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; Lillemhammer 2002, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2010a). From a Scandinavian perspective, among these are the places less visible in the environment (Björkkluger 1995), such as the wetland places (Fornmström 1993; Berggren 2010; Monikander 2010; Bergerbrant 2011) or their relationships to settlements (Ullén 1994) and rock carvings (Theedén 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 (Metzalf and Huntington 1991/1992), and to supernatual 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), deposits in liminal areas such as the wetland continued until the medieval period (Hedegård 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 (Eibbene 1986, 20); especially in Denmark, the Netherlands, and North Germany; to a lesser extent in Britain and Ireland (Dicks 1972; Stedal et al. 1986; Turner and Briggs 1986; Turner & Soule 1995; van den Sanden 1996; Coles et al. 1999; Bradley 2005). In the 1980s, European museum collections had over 1,500 human remains (Eibbene 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 (Dicks 1972; Glib 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 analysis of their bones in an archaeological context. These are aspects of great importance 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 spectrum of disciplines.

In the following paper I am going to demonstrate how 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 explore 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 bogfinds. A variety of literary sources, such as Ancient World narratives, Norse mythology, legends and sagas, Scandinavian medieval laws, Nordic folk beliefs, Scandinavian place names and Norwegian folk songs are included in the analysis. The interval between my paper at the Kent conference in 2006 and this publication has seen an increase 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 instance Brockliss and Montgomery 2010; Mustalahti and Laes 2011). On the various levels of mortuary behaviour and child treatment, the ideology, attitude and symbol are always related or connected with 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 are approached 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 practices 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 archaising 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 oral traditions, sagas and folktales 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 find models of the discovery. In the local name of the place was "Tviolda", referring to two natural springs formerly swelling in the bog. The bones were found together with as little as 30 cm depth between them 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 Haubaldsen 1989; Lillichammer 1989; Selleved and Næss 1991). 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 500-550) in Norway. It relates to the outland of one of the central farmdoms 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 dippolos C-14 dated respectively to pre-Roman period (BCE 475) and late Germanic period (CE 675). The youngest children (remains and infants 1) were found together with adults, two of which were male (Selleved 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 (Thorvidsen 1952: 30-30; Selleved et al. 1984, 242, table 9-10-1, Bergrerant 2011, table 1). With the exception of the Finnish material, this pattern of distribution 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 fetuses and neonates which have been discovered mainly with other objects at localities classified as sacrificial bogs (Bergrerant 2010, table 1 and 2; see also Monkkander 2010, 79-81, table 5, 86-91, table appendix 1). Compared with the adult remains, the lack of violence on most of the children's bones is significant (Monkkander 2010, 90). An osteological study of a Finnish Iron Age bog locality dated between 5th century BCE and 7th century CE (Monkkander 2010, 83-84) indicates that the disposal practice included a high amount of children. Among the skeletons, are 37% children and four children are infants under the age of one year (Forniost 1990, 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 death and capture the imagination of archaeologists. Corpses held in position by pieces of wood have involved an awareness of the supernatural possibilities at the grave and established Bradley 2005, fig. 5.1; van den Sanden 1996). In his book "The Bog People" P. V. Glob selected a collection of individuals to support his theory of the bog body theory, but the bog 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 the water (Glob 1969: 38). The bog finds are referred to the cultivation of bog cereals 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 underestimated (Strom 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; Hulgaard 2001, 537). The research has led the interpretation of bog bodies to develop into a sacrifice-theory (Thorvidsen 1952; Glob 1969; Fischer 1980) and a punishment-theory (Dierck 1965). In 1966, five hypotheses were put concerning the composition of human bodies in bogs, on the basis of the text of Tacitus in Germania part 1 (Tacitus 1923, 22). As an historian on religion, Folk Strom (1966, 234-236) concluded that the most likely theory is 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
Apopletic 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 'a sacrifice to a supernatural entity' 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 is often incompatible with disposals after death (Ström 1986).

In her discussion of bog-finds Elisabeth Munksågard (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 defied the valuable land.

A review focusing 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 booby sacrifice. The division 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 destroying the individuals in peat bogs. Depending on the size and value of the bog, the bodies or skeletons appear also in booby sacrifices and most show signs of violent death. 'Booby sacrifice' is defined after the human remains from the individual's bones or by the entire body, including the head and clothing. The archaeological finds contain a representative choice of the equipment of an Iron Age army (Fabeck 1991, 301).

