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Sacred signs, divine marks: geometric religious symbols in Viking Age Scandinavia

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Abstract: The main purpose of this research is to provide analytical elements regarding the meaning of the geometric symbols that are identified during the Viking Era (especially the swastika and triquetra). Inspired by John Robb's theory on symbols and the visual methodology of Jill Bradley, this paper approaches some of the main visual sources that occurs in Norse material culture (in particular, the runestone DR 248 and Thor's hammer pendants) and then draws a comparative line between them. Our main conclusions are that the symbols display a variety in their meaning, in accordance to the material and social context in which they were inserted and their religious relevance allowed their permanence in Scandinavia visual tradition.

Keywords: Norse symbols, Viking Age, Old Norse Religion, Visual culture, Scandinavia.

Resumo: O objetivo principal desta pesquisa é fornecer elementos analíticos sobre o significado dos símbolos geométricos identificados durante a Era Viking (especialmente a suástica e a triquetra). Inspirado na teoria dos símbolos de John Robb e na metodologia visual de Jill Bradley, este artigo aborda algumas das principais fontes visuais que ocorrem na cultura material nórdica (em especial, a pedra rúnica DR 248 e pingentes do martelo de Thor) e, em seguida, elaborando uma linha comparativa entre elas. Nossas principais conclusões são que os símbolos apresentam variedade em seus significados, de acordo com o contexto material e social em que foram inseridos e sua relevância religiosa permitiu sua permanência na tradição visual escandinava.

Palavras-chave: Símbolos nórdicos, Era Viking, Religião nórdica antiga, Cultura visual, Escandinávia.

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1. Introduction

The study of religious symbolism in pre-Christian Scandinavia constituted an important debate during the 19th century. After the Second World War, however, such studies became very scarce in academia. The presence of some traditional symbols has often been viewed as mere ornament, while in other cases they are simply left out of consideration. Figures with mythological content tend to be regarded as more important. Recent publications are highlighting the importance of such symbols in religion and mythology (Hellers, 2012; Westcoat, 2015; Pesch, 2023), but others still remain neglected by most studies, as it is the case with the swastika and the triquetra.

Our proposal is presented in three parts. First, the methodology will be introduced in detail. The second part displays the generic standards which have been adopted for systematization, organization and analysis of our data. The third part brings the analysis of four themes, displaying the main symbols treated here and their connections. The interpretations of the possible meanings or contexts of these symbols, which will be dealt with in this third part, will not make use of any type of phenomenological, a-historical, generalist or universalist approach. The view defended here holds every symbol identified in the Ancient Scandinavia as complex, ambiguous, polyvalent and proteiform, constructed on an analogical relationship which can only be understood within its historical and social context (Pastoreau, 2004, p. 11-28). We also do not follow the assumption of some researchers who take valknut, the triskelion and the triquetra as being the same symbols (Boyer, 1997, p. 33; Simek, 2007, p. 163; Pesch, 2023, p. 18), but regarding them as different (Hellers, 2012, p. 195) despite their visual resemblance (see table 1 and 2).

Our investigative questions hope to unveil the meanings of these Norse non-figurative symbols from both a diachronic and synchronic point of view. It is our hope to answer the following questions: how were these symbols related to each other? How were they understood in each region or social context? What differences can be detected between them?

2. Methodology

There is a difficulty in analyzing images in archaeology, mainly when it comes to interpreting symbols and their cultural-environmental functions. Our interpretations will be drawn in accordance to John E. Robb's archaeology of symbols (Robb, 1998). In





contrast with the information transmission view, plentiful archaeologists aimed to explore how symbols constituted and structured both the mental and social world of ancient people, taking them as central girders of this process. According to this view, they are approached as mental structures, girders which give the frames to the cultural world people live in and architecting thought processes. Taking symbols as responsible for such processes enables us to comprehend how humans orient and perceive themselves in the world through structured thoughts and how they act through these learned culturally distinct structures to which they can appeal when organizing social life, culture and their material productions (Robb, 1998, p. 334-335). One of the problems with this model is that such a framework does not supply us with the tools to understand geographic variation and temporal changes, since structuralism usually infers the existence of a whole and coherent underlying system. Poststructuralism takes the symbols as tesserae, rejecting the dichotomy between material signifiers and ideal meaning. Therefore, meaning does not reside in artifacts or in people, but in the moment of interaction between the two: there is simply no existence of symbol's meaning outside of this moment in which people apprehend, manage and convoke them. There is no such thing as an ideal meaning of symbols; they are a mosaic tesserae compound by fragments with inherently arbitrary characteristics that are summoned, assembled and experienced as being meaningful in specific contexts by people manipulating them (Robb, 1998, p. 338-339).

In relation to symbols as images, they are conveyers of ideas and possess their own vocabulary and validity, complementary to written texts although being independent of them, a vocabulary susceptible to variety and changes through time (Bradley, 2012, p. 31). In order to be able to interpret images without losing sight of the pressures of context, a rigorous methodology is needed. We have elected the methodology steps as suggested by Bradley (2012).

The first step is the selection of material. Material should be collected aiming to offer a view as broad as possible, in order to clarify what people at that time and place meant by a particular concept. Tracking down and taking into account everything possible about it is the best chance to achieve relatively reliable results (Bradley, 2012, p. 32-33). The next move is to create a "basic type", which gives a simplified picture in which the common details are clear. This basic type that emerges is considered an image that the majority of a society would recognize and regard as an adequate depiction of the subject into question (Bradley, 2012, p. 34).





By making use of a basic type, we get a simplified picture in which the common details are clear, and so we are able to compare a series of basic types, be it over time or across different regions. By doing so, the differences, changes, discrepancies and similarities become more apparent. The last step consists on placing the basic type in a larger context. By putting the image in a broader context of similar images, it is possible to reduce the level of uncertainty and subjectivity in interpretation, and so the world in which these images were made and found should be looked and held as of utter relevance (Bradley, 2012, p. 35-36).

Considering that our approach is characterized as comparative, it is important to outline what exactly is being proposed, since the word “comparativism” does not designate a specific method or approach, but a broad framework of research (Stausberg 2011, p. 35-36). The type of comparativism conducted here is the one designated by Jens Peter Schjødt as genetic. This means comparisons will be carried out between Scandinavians and other peoples and cultures to which they are related historically at some level – mainly culturally, in this case – (Schjødt 2018, p. 3-4).

3. Materials, relevance and basic types

The first stage of our research brings a quantitative survey of material objects containing symbols in Scandinavia, from the 5th century to the end of the Viking Age. The purpose of this phase is to draw a morphological and spatial systematization of such symbols, seeking to determine patterns of style and diachrony (table 1 and 2). The symbols were then divided into two basic groups from a morphological point of view: *tripartite* (triskelion and triquetra) and those related to the *solar/nodes* (swastika, quadrefoil and spiral). It should also be taken into account that some symbols are interchangeable (the triskelion is both linked to solar symbolism and related to the number 3). The conclusion achieved by this first procedure states that the swastika, the borromian triquetra, the spiral and the triskelion have existed since the Migration Period, with the valknut being almost exclusive to the Norse area during the Viking Age, especially on the island of Gotland.



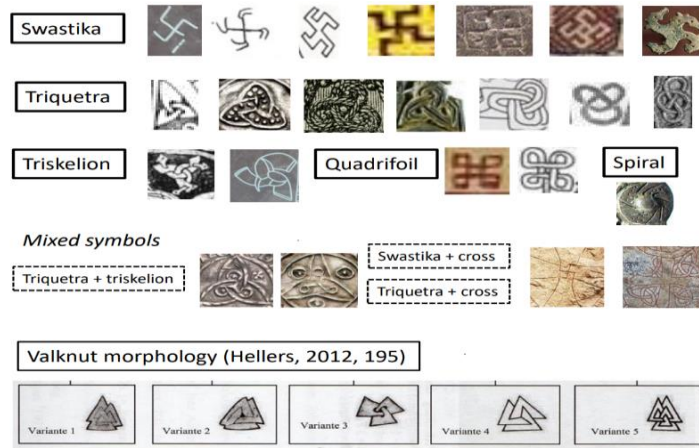


Table 1: Morphology of the Norse symbols in the Viking Age Scandinavia

The second stage, of qualitative nature, covers only symbols with religious connotations found during the Viking Age (8th-11th century), in areas of Norse settlement (Eastern Europe, British Isles, Iceland and Scandinavia) and especially on material supports with figurative contexts that make comparative analyzes possible. The selected objects offer the possibility of visual analysis of the context. This phase aimed at a synchronous interpretation of the objects. The main results of this research are based directly on this second phase.

