

THOMAS ERIKSSON

Department of Collections and Research, National Historical Museums in Stockholm
thomas.eriksson@shm.seGOTLANDIC POTTERY OUTSIDE GOTLAND¹

ABSTRACT

The article discusses contacts and networks along the eastern coast of Sweden and around the Baltic Sea. The focus is on the decorated pottery *c.* 0–700 AD. Sweden and Scandinavia had different regional styles of pottery during this period. One of the most distinctive Scandinavian styles is found on Öland and Gotland. This style is distinguished by the elaborate use of stamps and vessels with handles positioned from the rim to the shoulder. Vessels made in this style are found outside the large islands, notably in Svealand, *i.e.* the lake Mälaren Basin in central Sweden, as well as in northern Sweden. More interesting is the spread and influences in

the Dollkeim-Kovrovo culture, in north-eastern Poland, and Oblast Kaliningrad. During the Roman Iron Age, a special type of beaker is found from the Mälars basin to Gotland/Öland and further on in Oblast Kaliningrad. The connection can also be seen in dress ornaments and other artefacts. The regional differences in the pottery decrease during the Vendel Period (*c.* 550–800 AD). A new style of stamped vessels is spread from the Langobards in northern Italy to England and Scandinavia and marks a new, more uniform material culture. This marks probably a new area of more complex and centralised political units.

Keywords: Decorated pottery, Roman Iron Age, Migration Period, Vendel period, Eastern Sweden, Gotland, Dollkeim-Kovrovo culture, networks

Introduction

The pottery during the Roman Iron Age until the Vendel Period on the islands of Gotland and Öland forms one of the most unique traditions around the Baltic Sea. The complexity of distinctive traits in the fine ware makes the style easy to recognise. The use of stamped decors, vessel-forms, and placements of the appendages make the tradition unique.

The focus of this article is not the pottery on Gotland and Öland but its distribution outside this core area. The spatial distribution of Gotlandic style elucidates networks and political alliances during the period *c.* 70–700 AD. One of the most common ways to make bonds and consolidate alliances is to eat and drink together. The use of the same type of table manners and rituals is a way to signalise a common cultural habitat. Using the same type of cups, jugs, and bowls will be a strong and physical manifestation of these, easy to see for all participants as well as viewers (Fig. 1).

During those periods, decorated pottery is very uncommon on the mainland of Eastern Sweden, especially in Svealand (the counties of Uppland, Södermanland, and Västmanland). This quantity stands in sharp contrast to the frequency of its occurrence in continental Europe as well as in southern and western Scandinavia. The occurrence of decorated pottery must therefore be regarded not just as pottery but also as something rare and valuable in Svealand.

Ware or style

The term regularly used in archaeological contexts to speak about pottery is ‘ware’. It can be understood in two ways. Firstly, it expresses physical or technical conditions such as firing temperature and type of clay, *i.e.* stoneware or terracotta. Secondly, it can be used for stylistic features, such as style and decoration, and even indicate an origin.² It is possible to call the decorated pottery on

¹ The study is partly financed by Stiftelsen Gustav VI Adolfs Fond för Svensk Kultur, Stiftelsen Lars Hiertas Minne, Åke Wibergs Stiftelse and Magn. Bergvalls Stiftelse.

² Orton *et al.* 2001, 12; Rice 2005, 5, 286f.