The no-children argument by Munksågard (1984) reveals the difficulties in analysing similarity and difference between the human remains from the human sacrifices. Human skeletal remains from wetland areas compared to bodies, to raised and sunken bogs, and to fertility, human and booby sacrifices. It has been suggested that the Scandinavians from the early Iron Age represent women, men and children who have been killed deliberately as the result of punishment for crimes committed by the group, or because of the difficulties of the human sacrifices. However, they do not represent the potential of something new (Lillehammer 2002, 2005; 2010a, b), and biological social and cultural expectations may have related them to connections either promoting 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 discriminating the population of the landscape. The discrimination is defined by people themselves, and shared in a common "cosmological concept of Midgard/Argurd and Urgard reflects the division between in-field and out-field in the organisation of the landscape. The division is maintained by Midgard/Argurd and Urgard to 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 the situation 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:

- Murders
- Suicide
- Accident
- Natural death

The discussions are relevant to the classification of the Norwegian jung. The location of the find is a sunken bog, formerly the location of two springs. The disposal of the infants in the spring was either 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 traditions in the Hebrew Scripture, animals could be replaced in the substitute of children as sacrificial gifts (Stavrakopolou 2010, 23). The substitute aspect is one of the most important statements in the human remains from 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. The different circumstances of human infants in the stratigraphic layers in the bog are ambiguously difficult to penetrate due to the fragmentary and secondary state of the literary sources (Huldtgard 2001). However, it has been noted that the sacrificial
During the Iron Age a successive change of view world took place between CE 400-500, from the collective fertility Vanaí god Odin, the one-eyed god and all-father and the principal group of benevolent Norse deities in the pantheon. The ruler of life, death, and war, all the great shamans of inspiration and magic, he performed the legendary act of hanging himself from a three in exchange of almighty wisdom (1990), 79-81, 2011; see also Davidson 1993, 78). In the mythological cycle of Odin, the fani king Attila ascensioned with the already existing pan-German god Wotan/Odin and Odin’s son with his new, a concept that was important to the sacred meaning 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 (Heidegger 2011, 6, 17).

With regard to sacrifice, there were strict rules attached to the participation of the act. The 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 belief that the sacrificial act was usually a young man, woman or child. Parents offered their sons and daughters (Peel 2010, 5) or kings sacrificed sons and daughters Wotan/Odin (Vorstein 2005, 26-29).

According to my understanding in this perspective, the child treatment is linked to socio-religious identity and value in death on the same terms the behavior of a social group in the society (Lillehammer 2008b). It points to a society where constructive strategies 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 (Holtan 2003). The historical myths are largely derived from 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 (Næstebraten 2001, 26-28, 45-46). As the narratives about myths and legends were later transformed into writing in the medieval period after the conversion to Christianity processes to contrast pagan chaos with the Christ order of the world (Næstebraten 2001, 44-45). A significant similarity and difference existed between the two religions. According to the Christian doctrine mankind is a subject to God’s command and the believer is God’s obedient child or slave. The Norse language uses the concept in the meaning of those manners and customs that the individual had to accept and support. The relationship with the gods was a pact of friendship between man and deity, the god as being the being an inevitable act of violence. The central role of sacrifice in Christian ideology; particular the crucifixion of Christ (Maskeli 2010, 43). The transition from a pagan to a Christian attitude and practice of child treatment may overshadow the scholarly debate. The references in the medieval literary sources concentrate on turning against infanticidal, motivated primarily by saving of children’s souls (Mejelhøn 2009, 82-99).