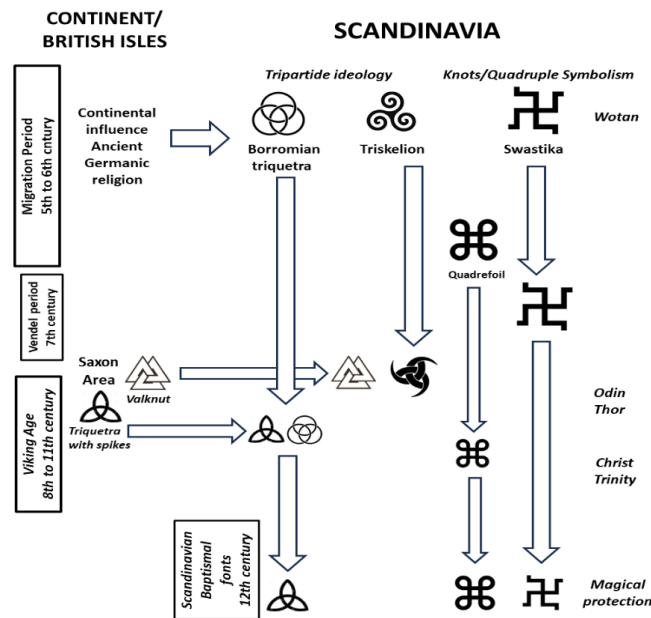


Table 2: Historical chronology of geometric symbols in Scandinavia

The approach used in this second phase sought to make internal comparisons between the different contexts and material supports (table 1, 2, 3 and 4). This allow us to move forward in discussions about the meaning of these symbols, since there are no Medieval literary sources about them (we do not even know their denomination in Old





Norse, with the only exception being the *Hrugnis hjarta*, which we will examine later). The terms adopted here to allude to these symbols are common since the 19th century, coming from modern Scandinavian languages or other cultural areas. For the analysis of symbolic meaning, we use in part the academic discussions already developed up to date and the medieval literature available on gods, myths and pre-Christian rites in Norse area.

Symbol	Context	Probable meaning	Deities	support
Vaknut	1 individual symbol	Apotropaic	?	Cutting board
Vaknut	1 symbol engraved on a dragon's head	Apotropaic	?	Bedpost
Swastika	4 swastikas around a cross, in the center of an anthropomorphic figure	Apotropaic	?	On each side of the handle of a bucket
Swastika	8 symbols around dancing women	Ritual ecstasy (?)	Odin (?)	Tapestry
Swastika	1 symbol in a sacrificial scene (9 hanged)	Hanging ritual	Odin	Tapestry
Swastika	1 symbol next to a house/temple	Apotropaic (?)	?	Tapestry
Swastika	2 symbols around a horseman	?	?	Tapestry
Swastika	4 symbols around a dead man's cart	Apotropaic	Odin (?)	Tapestry
Quadrefoil	1 symbol around the bird-headed woman	Freyja Ritual	Freyja/Odin (?)	Tapestry
Quadrefoil	9 random symbols in a procession	Freyr Ritual	Freyr/Odin (?)	Tapestry

Table 3: Distribution of the symbols present in the Oseberg burial mound

Symbol	Relationship with god figurations	Association with other symbols	Relationship with animal figures	Association with gods	Spatial distribution	Types of objects	Permanence in Norse churches after 11th century
Swastika (S)	Odin, valkyries, Christ	Horn triskelion, solar cross, quadrefoil, Thor hammer	Horses, Deer, snakes	Odin, Thor, Christ	Norway, Denmark, Sweden, British Isles, Russia	Runestones, Tapestries, pendants, crosses, everyday objects	Yes
Triquetra (T)	Thor, valkyries, Christ	Thor hammer, vaknut	Deer, Bear, snakes, swan, horses	Odin, Thor, Christ	Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, British Isles, Ukraine	Runestones, Tapestries, pendants, crosses, coins, everyday objects	Yes
Valknut (V)	Odin, valkyries	Triquetra, Horn triskelion, spiral	Horses, Deer, snakes, Birds, dragon	Odin	Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Ukraine	Coins, Picture stones, everyday objects	No
Triskelion (TR)	X	Triquetra, swastika, vaknut, spiral	Horses	Odin	Denmark, Sweden	Runestones, coins	Yes
Spiral	X	Vaknut, triskelion	Horses	Odin	Denmark, Sweden	Runestones, pendants	Yes

Findings: the association of S and T with other symbols is greater than that of V; the association of V and T with animal symbolism is greater than that of S; S and T are related to both Thor and Odin, V only to Odin; the spatial distribution of S and T is greater than V; the number of supports with an imagery context is greater in S and T than V. All these comparisons would explain why S and T survived as a symbol within Scandinavian Christianity until the end of the Middle Ages, unlike V, which disappeared in the 11th century.

Table 4: Comparison between the Norse symbols of the Viking Age Scandinavia

The spatial survey of this phase enabled some main conclusions (table 1 and 2). The triquetra and swastika were the symbols with the greatest spatial distribution, both occurring in practically the entire Norse area, from Eastern Europe to the British Isles. These two also have the most extensive internal occurrence in Scandinavia, but particularly the triquetra occurred close to centers of ceremonial and religious importance during the Viking Age, such as Lejre (Denmark), Uppåkra (Scania) and Uppsala (Sweden). The region with the greatest number and variety of symbols is the island of Gotland, although the small frequency of the swastika is notable. The valknut was found only in the Vestfold region (Norway), Ribe and Hedeby (Denmark), the island of Gotland





(Sweden) and Kiev (Ukraine), and the most spatially restricted symbols are the triskelion of horns, the spiral and the quadrifoil.

4. Toasting to the God of the hanged: the Snoldelev Runestone

The Snoldelev Runestone (DR 248) was discovered in 1775 on Mount Sylshøj, Gadstrup, Zealand, Denmark. It consists of a block of granite and was found in a funerary mound in parallel with two other stones (Imer, 2016, p. 274), among a group totaling 16 stones oriented in the North-South direction, but which were removed and lost, leaving only Snoldelev (Jacobsen, 1941, p. 32, 37). His first analyzes were published from 1812 and registered by the Danish Antiquities Commission. Archaeological excavations at the same location as the discovery, carried out in 1985, demonstrated the existence of a cemetery from the beginning of the Viking Age, including burials of a high-aristocracy woman from the 9th century. The Snoldelev stone is traditionally dated between the years 700-900 AD (Imer, 2016, p. 274; Stoklund, 2006, p. 368; Nielsen, 1974, p. 132). Snoldelev is currently on display in the runestone hall of the National Museum of Denmark, in Copenhagen.

Snoldelev's sculptors took advantage of a stone that already had an engraved symbol (currently barely noticeable in the original), dating from the Bronze Age and consisting of a solar wheel. This engraving was made in the upper part of the block – and the Viking Age sculptor inserted a swastika in one of its corners and in the other, a part of the runic inscription, which extends to the lower part of the block. Just below, a triskelion intertwined with three horns was carved (figure 1). The runic inscription (1.25 m long) is one of the first made within the so-called recent Younger Futhark, developed at the beginning of the Viking Age.