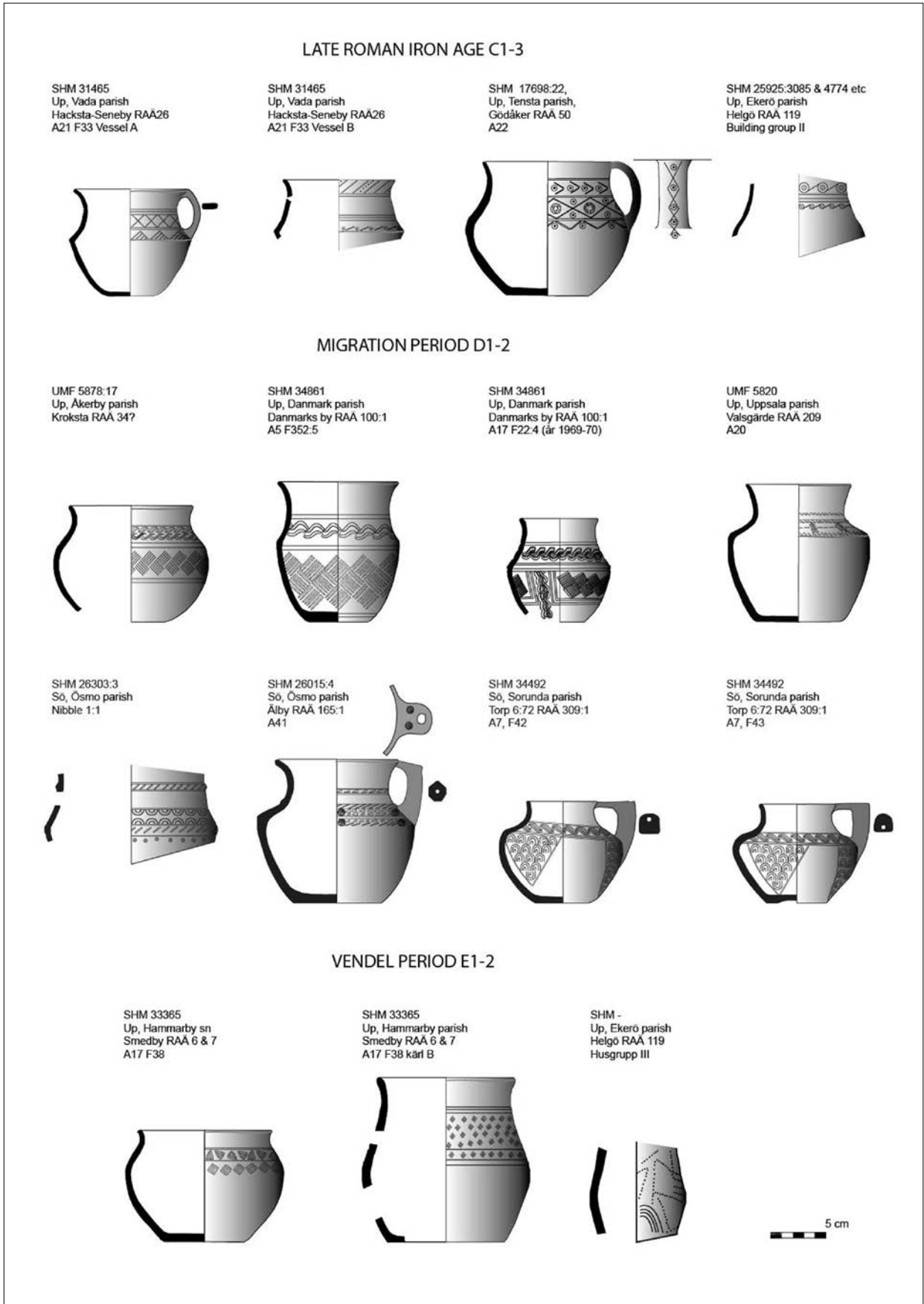


Fig. 1. Some of the reconstructable vessels from Uppland and Södermanland during period C-E (drawing T. Eriksson).

Gotland and Öland from *c.* 70–650 AD a Gotlandic or Ölandic Ware. However, the ambiguity of the term is difficult and may even be misleading.³ It is better without technological analyses to use the term ‘style’ in order to avoid this confusion. That makes it easier to deal with vessels made in a special style without making an implicit interpretation that implies export or import. In this study, I have chosen to call the style of the pottery Gotlandic, regardless of whether the vessels were made in Gotland, Öland, or even somewhere else. The vast majority of finds are found on Gotland.