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 children which could be actively putting them to death or allowing them to die (Encyclopedia 1974; on active and passive infanticide, see Crawford 2010, 66). Also, the relationship between the attitude and practice behind the social exclusion of children, we have to differentiate between child abandonment and deliberate infanticide (see below). Focusing on river the ritual, the idealistic model of this Christian practice is reflected in the Norwegian medieval religious folk song Akoj购物 (the Lamb of God) where the Virgin Mary finds a child abandoned on the river bank. As an 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 pagans right to carry the child out. In what manner these activities were based on pre-Christian traditions, to some extent, been disputed, and are difficult to place within a basis of contemporary sources (see Vusolianti 2011). According to Mejelhøn’s (2009, 90) comprehensive study of infant treatment in the Scandinavian transition period to the early medieval, 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 described as the process of isolating the children. The concepts differ between the child being carried out (bor, sla), slain (slit), cast out, or let die (slit). 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 some act or act. A possible background for explaining the Norse type of infanticide. It is as an act of actively killing the newborn, and therefore it differs from the practice of taking care of foundlings (Mundal 1989, 120), and the sagas mention several cases.2 What, then, were the attitudes towards the practice of infanticide in Norse society? In Germany part I written in ch. 96 CE, at a time corresponding with the Norwegian bog-find, Tacitus (Tacitus 232, 22) informs us that the death penalty for adults, men as well as women, was the drowning in a stream. The murder of a woman was punishable as a shameful death in the act in society (Ströms 186, 231). In the Norse world practicing infanticide was regarded as shameless among the rich Icelanders (see Mundal 1989, 132-133; also Mejelhøn 2009, 82-83; Vusolianti 2011, 12, 18 note 5 and 26), 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 legal texts contain prohibition acts against the cultural practice of infanticide. The texts instruct people on how to ensure the sex-decide on newborn children. (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 infant death, as the content describes the methods which dealt with saving the children (Mundal 1989, 122) (see note 2). As with the biblical legend of a son of pregnant woman who was killed by a river. The result of the intercession to the Virgin Mary to defend her parents to fear the devil would lead to their expulsion from heaven (Lisletus et al. 1946, 13-14, 113).

In the Norse tradition of childbirth, the duty of the parents to take care of newborn children 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 waters of linden", and the care experienced by the father (or sometimes the mother) giving a name. In the sagas the kings were naming children of the aristocracy (Næstebraten 2001, 113-114). However, there, was the practice of exclusion before the old had become sexually active (Beauvais 2005, 119)! The extended Norse 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 a say depending on circumstance and tradition. Circumstances influence the 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 Hovstved 1956) refer to the biological, social and economic motives behind infanticidal, such as disability, poverty, hunger, population growth, family honour, jealousy and revenge.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CIRCUMSTANCE</th>
<th>CLASS AND GENDER</th>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>Poverty and hunger</th>
<th>Family honour</th>
<th>Population surplus</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All classes</td>
<td>The poor, servants, slaves, the fatherless</td>
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<td>Females and males</td>
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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 contradictory aspects appearing in the analysis, and to explain the context and circumstance of the Norwegian newborns, the epistemology of the place and 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 dog-children, and how this may influence the explanation of the bog-finds.

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 realistic models, given away as valuable gifts to deities. The Norwegian folklore has been defined and explain the practice of children in bog-finds, and the practice of performing human deposits in lakes seems to correlate between BCE 300-CE (Næstebraten 2001, 54). In part this period the early Iron Age overlap the dating of the Norwegian bog-finds, but children in bog-finds have not been attested to the late Iron Age (CE 500-1000) in any archaeological evidence (Monkinder 2010, 8, 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, the bodies were exposed to the element of water. A wetery 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 dismembered children’s corpses by the sea at the high mark of water (Mundal 1989, 132). The practice of water placement for children differs from the treatment of the dead of all kinds stated in the Medieval Norwegian Christian acts, i.e. neither corpses nor their bones were thrown into the sea (Mundal 1989, 132). Similarly, the sacrifice of humans in springs or wells has been now considered a religious act byTacitus as well as by Sundqvist 2007, 121, the discussion throughout the pagan fertility beliefs, fertility goddesses (cf. note 1) and Christian polities towards controlling folk customs centered around the use of springs within the landscape for various offerings (Bae 1967, 58, Næstrøm 2001, 82-84, 2003, 26-72; Sundqvist 2007, 116, 120-122; see also Sømby 2012).

In her review on the use of the term sacrifice in anthropological and other academic fields Asa Berggren has discovered some problematic issues related to implicit Judeo-Christian values, unclear categorisation, and the inclusion of a greater variety of rituals. Sacrifice is often regarded as a universal act, taken for granted. It is something we are used to covering a term of understanding of varying practices. The offering concept and the term ‘sacred’ have been widely used to address 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 as a participation in 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 its humanity, gender and affiliation. The practices surrounding the circumstance of childbirth have much in common with formalised religious and ritual behaviour (Benaug 2003, 126). The first time a newborn child was born 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). 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 birth before the first feed.