The transliteration of the runic inscription into the Latin alphabet: <kun ualts stain sunar ruhalts þular o salhauku(m)> (Skaldic Project, 2023); Old Danish transcription: /Gunnvalds stæin, sonar Hröalds þular ä Sallaugum/, Imer, 2016, p. 274. Regarding the translation: “Gunnvaldr’s stone, Hröaldr’s stone, reciter of Salhaugar” (Imer, 2016, p. 274). The text alludes to the owner or person honored by the erection of the stone and his father, Hroald, who is characterized as being the reciter of a region called Salhaugar. The word would consist of sal (hall) and högar (mount, translated from English by Sundqvist, 2009, p. 660). Some believe that Salhaugar is today the village of Salløv (city of Gadstrup), Denmark, near Snoldelev. But archaeologists so far have not found the halls or corridors referred to in the inscription.



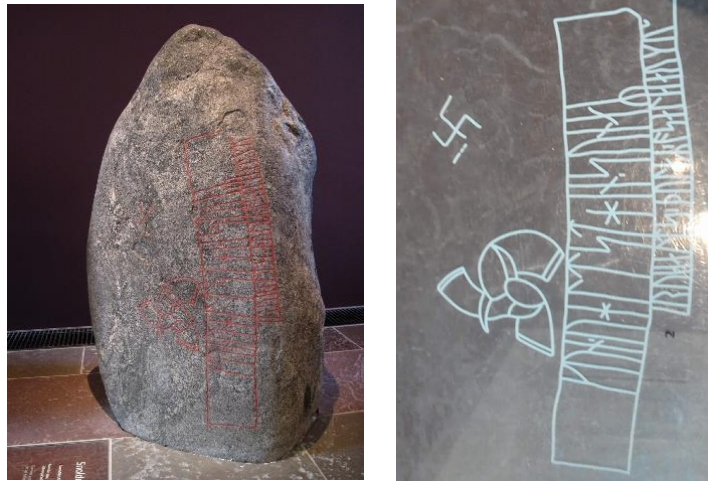


Figure 1: Runestone DR 248, Snoldelev, National Museum of Denmark. The swastika was carved on an engraving of a solar wheel, dating from the Bronze Age, unnoticeable in photos and absent from reproduction. Photo: Johnni Langer, 2018.

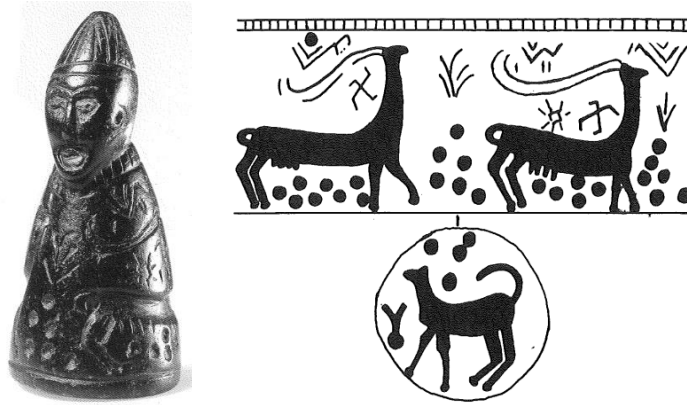


Figure 2: The cone-shaped figure from Tornes, Norway. Photo: Per E. Fredriksen, Science Museum, Trondheim. Right: The incised motifs on the cloak and on the underside of the Tornes. Drawing by Egil Horg. Ringstad, 1996, p. 101, 103. According to an analysis of the eye holes carried out by Bjørn Ringstad, the figurine would be a representation of the god Odin. It can also be noted that one of the swastikas on the back of the deer³ on the right is next to a solar representation.

³ In Birka's pagan graves (grave 832, SHM 34000, SHM 18212), deer decorations in embroidery and in a funerary urn seem to indicate a symbolism of rebirth, due to the fact that their horns change every year. There are also coins of type KG5, containing deer, triquetra and snake, found in Birka tombs (grave 963), indicating a possible special role at the time of burial (Audy, 2018, p. 212, 213). One of the most important objects related to the connection between this animal and royalty in the Germanic world is the stone scepter of Sutton Hoo, which presents the sculpture of a Fallow deer (*Dama dama*) on a circle, below which are located four reliefs of masks. The connection between deer, royalty and Odinic cults was investigated by: Tolley, 2009, p. 338-339; Vries, 1957, p. 257. The poem *Plácitusdrápa* 7 (c. 1200) preserved the word *elg-Þrótr* (elg-Þrótr í stað Sótti), The Skaldic Project. In the poem *Sonatorrek* 15 (10th century) the metaphor appears: *elgjar galga* (moose strength), The Skaldic Project. Following an interpretation by Sigurður Nordal, Tolley (2009, p. 338) believes that this kenning is a reference to the cosmic tree Yggdrasill. The term in Old Norse, *elgr*, refers to the elk (*Alces alces*) and in Germania 43 of Tacitus, the term corresponding in Proto-Germanic to **alhiz/*algiz* and was Latinized to *Alcis* – and referred to the divine twins worshiped by the Germanic tribe of the Naharnaivali of Silesia. The term would be related to other Indo-European words to designate divine protection and would be associated especially with horses (Simek, 2007, p. 7).



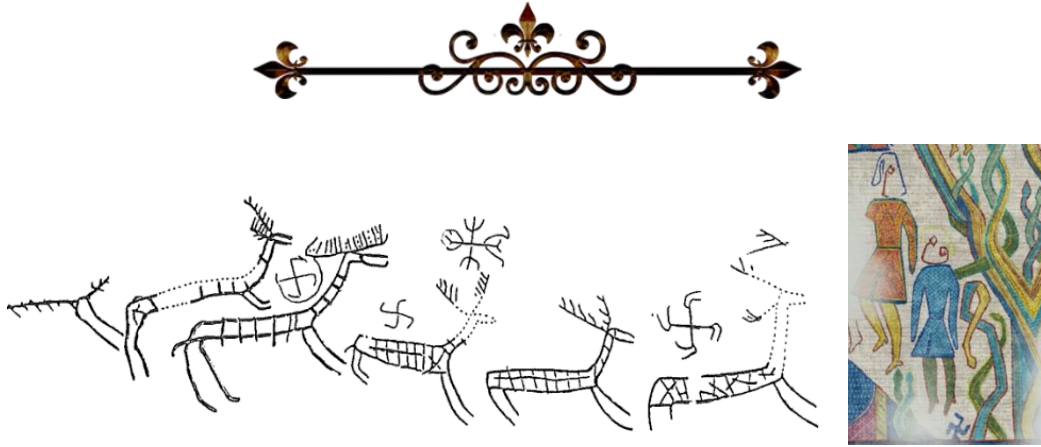


Figure 3 (left): Deer and swastika decorations on a ceramic pot from the Viking Age town of Hedeby. Ringstad, 1996, p. 110. The geometric symbol above the deer scene has a clear solar function and is very similar to the *Ægishjálmur* of manuscript 434a, Iceland, 15th century. Similar symbols occur in Ireland, such as the one on the Ballintaggart stone, Ireland, 6th century AD, and they would have been influenced by Merovingian Gaul (Sheehan, 1994, p. 23-31). But this type of cross (a proto-*Ægishjálmur*?) also occurred in pre-Christian contexts and alongside swastikas, such as on ceramic vessels from grave 30, Przeworsk culture, Biala, Poland, 4th century AD, Marek, 2017, p. 13. **Figure 4 (right):** details from the Oseberg tapestry (sacrificial tree scene), Norway, 9th century AD. Bernardi, 2023, p. 36. The vast majority of researchers who analyzed this scene consider it within a cult context related to Odin (Bernardi, 2023, p. 36-38). In this case, the swastika represented at the base of the tree would also have some type of connection with this deity.