A crucial factor for understanding the handicraft and production of the vessels on Gotland and Öland is the supply of raw material, especially clay. Most of the clay found on the islands is rich in chalk; so rich that it is difficult to make low-firing wares without adding organic temper or using a reducing atmosphere in order to avoid cracks in the ware.⁴ Despite this shortage in good raw material, the islanders have maintained the extraordinary tradition in making pottery. One explanation could be that originally there were more spots containing more suitable deposits with glacial and post-glacial clays, transported there from the northern Baltic basin. Those secondary clays could have had lower calcium content. Another explanation could be that the islanders had the technical knowledge to manage the calcium. Clay is rare on both islands. It occurs mostly in the form of moraine clay, especially on Öland. According to the latest geological survey, more secondary clays are found on Gotland than previously thought.⁵

The scarcity of clay and the need for a higher level of special treatments during the manufacturing and firing may be some of the clues for understanding the production. The need for more knowledge in combination with the scarcity of raw material could have forced the production towards more specialised potters. The production may have been more centralised and professional compared to the production in, *e.g.*, the region around Lake Mälaren, *i.e.* Svealand. The handicraft in the latter region has a more domestic character, dominated by functional undecorated vessels. The abundance of clay in Svealand has given the handicraft a decentralised production for the household on the mainland in contrast to more standardised fine ware from the islands.

Definition of Gotlandic style

There are of course many types of vessels found on the islands. The settlements are dominated by large, undecorated vessels in the shape of barrels or *situlae*.⁶ The focus in this study is the fine ware, *i.e.* thin-walled, smaller vessels, often with smooth, polished, or burnished surface and often fired in a reducing atmosphere. Ornamentation with stamps is the main feature of the pottery from the Roman Iron Age until the Vendel Period. Stamps occur in other regions, but it is only on Gotland and Öland that they form such a large part of the elements of decors. Here, the variation among the stamps is only equivalent to the Anglo-Saxon pottery during the Migration Period.

Another typical trait is the position of the handle in the Late Roman Iron Age and Migration Period. The handle is usually placed to begin on the rim and ends on the shoulder. This is a typical East Scandinavian and East Germanic way of design, with parallels in Eastern Scania, Bornholm, and in the Wielbark culture.⁷ In other parts of Scandinavia, the handle usually begins on the neck and ends on the shoulder.

Early Roman Iron Age

Something happens within the pottery-making tradition on Gotland and Öland in the Early Roman Iron Age. This seems to be an indigenous course of events more connected to internal change of traditions in style and other handicrafts rather than a result of external influences. One of the main forms is the so-called Ölandic or Gotlandic pot.⁸ The rounded S-profile of the vessels is very similar to other forms in contemporary products made of copper alloys and silver (Fig. 2). The form can be seen in strap ends, fibulae, and even in imported Roman wine sieves and wine ladles. The décor mostly consists of thin, shallow, horizontal cordons and simple ⊙-stamps.

The vessel form probably has its origin in the Seedorf phase of the Jastorf culture with an early, more continental example from Öland.⁹ What is more interesting is the resemblances with pottery in northern Poland and Kaliningrad Oblast, Russia, during phases B1–C1.¹⁰ It is a variant of Wołagiewicz group VIII. There are

³ According to a new XRF-analysis in Eriksson, Lindahl, forthcoming.

⁴ Feathers 1989; Rice 2005, 97f; Eriksson, Lindahl 2012, 47ff.

⁵ Daniel *et al.* 2005; Svantesson, Söderlund 2005.

⁶ Stenberger 1955, 1113–1119; Herschend 1998, 31ff; Fors, Gerdin 2009, 183ff.

⁷ Mackeprang 1943; Stjernquist 1955; Wołagiewicz 1993, tabl. 68; Klindt-Jensen, Bech 1996, 70–78; Engblom 2001, 63ff.; Heidemann Lutz 2010, 136ff.

⁸ Almgren, Nerman 1923, figs 186–194, 297–302; Eklund, Wikborg 1996; Eriksson 2009, 191ff.

⁹ Almgren, Nerman 1923, 24, fig. 182; Beskow-Sjöberg, Hagberg 1991, 366; Eriksson 2009, 192.

¹⁰ Wołagiewicz 1993, tabl. 30, type A.7–8.