The question of manipulation in order to create and transform individuals from one state of being to the other through water ritual continues and 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 these terms can represent the outcome of ritual or non-ritual behaviour following childbirth, but which material remains have been difficult to observe in the retrieval of found objects and 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 ritualised, i.e. deputating to the dead? 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 by the society. These children were not disposed in graves, and only a few have been discovered in pits, wells and bogs (Sellevold et al. 1984, 282). Therefore we will argue that the 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 study of the period, the researchers should consider both the development of settlement patterns and ideology, attitude and practice of mortuary treatment of the Iron Age society in the Jarnoe 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 condition of "northway" - the seaways along the coast Norway, the development of an expanding warrior society with a chiefdom organisation representing a new layer of power in the redistribution coastal economy, reflected a manifold trading system of production surplus from local and regional areas in exchange with high value goods (from the Baltic to the North) (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 (c. 541) (Myhre 1978). Following the breakthrough of the chiefdom organisation and restructuring of the farm settlements in the 7th century CE, a state society with expanded centralised settlement systems and patterns 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 than the living (Schjold 2008, 2010, 2015, 2017). 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 society practiced a selective burial custom of family representation mainly in the form of cremation graves in burial mounds. A comprehensive study of burial treatments 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 (Løvholt 1999). Sacrificed infants in the region CE 200 onwards, variations in the form of inhumation graves, and also to some extent collectively the representation of cremation burials, is an act of continuity. However, the burial custom continued until the introduction of Christianity during the Viking period (Lillehammer 1996a, 1996b; Bukkemoen 2007). In the ancestor cult, on use of the word "ancestor" is referred to as a representative of the burial custom and the burial rite continued until the introduction of Christianity during the Viking period (Lillehammer 1996a, 1996b; Bukkemoen 2007), and during the late Iron Age burials also occurred in the ruins of earlier deserted farm houses (Lillehammer 1996b; ThITE 2007).

Notwithstanding the cultural variations and change in settlement and mortuary treatment, continuous relationships existed in the Iron Age between a family settlement system of ancestor warrior estates and the practice of a selective burial custom of family members. Mortuary treatment was, however, when normal conditions were maintained in the society or the family were threatened by crises, it is relevant to consider the question of similarity and differences 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 households, and inequalities that were comparable with what happened later in Iceland CE 1000-1050 (see Bezk et al. 2004, 87). 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 Jarnoe 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 Rigsvata, Helvami (i.e. saying of the high one) gives the rules on how to conduct oneself and live in proper way. Thinking the rules on the level of practice adults may concur and yet 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 maintain the social structure and having hope for a change of circumstance. The meaningful code of behaviour on exchange and contracts of gifts (see stanza 145) sets out obligations and constraints on the relationship between the voluntary giving and the reciprocated (Maass 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 (Nilsström 2001, 123).

In looking upon infant treatment in general, there is a conative aspect in the recognition of "sameness" or ‘otherness’ concerning the biological and mental capacity and the social and cultural identity of the infant depending on perceptions of circumstance and attitude towards children and childhood in the society. A strive for balance of normality and disease continued in the practice of child sacrifice. According to Scott’s study of infancy and death (1999, 89, 127), societies manipulate codes of death and give different cultural meanings and acceptances which are associated with periods of infancy. Sacrificed infants in the region CE 200 onwards were ‘given up’ and tended to be older compared to the neonatal victims of domestic infanticide. Her study demonstrates that in the circumstances 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, 101), but which reflect the ideals of children and childhood (Lillehammer 2008b, 90). 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 children was high (Mundal 2008b, 100). 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 Halv 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-fun- tional 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-flinds to representing unwanted children? The occurrences of children in the wetlands of Northern Europe, and in particular (the evidence of newborns (cf. Sellevold et al. 1984; Eckerdal 2010), indicate various positions of 'being' in the world. Infanticide is the ultimate exclusion of a form of otherwise by dislocating newborns from the strings of biological and social bondage and material case. In the Norse societies, in-between position of newborns and motives existed behind the set of exclusion from the initiation rites of new family members. As people brought newborns far away in the fields and forests, it is claimed that the observed legacies were probably the result of restrictions set against the practice by the medieval Christian law (Mundal 1989, 131).