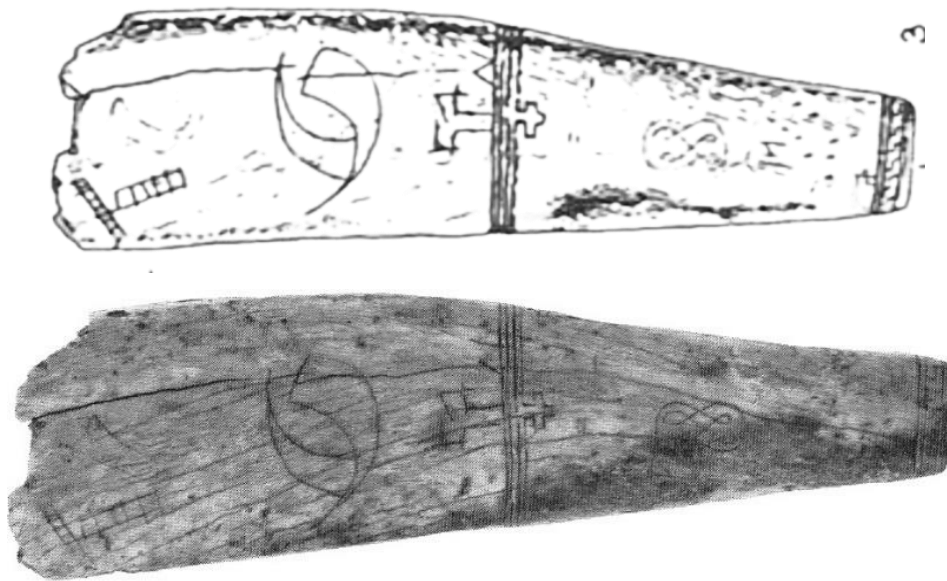


Figure 5: Knife handle made of animal bone, engraved with symbols, Staraya Ladoga, Russia, 10th century AD. Fonte: Petrenko; Kuzmenko, 1979, p. 81. The object presents five sets of images: from left to right - two geometric representations similar to "ladders"; a pair of intertwined horns; two hammers of the god Thor on opposite sides, from a pair of lines crossing the diagonal of the object; a geometric symbol similar to the number eight; at the right end, in small size, the representation of a swastika and on its right side, a series of Sól runes.





Figure 6 (left): Picture stone from Lillbjärs III (SHM 279), Gotland, Sweden. Nylén; Lamm, 2007, p. 75. The upper scene of the painted stone features one of the largest visual sets of geometric symbols in the Viking Age: a valknut, a horned triskelion, and a spiral (on the knight's shield). The valknut is the most vivid manifestation of the number nine motif in the material culture of the Viking Age (Gardela, 2022, p. 28). The spiral shield theme was also represented in valkyrie pendants: Wickham Market (Suffolk, 9th century, Colchester Museum); Vrejlev (9th century, National Museum of Denmark); Tissø, 9th century, National Museum of Denmark). Would the spiral be a protection for the warrior? In amulets found in female tombs from Birka, where we observe the central representation of a spiral, archaeologists identify this object as being a representation of a shield – in this case, the object would have been used for individual magical protection (Gräslund, 2005, p. 385). Snorri Sturluson mentions that shields were called “Sun on the Ship”. Several elements of Norse literature and mythology indicate that shields were seen as symbols of the Sun (such as kenning for shield: *skipsól*, Wang, 2017, p. 14, 25). Perhaps there was a continuity in the link between the Sun and spirals existing on picture stones in Gotland since the 6th century AD, but in iconography they were transferred to Odinist contexts and/or funerary symbolism of warriors. We highlight that the swastika present on the handle of Staraya Ladoga's knife (figure 5) is next to *Sól* runes. **Figure 7 (right):** Picture stone no. 1 from Sanda church on Gotland, Sweden. Oehrl, 2023, p. 199. Next to a male being, traditionally interpreted as the god Odin (Jungner, 1930, p. 65-82), a representation of a triquetra with spikes was engraved next to him.





Figure 8 (left): Odin's mask, Tissø, Denmark. Pentz, 2018, p. 23. An important remains of an object clearly associated with the god Odin (from analysis of representations of the pupil of this object, by Peter Pentz). Triquetras with spikes were engraved on both sides of his face.

Figure 9 (right): Ritual scene, painted stone from Stora Hammars 1, Gotland, Sweden, 8th-9th century AD. Westcoat, 2015, p. 1. An image where the valknut was represented in a completely "pagan" context (and directly to the god Odin): next to a man hanging from a tree, a human sacrifice ritual, two birds and a war band.

Snoldelev's first runestone study, published in 1812, interpreted the swastika as being the symbol of Thor's hammer (Abrahamson; Thorlacius, 1812, p. 289-322). Probably here the authors were influenced by modern Scandinavian folklore, which called the swastika Thor's hammer – as in the Icelandic case: *Pórshamar* (Árnason, 1862, p. 445) and Swedish: in the 18th century peasant brotherhoods (*Fattigklubba*) used it in their meetings hammers with engraved swastika (Mejborg, 1889, p. 16). Researcher Hilda Davidson related the swastika to Thor's hammer and its lightning and thunder effects in the sky (Davidson, 2004, p. 69), but the connection between Thor and thunder has recently been questioned (Taggart, 2018). We therefore assume there probably was a relationship between Thor and the swastika, but refute the relationship between this symbol and the hammer (Motz, 1997, p. 340).

For the triskelion in Snoldelev, scholars analyzed several passages from Icelandic sagas and mythological sources, always looking for connections between the toasts as religious and communal acts and their relationship with the number three (Abrahamson; Thorlacius, 1812, p. 289-322). Still in the 19th century, Snoldelev's swastika was interpreted as being a symbol of Wodan/Odin and the horned triskelion related to Thor (Stephens, 1868, p. 4).⁴

In the 20th century, the swastika was considered a solar symbol or symbol of some divinity and the horned triskelion related to the great annual sacrificial festivals, but without great certainty about its meaning (Glahn, 1917, p. 139). Other academics, despite considering a religious meaning of the two symbols on the stone, preferred to remain solely on the interpretation and context of the runic inscription (Westrup, 1930, p. 60; Sundqvist, 2003, p. 115). And some chose to consider that the shape and size of the stone

⁴ It is interesting to note that Stephens later had a completely different interpretation of the swastika. When analyzing the inscription on the sword blade of Sæbø (Norway, 9th century AD), Stephens gave the following transcription into Old Norse - "oh 𐀀 muþ"; "owns (possesses me) thurmute" (Stephens, 1884, p. 243), the researcher interpreted the swastika as being a phonetic sign for the god Thor, a runological misinterpretation. In no type of context, object or support, the swastika had any type of connection with sounds or phonemes in Viking Age Scandinavia.





had religious connotations, being a sacred stone (Jacobsen, 1941, p. 32). Another line of interpretation is to relate Snoldelev's triskelion to a symbol described by Snorri Sturluson (Westcoat, 2015, p. 18-19; Simek, 2007, p. 163; Hupfauf, 2003, p. 230; Boyer, 1997, p. 33), an idea we disagree with.

In his description of the giant Hrungrnir's combat with the god Thor, Snorri Sturluson comments that after the giant was destroyed by the deity's hammer: "Hrungrnir átti hjarta þat er frægt er, af hörðum steini ok tindótt með þrim hornum svá sem síðan er gert var ristubragð þat er Hrungrnis hjarta heitir" (Sturluson, 1998, p. 21); "Hrungrnir had that heart which is renowned, made of hard stone and spiked with three corners just as afterwards which was made that carved-figure which is called Hrungrnir's Heart", Westcoat, 2015, p. 6. The vast majority of researchers consider that the symbol in question is the *valknut*, as it refers to the symbolism of the number three. Although it is a symbol objectively related to this number (there are two intertwined triangles), morphologically the valknut it does not have three external points, but rather six (and counting all the ends, internal and external, it has nine). Another problem: the valknut in the Norse area often appears related to the god Odin, in the most varied figurative contexts (Langer; Oliveira, 2021, pp. 24-51), while Snorri's account of Hrungrnir is essentially linked to the god Thor. We believe that the symbol best suited to the description contained in the *Skáldskaparmál* is the *triquetra*, especially the spiked pattern that was depicted on the Swedish runestones of U 937 and U 484 and on the Gotlandic picture stone of Sanda I (see figure 7). The last element that we consider fundamental to this question is the presence of said symbols in medieval Iceland, the land of Snorri Sturluson – the triquetra occurs on several objects, while the valknut has never been recorded on the island.