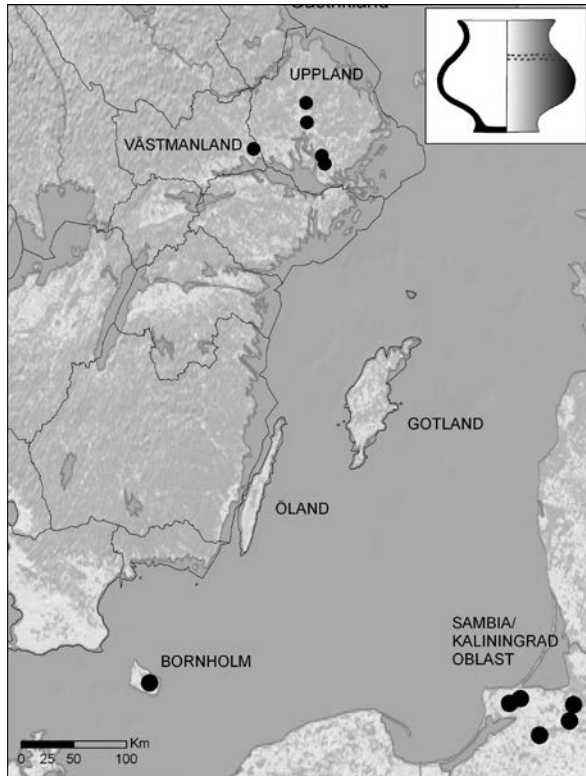


Fig. 2. The distribution of Gotlandic style pottery around the Baltic during period B1–C1. The distribution on Öland and Gotland is not marked on the map (map T. Eriksson).

some Sambian examples from phase B1–C2 that must be influenced by the Gotlandic style.¹¹ The similarities form one of the most striking examples considering the pottery from Sweden *versus* the Dollkeim-Kovrovo and Wielbark cultures. The forms of the vessels in both regions are very similar and this applies even more so to the knobs and handles. Their clover-form and other forms do not occur elsewhere in Scandinavia. Contacts between Gotland/Öland and Dollkeim-Kovrovo can also be seen in some types of belt-fittings, the cross-bow brooches of Dollkeim-Kovrovo type.¹²

One more type of ceramic vessel shows the contacts between the regions. It is a special type of slender, tall vase common on Bornholm, Gotland, and Öland and in Kaliningrad Oblast during the migration period.¹³

About 16 vessels are found on Öland, and the number on Gotland is much higher.¹⁴ They are dated to phases B1b–B2 with very standardised form and size. The distribution outside the islands is very interesting (Fig. 2). Vessels are found on the northern shores of Lake Mälaren, in inhumation graves in Bastubacken, Tortuna parish in Västmanland and Brillinge, Vaksala parish and Carlslund, Hammarby parish in Uppland.¹⁵ All three graves belong to a stratum with richly equipped interments, especially the grave from Carlslund (Fig. 3). This is dated to sub-phase B2b basing upon, *i.a.*, Roman imports in the form of a Capuan bronze casserole of type Eggers 142, beads with gold foil, and a fibula with silver thread.¹⁶

Some variants of the type are also found. A vessel with a décor of a shallow cordon and impressions of concentric circles comes from rich grave A7 in Gödåker, Tensta parish in Uppland. This inhumation grave was equipped with a Roman casserole, drinking horn, and bark vessels. The casserole, an example of the type Eggers 144, has almost the same profile and decoration as the majority of the Gotland bowls.¹⁷ The resemblances in form and decoration cannot be a mere coincidence.

A vessel from the large graveyard in Istaby, Blekinge parish, has been interpreted as a Gotlandic vessel.¹⁸ The vessel should rather be considered as a Gotlandic form type ÄEG 196 with affinity to forms on Bornholm and in the Wielbark culture.¹⁹

At least one example of a Gotlandic vase is found without context on Bornholm. It is a type with décor of vertical cannelures and cordons, with a close parallel on Gotland. It can be dated to phase B2.²⁰ The spatial distribution shows close contacts between Gotland and Svealand with one example from Bornholm and similar forms in the Dollkeim-Kovrovo culture.

