this paganism included concepts of mentality and world view on a general level and not just belief in its narrowest sense, it is clear that the depositions of weapons, jewellery and tools from mainly the 9th and 10th century could be expressions of the blossoming of cultural paganism. This tradition of mobilising specific landscape features through ritual acts had its roots in Pre-Christian Anglo-Saxon England, revitalised in the fusion of Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian traditions. The objects deposited in this period were of distinct Anglo-Saxon as well as Scandinavian types. Specific types of artefacts which were not deposited in Scandinavia are found in the English rivers, for instance stirrups, and several

of the objects have inscriptions on Anglo-Saxon in runes. Thus, the acts of depositions were most likely joint ritual practices, which could also contribute to merging the different ways of perceiving the landscape and the different types of objects.

Conclusion

The practice of depositing in wetlands took place in Northern and Central Europe through prehistoric and early historic times. However, the material is so varying that it can hardly be described as the same phenomenon. The wetlands bore specific associations and meanings in the different contexts of time and place. These dissimilarities can be seen in the very diverging types of objects being deposited – from artefacts with very short biographies being made at the place with the single purpose of hoarding to objects, humans and animals with very different and complex social lives, and from massive hoards of destroyed artefacts to deposits with single, whole artefacts. It can also be found in the preserved place names pointing towards fertility cult in one context and war cult in others, and as we see it in the English material, in the shift from using places of both still-standing and running water for hoarding in the prehistoric periods, to depositing in rivers exclusively. The special position of wetlands was characteristic features in Old Norse and Anglo-Saxon mentalities. Clearly, the meanings of the wetland varied regionally and inter-regionally, as is expressed in the many deposits from the rivers Thames, Lea and Witham, and the apparent lack of deposits in English lakes from the 6th century onwards.

The acts of hoarding reflected a mentality and world view where specific artefacts, especially weapons, but even jewellery and liturgical objects, were treated as social agents, which were deposited as a way of handling a tabooed objects or dealing with the place itself. The wetlands finds can in this sense be seen as expressions of the heterogeneity of religious practice in Anglo-Saxon England. The English deposits from the Middle Anglo-Saxon period can hardly have been actions performed by early Christians. The finds from the Late Anglo-Saxon period include Anglo-Saxon as well as Scandinavian types of objects. Thus, they were most likely deposited by people how were familiar with the Anglo-Saxon as well as the Scandinavian tradition of hoarding. They were hybrid acts from a period were a mosaic of groups and people with different identities met and fused in England.

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