We perceive Snoldelev's two geometric symbols from two perspectives: the swastika in isolation and in relation to the triskelion and the runic inscription. In isolation, the swastika was engraved above the solar cross symbol, dating from the Bronze Age. Its author certainly reaffirms the solar sense that was present at the Migration Period and in several bracteates.

The swastika is a symbol of Asian origin, which spread throughout Eurasia during Antiquity, receiving diverse religious, political and ideological meanings. The vast majority of manuals and comparative studies of the 19th century perceived the swastika within an organic, phenomenological and functionalist vision, where it would have been basically a solar symbol (Müller, 1877, p. 43-87; Greg, 1884, p. 1 -25). Our main criticism of these classical studies considers that these interpretations were isolated and removed





from their original context, separating the symbols from other iconographic and visual elements that could aid their study. The interpretation is also purely morphological, not taking into account other types of parallels, such as a comparative analysis of the type of physical support. The swastika has been present in Scandinavia since the Bronze Age, as we can see in the cave paintings of Hikivuori, Finland, but they are occasional and extremely rare, compared to other types of geometrisms (the wheel or solar cross, for example). The swastika was more common and widespread in northern Europe from 200 to 300 AD (Mandt, 2005, p. 57).

When this symbol was represented isolated on objects, it is very difficult to carry out any type of interpretation of its meaning.⁵ The best objects for contextual analysis are those related to scenes or figurations, but without foregoing comparative methodologies. In general, the symbolism of the swastika received the most varied meanings and uses in Eurasia, but always related to two large interpretative groups: as a magical amulet to grant luck, protection and benefits to a place or person; on the other hand, very linked to the cult of specific deities or religious figures (such as Mitra, Christ, Apollo, Moses, etc., Bliujiene, 2000; Vaitkevičius, 2020; Dennis, 2016; Coimbra, 2014; Burilo-Cuadrado, 2014).

Another important point to point out: most representations of the swastika on Scandinavian bracteates are linked to figures of horsemen (or heads above horses), wolves, snakes and birds, attesting to the interpretation that they are related to the god Wotan/Odin.⁶ Could other types without this symbol (IK 190, IK 595, IK 51, IK 165) but with anthropomorphic figurations be linked to other deities or cults? It's an open question. Also in several bracteates the swastika is next to a Latin-type cross, a triskelion (or

⁵ The presence of this symbol is considered by specialists to be a divine one which makes the object more sacred, to bring more luck or to reinforce the magic of the inscription (MacLeod & Mees, 2006, 21, 94).

⁶ The only deity that has a quote written on the bracteates themselves is Odin, whose first trace was revealed in 2023, with Vindelev bracteate and significantly altered interpretations since Karl Hauck's model. The bracteate IK 738 was discovered in 2020, next to a large treasure in the Vindelev region, Jutland, dated between 450-490 AD and containing the first written reference to the main Germanic god (150 years before the oldest until then): "Wōd[a]nas weraz" ("who is Óðin's man"), referring to a person named Jagaz, possibly a king (or a warlord). This man in question received some divine legitimacy from Odin, which could mean that he was also the main cult leader of his community (Imer & Vasshus, 2023, p. 84). It is important to highlight that Snoldelev's bracteata (IK 738) contains the representation of a swastika next to the face of the head on the horse, as well as other bracteates from the same set analyzed by the two authors, such as IK 31,2 Vindelev and IK 31,1 Bolbro (in these last two, next to the swastikas, there are figures formed by three small point ornaments). In IK 735 Vindelev, below the human face, a triskelion is next to an isolated Tiwaz rune and another unidentified symbol/geometric shape.





tripartite symbol figures, the Tiwaz rune - IK 215- or the Sól rune in NM 1048 - as well as these are also presented without the presence of the swastika : IK 79, IK 25).⁷

Some figurations dating from the Viking Age also reinforce the survival of this meaning between the 9th and 10th centuries: in the statuette of the god Odin of Tornes, a sun was represented next to a swastika (figure 2); Already in a ceramic from Hedeby, three swastikas appear related to another solar symbol (figure 3, with a proto-Ægishjálmur?). Our comparative iconographic research indicates that in all these contexts mentioned, the swastika of the Viking Age was essentially linked to the god Odin, who added solar symbolisms that had already been in decline since the Migration Period, with the consequences of the cataclysm of the 6th century (Andrén, 2020, pp. 1474-1480).

In some objects and figurative contexts from the Viking Age, the swastika also presented other possible meanings: apotropaic protection of vessels and buildings (tapestries from Rolvsøy and Oseberg, Norway); related to funerals and funeral processions (Oseberg tapestry, – here the meaning seems very close to that found on the tombstone from Näsby, Sweden, 6th century⁸); related to ritual sacrifices (Oseberg tapestry, figure 4); associated with ecstatic dances (Oseberg tapestry – here the meaning seems to return to the swastika related to movements/dances represented in bracteates⁹).

From another perspective, we have the relationship between the swastika and the horns. Apart from Snoldelev, the only case where we have these two figures together on the same support is the handle of a knife made from animal bone, discovered in a Norse archaeological site in Staraya Ladoga, in Russia (figure 5). It was discovered in the “Earth Citadel”, level VIII (dating from 920 to 950), between the so-called “temple” (the great hall) and “Varangian street”. In the same place, a tablet with runic inscriptions and a necklace with three pendants of Thor's hammer were discovered. The knife handle has engravings of two intertwined horns, two hammers of the god Thor, a symbol similar to the number eight, a small swastika and seven representations of the Sól rune (Petrenko;

⁷ In 6th century bracteates, the swastika was associated with the Sól rune (as in DR BR8 Skodborg/IK 161, bracteate 7, DK nr. UK 197). In the *Icelandic runic poem* (dated from 15th century) the Sól rune is identified with the Sun and the destruction of ice: “Sól er skjýja skjöldur ok skínandi röðull ok ísa aldrtrégi rota siklingr” (“Sun is the shield of the clouds and shining ray and destroyer of ice”, Dickins, 1915, 31).

⁸ It is one of the most interesting funerary monuments containing a swastika in pre-Viking Scandinavia. On the outer side of the tomb lid, a large swastika was engraved and on the other side, various weapons were carved, such as a spear, a shield and a sword. Without a doubt, here the swastika can represent an apotropaic sign for the protection of the dead in the afterlife, as well as reflecting the ideology of groups of warrior-aristocrats, of which the god Odin is the most important deity. For images and details about the tombstone from Näsby: Nordén, 1934, p. 35-53.

⁹ Some of these, in addition to bearing swastikas, also have representations of triskelions and isolated Sól runes: IK 129,2 Darum 4, DR BR 38, IK 161, IK 129,2, IK 197, DR BR 55, DR BR 67.





Kuzmenko, 1979, p. 78-84). The eight-shaped symbol is also found on several pendants on the god Thor's hammer and is perhaps an allusion to the world serpent (see figure 15).

A pair of intertwined horns occupies the center of the object, alongside two of Thor's hammers. A swastika was represented in a small size and at one end, close to runes. It is possible that due to the difference in size and the location where the symbols were represented (horns, hammers, “eight” symbol, swastika), the swastika does not have a direct relationship with the horns (but rather, the hammers with the horns). Another issue is that only two horns were represented on the object and not three, as in Snoldelev. But what is beyond doubt is the fact that the object was found next to a longhouse (great hall) and that its symbols refer to the idea of ritual and consecration. That being said, perhaps it was originally a ceremonial knife.