The Late Roman Iron Age

The pottery on Gotland experiences a transformation and exhibits an extraordinary richness in forms and decors during phase C1–3. The use of stamps has its counterpart in the use of stamps on items of silver, gold, and bronze alloys. Stamps on gold items are well analysed and have been shown to originate in different workshops in Scandinavia. One group of the workshops can be seen

¹¹ Wołagiewicz 1993, tabl. 70.2–3, mapa 9; Nowakowski 2007, 272, Taf. I.e, V.c, f.

¹² Nowakowski 1996, 102ff; Bitner-Wróblewska 2001, 41ff, 83ff, 109ff.

¹³ Klindt-Jensen, Bech 1996, 81; Nowakowski 1996, Taf. 16, 17.

¹⁴ Almgren, Nerman 1923, Taf. 12; Beskow-Sjöberg, Arnell 1987, 252, 358, 363; Beskow-Sjöberg, Hagberg 1991, 123, 184, 242; Hagberg, Beskow-Sjöberg 1996, 105, 166, 175, 177, 260; Rasch, Fallgren 2001, 337.

¹⁵ Arwidsson 1941, 12ff.; Eklund, Wikborg 1996, 172–175; Edenmo 1998, 26–30.

¹⁶ Edenmo 1998, 26, 94; Eriksson 2009, 191ff.

¹⁷ Almgren 1916, 90ff; Andersson 2002, 240; 2016.

¹⁸ Björk *et al.* 2011, 68f.

¹⁹ Almgren, Nerman 1923, fig. 196; Wołagiewicz 1993, tabl. 30; Klindt-Jensen, Bech 1996, 57f.

²⁰ Müller 1888, fig. 171; Almgren, Nerman 1923, fig. 302.



Fig. 3. So-called Gotlandic or Ölandic pots from phase B2. A vessel from Brillinge, Vaksala par. in Uppland, to the left and two pots from Öland to the right (photo T. Eriksson).

in Gotland and Öland with a preference for some special stamps, particularly triangular forms and St. Andrew crosses.²¹ The use of stamped decors is even richer on pottery. It is hard to explain the two phenomena without a transmission of methods between the crafts of metal and pottery. One explanation of this transmission can be found in the moulds and crucibles. Most moulds and all crucibles are made of clay. To make them suitable for extreme temperature and still preserve a milieu for making good-looking artefacts requires an insight and knowledge of clay, temper, and forming. This points towards a milieu where goldsmiths, potters, and bronze casters work so close that they have insight into each other's traditions and workmanships. There are several possibilities for this. The potter and the smith can be the same person, they can be married, or they work in special sites for manufacturing. It has been argued that stamped decors appeared in phase C1 in Central Europe and spread northwards.²² But the tradition of stamped decors had begun already in phase B1 on Gotland and Öland.

At the same time, two main features begin to appear on the pottery, creating a division between the East and West Scandinavian ceramic traditions. The first trait is the carinated form of the drinking bowls. It is seen in Eastern Scania, Blekinge, Bornholm, and on Gotland and Öland. The second characteristic is the placement of the handle, with the starting point at the rim. This can also be seen on bowls in the Wielbark culture and in the

regions mentioned above.²³ This is a distinctive cultural trait in contrast to the tradition in western Scandinavia.²⁴

The contacts between the three large islands in the south-eastern Baltic Sea can be seen in handled bowls made in Bornholm or eastern Scania style found in graves at Öland and Gotland.²⁵ The bowls are of Bech type 27 and can be dated to phase C1.²⁶ The bowl from rich grave 302 at Vi Alvar, Källa par. on Öland, was found together with artefacts with mostly female connotations. Perhaps this was a woman from Bornholm or eastern Scania who was married to an Ölandic man. The contacts between the regions are also seen in other materials.²⁷ The distribution of Roman imports must also have gone via the large islands in the Baltic and further to the northern regions around the sea.²⁸

Pottery of Gotlandic style is found in the eastern part of Södermanland and in Uppland. The finds from Södermanland come from Ösmo parish, and the sites are situated on the parts of the Mälaren region mainland that are closest to Gotland (Fig. 1). The distribution northwards follows the water systems from Ösmo up to Gödåker in Uppland (Fig. 4). The graves from grave cemeteries in Ösmo are quite common without any remarkable richness in the rest of the grave goods. This might indicate that the contacts between Gotland and Ösmo were regular and that decorated vessels were not high status artefacts in that context. The vessel from Ösmo was probably made in the same workshop as

²¹ Andersson 1991, 222ff.; Andersson 1995, 181–189.