The social displacing of children outside the vicinity of settlement is found in the descriptions of Scandinavia at place names. A type of place name distributed in the eastern and western parts of Sweden refers to ‘Barnårumu’, ‘Barnesjö’, ‘Barnånum’, 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 “Blekkehonest” (the brookhorse) (Moenkander 2010, 34).

Another type of name place is “Uthbore”, a Norwegian place name of uncertain etymology, which may simply mean “the child (s) out” in relation to children being carried out in the landscape. The place name has a variety of connotations to Norwegian 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 absent child, a child who has been carried out, abandoned, drowned, or buried (Petkainen 1968, 192-194), to a child baptized with cold water by the gaze of a such a child (Fritzen 1973, 815), or a child who dies without being christened (Heggstad 1958, 762). Also, the “uthbore” is a "trold" (grog, 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 born, it could transform into a “troll”. Many legends tell the tales of the “troll” crying and wining, or hanging itself on people’s back and asking for a name to be given in order to get peace (A and O 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 2006b, 101-102, 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; Steinland 1990a; Hedeager 2011, 81-85), and which in particular has been explored in the development of Migration Period animalistic art (Kristoffersen 1995). The Norwegian saga Flatenhok deals with the childhood legend about a warrior to the first missionary king Olav Tryggvassen (CE 980-1000). Torstein Okselot, who as a child was carried out, but found dying and taken care of by a farmer (see note 2). The saga relates to the little child Torstein who once stumbled and fell over his elder ego, a polar bear cub (Baksted 1984, 200).

The circumstances of childbirth, nature of death, murder, and supernatural beliefs in spatiotemporal measures are connected with the word “uthbore”. The meaning is linked to the time of the existence 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 construction of children in the environment covering the extreme northern and western parts of the Nordic area (Petkainen 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 “Uthbore” 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 excavated settlements on a central location at present in Norway. The pre-historic settlement area of farmsteads is dated between the Bronze Age and Late Iron Age (CE 1100-550) (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 (Petkainen 1968, 192-195, table 2) (Table 2). A major place linked to the encounter of the dead-child being is the abandoned, or 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 representative are the places under a stone or a tree, a cattle shed or a deserted house. The least frequent place of encounter is the hill, such as “Uthbore”. The range and scope of these locations of encounter support the distribution indicating the disappearance of unwanted children in the landscape, and which are mentioned in the Norse and early Christian literary sources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLACE OF ENCOUNTERS</th>
<th>NUMBER OF REPRESENTATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forest, wilderness</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiding place of child’s body</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake, water</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under stone or tree</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle shed or deserted cottage</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supra normal place name</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Place of encounter and number of presentations of dead-child being discovered in the Nordic traditions (based on Petkainen 1965).

Conclusions

The Norwegian bog-find of the early Iron Age is of an earlier date than the main body of literary sources brought forward in the context of the find. The find is classified among the archaeological evidence of prehistoric human skeletal remains of children who drowned from bogs in Northern Europe. In a Norwegian perspective, the bog-find is a late date with respect to a variety of questions. On a long-term scale, compared with ideologies, attitudes and practices related to mortuary treatment of newborn infants, the anecdotes have shown the contextual evidence to connect generally to wetland places of both sacrifice and infanticide in the landscape of the natural environment; a spring in the landscape. The marginal location of the infants 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 beliefs on the fertility and folktales. As wetland places of both sacrifice and infanticide of children overlap to some extent, the interpretation of the bog-find is a difficult one.

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 dispossession of lads and girls 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 itself the five 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 traditions, the performance of familiar sacrifice by giving away valuable offerings as tributes to the gods at times of unbalance and stress in society is possible to model. The main point of the sacrificial 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 limited 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 been connected with the practicing of infanticide directed upon unwanted children. This argument is supported by the facts that the newborns were discovered at the edge of a settlement and not disposed together with adults and/or material objects. The location in the outland spring connects them as outcasts and to the wilderness of 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, 101a, 15, 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 underlying the narratives of childbirth and child treatment in the relationships to existence and place on a long term scale: Where do children really go when they die? In the narratives of place they are connected with wetland locations in the natural environment; in the narratives of the dead-child their ghosts are represented in the shape of animals. From studies of passage (van Gennep 1965), newborn children have passed the threshold of birth, but their existence are in the state of betweenness. The nature of otherness separate and confine them outside the normal structures of society. In the handing of death (Bloch and Parry 1987), they may return permanent and naked from whence they came: invisibility, to the 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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References