In morphological terms, Snoldelev's triskelion is much more similar to another representation of horns on the Lillbjärs III picture stone (figure 6), but in the case of the latter, it is close to a valknut - it is possible that this symbol has replaced it in many contexts the swastika itself, since we never find the two represented together on the same material support in the Norse area, whether in mobile or fixed objects. The swastika maintained an association with the triskelion (simple in shape, without ornaments or horns) on the same material support since the Migration Period, as in some bracteates: Lyngby, Jutland, see Bliujiene, 2000, p. 19; bracteata NM 12430, Bolbro, Odense, Denmark, see: Magnus, 2008, p. 98; Germanic fibulae from the period: the same objects appear with terminals in the shape of animals (especially horses) or in the shape of swastikas or in the shape of triskelions (see: Bliujiene, 2000, p. 18). In a study of material culture, researcher Fernando Coimbra identified both the swastika and the triskelion engraved on defensive and offensive equipment in European Antiquity in general, considering them as symbols of protection for war (Coimbra, 2014, p. 15-26).

And unlike the Staraya Ladoga knife (which was possibly related to the god Thor), all objects that have a figurative context and deities with the valknut refer to Odin. Here we mention some of the most important objects with a figurative context involving the valknut and which are related to Odin: Oseberg tapestry (9th century); pictures stones from the island of Gotland (9th century); Danish Ribe and Hedeby coins of the *Hjort* pattern (9th century). In another article we analyzed the presence of valknuts and triquetras on these coins, relating them to religious and mythical themes from the Norse area, especially linked to the role of the king and leader in a process of political centralization and the god Odin (Langer; Oliveira, 2021, p. p. 24-51). Another study on





the figurations and geometric symbolisms of these coins also noted that despite an initial influence from the continent and Christianity, their meanings were connected to Norse and native traditions (Helmbrecht, 2011, p. 292). Both the valknut and the spiked triquetra come from the Saxon area, from the 7th century AD (Pesch, 2023, p. 14), but were given new meanings in a “pagan” context by the Scandinavians.

Like Snoldelev, the Lillbjärs picture stone is a funeral monument, commemorating the memory of a deceased person. A warrior (carrying a shield with a spiral) is received by a valkyrie holding a horn filled with mead and above his head, a valknut and a triskelion of horns hover (figure 44). Unlike the horns on the knife handle of Staraya Ladoga, the triskelions of Snoldelev and Lillbjärs are triple – obviously referring to the symbolism of the number 3 and the god Odin. The number of references coming from medieval Norse literature involving drinks and the number three is very vast (for a synthetic overview, see Abrahamson; Thorlacius, 1812, p. 289-322) and here we will quickly focus on just two: a mythical narrative and another ritual. Some literary passages (*Hávamál* 104-110; *Skáldskaparmál* 1) mention that Odin, in disguise, entered the mountain of Suttung to steal the mead. After spending three nights with the giantess Gunnlond, she offers him three doses of mead, which were in three containers (originally, it was the blood of Kvásir, the murdered sage, mixed with honey and which was deposited in the containers Odrórir, Bodn and Son, Sturluson, 1998, p. 3-4). In a ritual context of the Icelandic sagas, during the celebration of Jól in the depths of winter, the jarl Sigurd makes three toasts: to the god Odin (to bring victory and power to the king), Njord and Freyr (for good harvests and peace) and for dead ancestors (Sturluson, 1872). Although ceremonial toasts were important elements of various types of religious activities of the Germans and Norse from Antiquity until the beginning of the Christianization of Scandinavia (Davidson, 1988, p. 41-45), Snoldelev's triskelion takes us back to the myths and rites linked to Odin, a connection already suggested by several researchers (especially Sundqvist, 2003, p. 115). In the mythical context, alcohol has qualities that would connect the other world to Odin and numinous knowledge, while the act of drinking in Norse society reinforced the ties of the aristocracy with the god of war and mainly, the authority of the king (Rood, 2014, p. 2-12). But another element indicates this connection.

The place where the runestone was discovered (Mount Sylshøj) is 13 km away from Gammel Lejre, an important political and religious center at the same time the block was erected. Archaeological evidence points to the Lejre complex as containing ship-shaped stone monuments from the 6th century (for elite funeral ceremonies) and the appearance





of ceremonial buildings alongside large royal halls in the Vendel period (7th century) until the beginning of the 10th century, all controlled by a king or ruler. Gammel Lejre's aristocracy used religious elements to legitimize itself (Rood, 2017, 88-92, 112-113). Even though the reciter mentioned in the inscription may have worked in a hall of a regional leader close to the place where the monument was found (Salløv, in Gadstrup, not yet identified), it is very likely that he also had connections or influences on Lejre. The royal hall was the most prominent area for warriors and the aristocracy, with the ceremonial toast being the central element of this religious configuration (Nordberg, 2019, p. 348). In this way, the swastika with Snoldelev's triskelion represents not only the myths of Odin (of which Hroald was certainly the narrator – the triple horn embodies both the narratives and the act of celebration), but also the relationship between men and the deity itself, reflected in the authority of the king or leader (the swastika, as a sun sign, embodies both the prosperity of the community and the power of human leadership and the god Odin).

5. The Borromian triquetra and the god Thor

An object with geometric motifs was found in a grave from the 10th century, it is the famous Mammen axe, with engravings on its blades that gave its name to one of the artistic styles of the late Viking Age. It was discovered in the village of Mammen, Jutland, on the mound of Bjerringhøj, making it one of the most iconic graves excavated in Denmark. The man buried in this place belonged to high aristocracy, possibly related to the royal dynasty of Jelling. The site was excavated in 1868 and the material was sent to the National Museum, but unfortunately most of the human bones were lost. On the mound was a wooden chamber, sealed with blue clay. Inside the coffin, the deceased was positioned on a layer of feathers and wore woolen clothes, decorated with silk, silver and gold threads. Two silver axes were added near the dead man's feet, in addition to other objects. The site was reexcavated in 1986, confirming a dendrochronological date for the period 970-971 A.D. New studies in the National Museum's collection managed to identify and recover some of the lost bones, allowing osteological analysis of the individual to be carried out – it was an adult male (over 30 years old), with evidence of intense physical activity (probably horse riding) (Rimstad, 2021, p. 735-752).

The ax would have been a ceremonial weapon of a man with princely positions, filled with an irregular leaf design: sprouting from spirals at the base, its appendages snake and intertwine with the blade (figure 10), as well as some gold details. On the other side, when viewed from the same angle, it is occupied by a bird (also filled with





interlacing) whose crested head and circular eye is turned backwards. A prominent shell spiral is used to mark its hip, which is also the tip from which its two wings emerge; the one that extends to the right intertwines with the neck, while the other intertwines with the body and tail, the latter taking the form of a triple tendril. The particular treatment of the tendrils, with open ends (in the shape of a hook), is yet another characteristic of the Mammen style. The outer contour of the wings displays a particular feature of the Mammen style in a semicircular notch. At the top, the blade is protected by a human mask - a favorite motif of the Mammen style, although inherited from earlier styles. In this case, he has a more prominent nose and a spiral treatment on his beard. The designs on both sides are asymmetrical, with loose interlacing and an irregular appearance (Graham-Campbell, 2018, p. 100-103).