²² Machajewski 2001, 164.

²³ Wołagiewicz 1993, tabl. 33, 36.

²⁴ Mackeprang 1943, 83.

²⁵ Almgren, Nerman 1923, fig. 479; Rasch, Fallgren 2001, 110, 129.

²⁶ Klindt-Jensen, Bech 1996, 76ff.

²⁷ Heidemann Lutz 2010, 259ff.

²⁸ Lund Hansen 1987, 218ff.

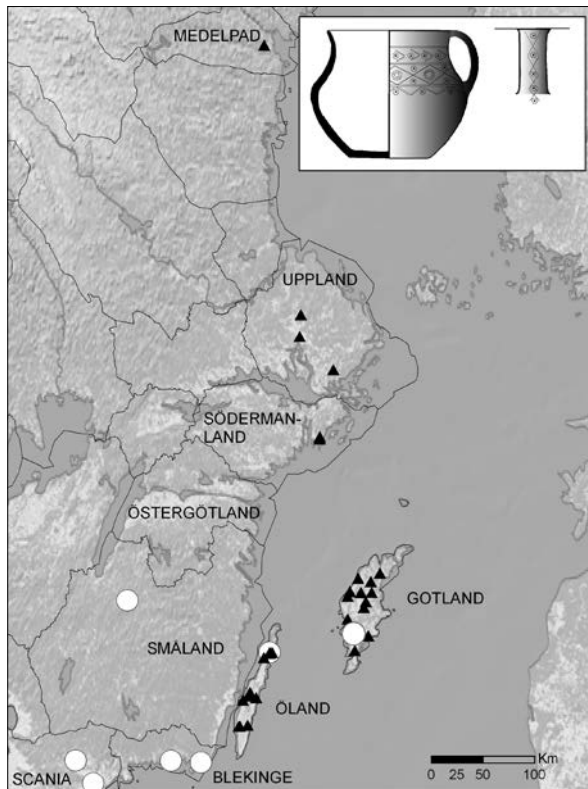


Fig. 4. The distribution of Gotlandic style pottery around the Baltic Sea during phases C1–C3. Triangles – Gotlandic style; circles – Bornholm/east Scanian style (map T. Eriksson).

vessels found on Öland.²⁹ A grave at Hacksta-Seneby, Vada par. in Uppland, belongs to a woman, and another grave at the same graveyard contains one of the rare silver fibulae in Uppland. The vessels from Vada are not typical Gotlandic ones but show some resemblance with vessels from Lärbro on northern Gotland (Historical Museum in Stockholm – SHM, inv. no. 32375.6). The find from Gödåker comes from a chamber grave richly equipped with a golden finger ring and a wooden bucket.³⁰ Thin-section analysis has shown that the vessel of Gotlandic type was not made in a common Gotlandic ware.³¹ The item is very similar to finds on the north-western coast of Gotland instead (SHM, inv. no. 3911.6, b, c; 6957.h; 10025; 20651b³²). The similarities must be regarded as a proof that the vessels were made in the same tradition of one workshop, although not necessarily with the same clay. The other grave goods in the graves both on Gotland and in Gödåker also bear many resemblances (Fig. 5). It seems likely that the deceased in grave 22 in Gödåker was part of an intermarriage with a Gotlander.

During this period, a distinctive connection between the workshops and halls at Helgö in Lake Mälaren and Gotland is seen.³³ A fragment from house foundation II on Helgö has probably been made using the same stamps as the vessel from the Havor cemetery, Hablingbo par. on Gotland (SHM, inv. no. 25925.4774; 8064.135). The stamps are in the shape of quite simple concentric



Fig. 5. A set of vessels from Gotland phases C1–C3. The colours of the vessels are mostly secondary. Back row from the left: Visby par., Värnhem par., SHM, inv. no. 15828 (phase C1–C2) and 15828.6 (per. C3); front row from the left: Sjonhem, Sojvide par., SHM, inv. no. 6071 (phases C2–C3) and Ekeby, Ardags par., SHM, inv. no. 26313.1 (phase C1–C2). The vessel in the upper left corner is almost a copy of the vessel from Uppland, Gödåker, grave 22 (photo T. Eriksson).

²⁹ Polásková 1998, 28f.

³⁰ Andersson 2016.

³¹ Stilborg 2009.

³² Polásková 1997, 253f.

³³ Arrhenius 1964, 269ff.

circles with tangents that might be difficult to distinguish, but the style and décor are very similar. The vessel from Havor is dated to phases C1–C2.

From this period onwards, the axis between Gotland and the area around Uppsala becomes more and more accentuated in the chorological distribution of the Gotlandic style. Regions on the rest of the Swedish east coast lack similar finds. In some areas, such as Norrland, Småland, and Blekinge, the shortage of finds may partly be owed to the limited number of excavations that have been carried out. In other counties, such as Östergötland and Scania, the lack of finds cannot be sought in the lack of excavations. Instead, it must be seen as the absence of bonds compared to the ones between Svealand and Gotland and Öland.

The most northern find of Gotlandic character is found in a cairn in Hov, Selånger in Medelpad. The closest parallel to the handled bowl comes from phase C1 on Gotland.³⁴ It is the earliest example of a decorated vessel in Norrland and the only one that tells us about contacts with the south. All the other decorated later vessels in Norrland have a Norwegian character. The contacts between the former estuary around the rivers of Selångersån, Ljungan, and Indalsälven and Gotland can also be seen in the distribution of Westland cauldrons and the spade-shaped currency bars.³⁵

The vessel from Hov is, therefore, an important and early witness of these contacts.

The Migration Period

The Migration Period is the peak of the Gotlandic tradition as to the amount of finds as well as to the originality and complexity in décors. The quantity of different stamps and compositions is striking. The compositions of the motives are dominated by simple horizontal bands loosened up with décors in triangular fields, rectangular enclosures, and vertical bands. The stamps and the décors are very similar to the contemporary Anglo-Saxon tradition. This kind of similarity may not only be explained simply by close contacts between the regions. The likeness could rather be explained by a common transmission of style from metal handicraft. Stamps, rectangular and triangular fields, can all be seen in relief brooches and other metal handicraft. Other patterns that are common with the metal handicraft are the use of entrelac and ribbon interlacing. This stands in sharp contrast to the common styles in Western Scandinavia, even though the Norwegian bucket-shaped vessels show similar

influences with a transfer in decoration between fine-smiths and potters.³⁶ The stamps, on the other hand, are rather an archaic trait, even though stamps are common even in metal art.

The decorated vessels can be divided into two main groups with traditions going back to the Late Roman Iron Age. The first group consists of the often tall and slender bowls with one handle and a mostly carinated profile. Almost 80% of the vessels have a carinated shoulder. The second group consists of bowls or jugs with a tubular handle. The former type became extremely popular on the islands during this period and was exported to Svealand. They can be found in richer gravefields such as Denmark outside Uppsala, stray finds inside Uppsala, and on Helgö.³⁷ Two almost identical vessels are found in two separate graves in Torp, Sorunda par. (Fig. 1) in Södermanland.³⁸ The jugs from Torp are also almost identical with two finds from the Barshalder cemetery, Grötlingbo par. on Gotland (SHM, inv. no 32623.1967. A07, 13).³⁹ The vessels have identical stamps and they must have been made in the same workshop. The finds in