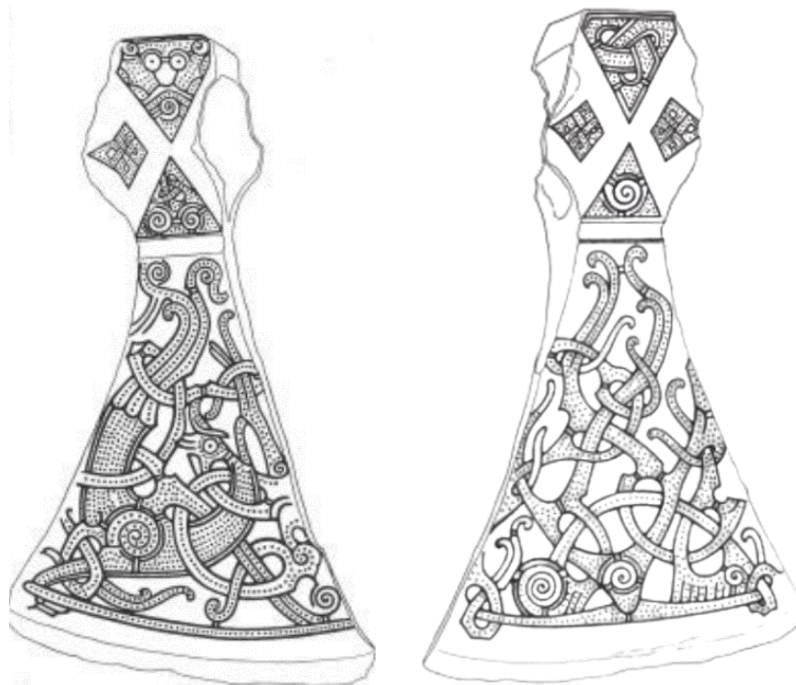


Figure 10: *The Mammen axe* (reconstitution of the two faces with figurations), Jutland, Denmark, 971 AD, Drawing by Bertil Centerwall. Source: Nationalmuseet, 2021. One side (left image) has a male representation on its handle, with a spiral mouth and bulging eyes; in the lower scene of the handle, a small triquetra appears above two spirals. On the other side of the cable (figure on the right), a large Borromian-type triquetra was represented with rounded ends and just below, a spiral.

When the ax is observed with the head up and the blade down, we notice a pattern: the male mask at its top is very similar to those found on Thor's hammer pendants (see figures 14, 15, 16), with extremely wide eyes and a mouth occupied by a spiral, almost identical to the figuration of the Scania pendant (figure 16). In the same position, but on the other side of the axe, is a triquetra with a Borromean pattern (three interconnected





circles), a symbol also present on the Bredsättra pendant (figure 14) and on the Solberga plaque (figure 12), the latter from the 8th century. The triquetra is also a geometric symbol associated with Odin – but generally with pointed terminals, as in Sanda I (figure 7), and in a Tissø metal figures (Odin mask, see figure 8; a valkyrie?, see: Pentz, 2023, p. 322), while those related to the god Thor almost always contain terminals in the Borromean pattern. The wide eyes of the masks and pendants are related to the description of the moment when the god hooks the world serpent (*Gylfaginning* 47) and other moments in mythological sources, describing his eyes as glowing. Specifically, the male figure on Mammen's handle must both indicate this characteristic of the god, and associate it with the link of Norse rulers with bright, illuminated or even clairvoyant eyes – an element also very present in medieval literature and, according to recent research, in Saxon helmets (Price; Mortimer, 2014, p. 517-538). Here we realize that this divinity-royalty link reinforces and justifies the political power of the ruler over the community.

Synthesizing the patterns, the figures on both sides of Mammen's handle have some relationship with the deity, whether in the form of a mask with a spiral mouth, above two spirals; on the other side, a large triquetra above a spiral – reinforcing the symbolism: Thor above the world serpent. This visual relationship, in fact, also exists in the hammer pendants dating from the 10th century (figure 15): the god and his eyes (and spiral mouth, in the Scania pendant) are represented on the handle, above the serpent, the latter figured in the head of the hammer, just below (in the form of spirals or ornaments resembling the number eight).

On one side of the blade of Mammen's axe, there is a figure of a bird which is difficult to identify in precise terms, intertwined in terminals with spiral tips. Some point out that it is the figure of a rooster, which has religious symbolism in both “paganism” and Christianity, becoming an abundant theme in runestones from the 11th century. In the Eddic sources, eschatological cocks were associated with trees and were possibly a mythical (and artistic) influence from the ancient Celtic area (Hultgård, 2020, p. 1020), although Perun, the thunder god of eastern Slavs is also reported to be connected with roosters (Yoffe & Krafczik, 2003, p. 28) probably because in the Slavic worldview these animals were related to the cult of the sun (Álvarez-Pedrosa & Marinas, 2023, p. 94). Another issue that we must take into account is the possible uses of this axe, not as an objective instrument of war, but rather as a military ceremonial item (Graham-Campbell, 2018, p. 103), in addition to having been created by the court of King Harald Bluetooth – a possible gift of prestige, loyalty and high status, required by social and political relations





between the king and his warrior aristocrats (Winroth, 2012, p. 45-49). And as for the object itself: several studies have already correlated the symbolic ambiguity of Thor's martial instrument, which could have originally been a stone, but took on other shapes, such as a wedge, chisel, club, hammer and ax – but with the latter it gained prominence, due to the importance of this type of war instrument in Old Norse society (Motz, 1994-1997, p. 331). Etymological evidence demonstrates Thor's hammer has travelled long distances (West, 2007, p. 253-254; Alves, 2020) and miniature axes are a common archaeological find throughout the entire Baltic Sea Region (Kucypera & Wadyl, 2011), what makes this question both intriguing and complex.

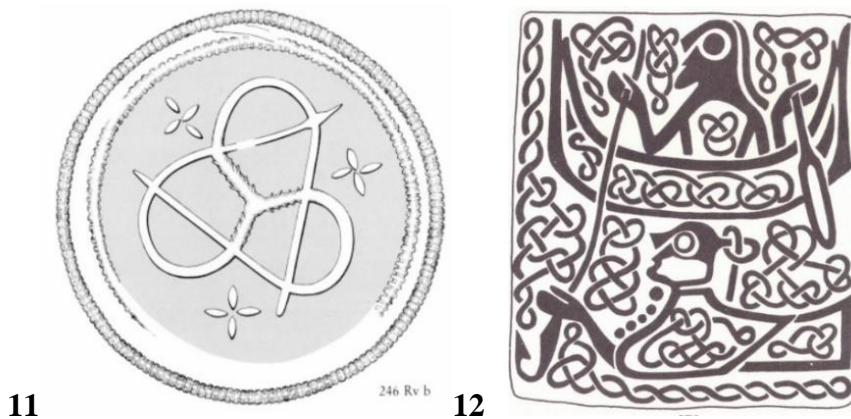


Figure 11 (left): Bracteate IK246 Frejlev (DR BR44 Frejlev, Denmark) B-side. Digi20, Hauge, 2022.
Figure 12: Bronze plaque found in the mound of Beschlag, Solberga (Nr. 925), Östergötland, Sweden, dated to the year 700 AD. source: Helmbrecht, 2011, p. 84. Considered the oldest representation of the god Thor fishing (Hall, 2007, p. 168). The figuration presents a male being fishing in a boat, the end of the line being handled by a female entity (perhaps a valkyrie, due to her triple knot hairstyle, in addition to wearing a beaded necklace). The boatman does not carry a hammer, but the two ends of the boat (stern and bow) are very similar to those found on the Altuna stone, which is 250 km from Solberga, both in Sweden. The most important detail of the Solberga plaque is the representation of a Borromean triquetra, in the center of the male figure (probably the god Thor). It is also worth highlighting the prominence of the boatman's eye, represented larger than that of the lower figure.

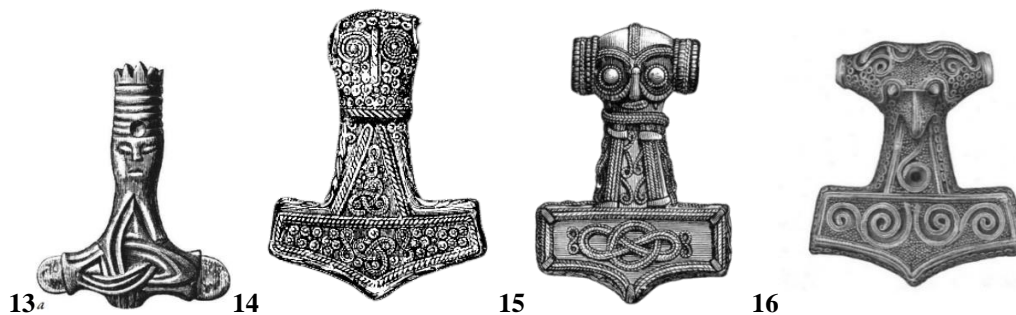


Figure 13 (left): Enarme accessory for shield, Vendel dig 2 (n. 1099), Sweden, Helmbrecht, 2011, p. 329.
Figure 14: Pendant, Bredsättra, Oland Island, Sweden (Historical Museum, SHM 101). Source: Stephens,





1878, p. 35. **Figure 15:** Pendant, Erikstorp, Sweden (Historical Museum, SHM 5671). Stephens, 1878, p. 35; **Figure 16:** Pendant, found in the Scania region, Sweden, with no specific location (collection of the Historical Museum, SHM 9822:810), illustration by Carsten Lyngdrup Madsen, source: Heimskringla, 2022. They all have common patterns: at the top (which would be the handle of the object), eyes and a kind of “nose” were represented, all denoting an aspect of being “wide-open”. The lower part, corresponding to the head of the hammer, all contains Borromean triquetra and/or spirals. In the first (figure 14) the triquetra is identical to the one in the center of Solberga's Thor (see figure 12). On the center hammer (figure 15), the circular symbol (a kind of intertwined eight) is very similar to the geometric symbol that occurs on the knife handle of Staraya Ladoga, which contains figures of Thor's hammer (see figure 5), as well as on Gotland pictures stones (Sandegårda, Sanda socken) and serpentine brooches (such as Type L1d. SK Järrestad, SHM09822:818). In the third example, the mouth is represented by a spiral, very similar to the figure of Mammen's ax handle (see figure 10).

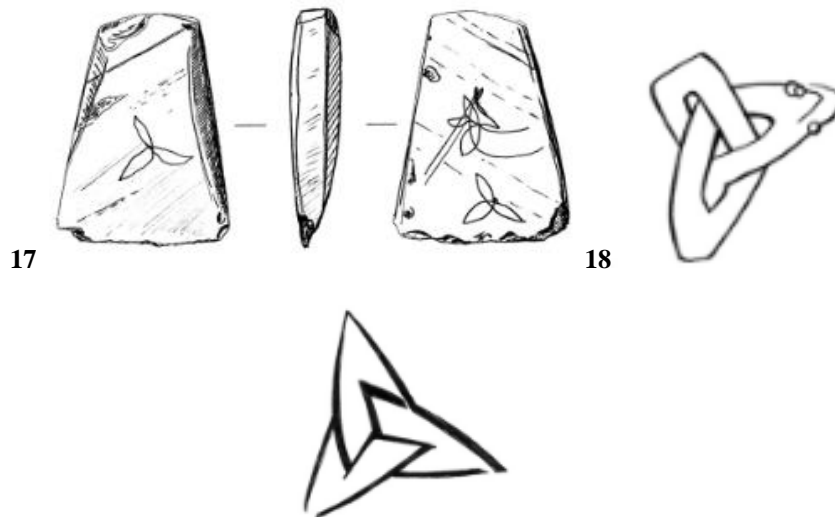


Figure 17 (left): Neolithic stone tool with triquetra engravings on both sides, found in Novgorod, 10th century. **Figure 18 (right):** triquetra figurations (of the Borromian type and another of the type with points) found on wooden objects ritually deposited in Novgorod. Musin, 2019, p. 175.

And to complete the matter: the use of the triquetra. This symbol refers to the tripartite ideology of the aristocratic-warrior elite in Scandinavia, since the Migration Period and, together with other geometric triptych symbols found in the Viking Age (such as the triskelion, the triple drinking horn and the valknut), brings together the main attributes associated with the claims of a divine descent and as instruments to connect with the dead and ancestors (which could be both geometric artistic symbols and literary-oral elements, but also monuments, such as the *treuddar* of Norway), in addition to the very legitimization of existence of the warrior space in the great halls (Main, 2020, p. 1-53). Although Odin mostly encompasses the triptych ideology (see Gardęła, 2022, p. 28), the god Thor also presented elements related to the world of warrior-aristocrats,





demonstrating the flexibility and variations of religious configurations in “pagan” Scandinavia.

In the Russian area, another archaeological find attests to the connection between Thor and the spiked and borromian triquetra. The first populations of the city of Novgorod (of Norse origin) made ritual deposits before the first houses were built, inserting several objects in this location (between 930 and 950 AD): several pendants of Thor's hammer, anthropomorphic figurines, as well as amulets with many representations of triquetras and triskelions (figures 17 and 18). One of these objects was a tool of Neolithic origin with triquetras engraved on both sides (figure 17, Musin, 2019, p. 182). In other words, a totally “pagan” context, both for objects and symbols. In Viking Age Scandinavia, Neolithic stone objects reused in pre-Christian burials have been discovered (Johanson, 2009, p. 162).

6. Conclusion: the importance of new studies of geometric symbolism in the Norse area

The questions that stimulated our research brought us some points worthy of being highlighted:

1) The swastika appears related to Thor (but only in the case of the Staraya Ladoga knife, but in an indirect and ambiguous way)), the *Sól* rune and maybe to the symbolism of the great serpent, although this symbol is clearly more related to Odin (specially previously to the Viking Age, in bracteates).

2) The triquetra is also found in relation with Thor (especially the Borromian type), as well as the god Odin (but this one, especially the spiked type); the triquetra also appears to be a hybrid symbol embracing the pagan worldview and the symbols of Christianity, such as the Trinity, especially after the 10th century.

3) The valknut has no clear connection to Thor, despite having previously appeared linked to Odin. In the ritual sphere connected to these symbolisms, Odin is the most prominent deity, as the Oseberg tapestry attests. The spiral, triskelion and triquetra have strong connections with funerary elements in the Norse area. Representations of deer may potentially be related to the symbolism of death, in which context the valknut appears to have replaced the swastika.

4) Many movable objects carved with symbols do not appear to be strictly linked to specific gods, rituals or mythical narratives, but are shown to be charged with





apotropaic properties, most notably the swastika, but also the valknut and, to a lesser extent, the triquetra. But at the same time, the same symbols when represented in figurative contexts appear to be related to deeper meanings of cult, rite and myth. In this sense, we warn future researchers that the same individual symbol can gain other meanings in combination with other geometric or figurative symbols (as argued by Helmbrecht, 2011, p. 221). Thus, the swastika appears to have a clearly apotropaic meaning when combined with the Sól rune, but it takes on another meaning when combined with triple symbols (such as the triskelion). This pattern is noticeable from the Migration period to the Viking Age. The same case applies to valknut, but only in the context of the 9th century.

Viking art also contained many ornamentations that possibly had a religious and symbolic meaning and not merely decorative (as argued by Pedersen, 2014, p. 195-222; Hedenstierna-Jonson, 2006, p. 312-322), and some specific ones, such as knot ornaments, should be studied in conjunction with geometric symbolism (Gardeła; Pentz; Price; 2022, p. 110).

Also future research should be concerned with both diachronic and comparative patterns. It is very important to highlight that the valknut symbol was the only one that was not preserved in the Scandinavian area after the 11th century (the triskelion was retained, but not in its horned form), especially in church interiors and baptismal fonts. In these last objects, we find representations of Thor's hammer, quatrefoils, triskelions, swastikas and triquetras, but never the representation of valknuts. This may indicate that this symbol received a special “pagan” connotation and was not fully hybridized or assimilated by the new religion in Scandinavia, even if it came from the Saxon area (as argued by Pesch, 2023, see table 2). Our research also supports Tom Hellers (2012) extremely convincing arguments that the valknut had a direct relationship with Odin, death and magic, that is, a totally pagan context for the valknut symbol in Viking Age Scandinavia.

We hope we have provided new possibilities of research when it comes to these symbols. As we argue, the clues provided by the cultural context in which they are found help to narrow our interpretations of their meaning, avoiding divergent and conjectural abstractions, while also pointing to vast potentialities for multiple variations of understandings based on culture. Also, the amount of data gathered and systematized here could help giving a clearer panoramic view of the concrete manifestations of these





symbols, something that could be of help for future endeavors in analyzing symbolism in Ancient Scandinavian Area.

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