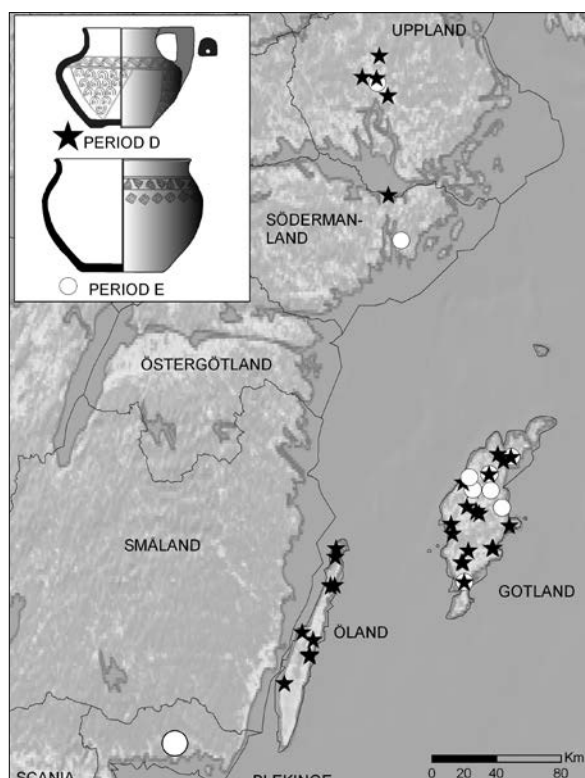


Fig. 6. The distribution of vessels made in Gotlandic style during phase D, *i.e.* the Migration Period, and E1, *i.e.* the Vendel Period (map T. Eriksson).

³⁴ Almgren, Nerman 1923, fig. 477, 480, 482.

³⁵ Hauken 2005, 92; Lindeberg 2009, 275.

³⁶ Fredriksen *et al.* 2014, 126ff.

³⁷ Eriksson 2016, 59ff.

³⁸ Elfstrand 1994, fig. 12.

³⁹ Rundkvist 2003a, 196ff.

Sorunda may be interpreted as a Gotlandic woman and a child with Gotlandic ancestry buried in Södermanland.

The most remarkable concentration of finds is Helgö on Lake Mälaren (Fig. 6). The island is situated on an old waterway that leads directly from Ösmo in Södermanland through Södertälje to Mälaren and further up to Uppsala. No pottery with Gotlandic style has so far been found in any of the graves on Helgö. The Gotlandic style, in the form of jugs, bowls, and vessels with tubular handles, is instead found in the settlement debris in the halls and among the building foundations. In particular, house foundation II is rich in finds of this type. The tubular handles may also be seen as a very special feature, one that was not constructed for practical reasons. The form became exceedingly popular on Gotland during this period. The construction of the combined handle and spout may be seen as a materialisation of ritual drinking or feasting.⁴⁰ The rest of the finds in the same house foundation indicate feasting, rituals, faraway contacts, and specialised workshops. The connection between the manufacture of items of gold and copper alloys and stamped décors on metal and pottery from the same foundation indicates a more indigenous pottery-making tradition on Helgö.

The rest of the Stockholm area lacks similar finds of Gotlandic style even though large-scale excavations of both settlements and graves from this period have been carried out. The area around Uppsala presents a contrast with the finds of pottery with Gotlandic style. Two of the sites belong to richly equipped necropolises, namely Valsgårde near Gamla Uppsala and the cemetery at Danmark-Söderby, Danmark par. in Uppland. The latter is situated at the landing point of two former waterways. The graveyard contains chamber graves with pottery of Gotlandic style.⁴¹ It is interesting that thin-section analyses of two of the finds have revealed that the clay is not typically Gotlandic in the sense of being rich in calcareous deposits. The vessels with entrelac are tempered with grog in a medium-coarse clay. The vessel with stamped décor from grave 46 is made of a fine clay tempered with granite. Thus, they have different origins,⁴² which is exactly the same observation as in the case of one of the older vessels from Gödåker. The vessels with entrelac from grave 5 and 17 are very slender. This, together with Hulthén's results, can indicate a manufacture on the mainland. The compositions of the décors on the vessels are very much alike, but the stamps are not identical. The

entrelac has close likeness to finds in Grötlingbo (SHM, inv. no. 32623.A33).⁴³

The second aristocratic milieu is Valsgårde. One vessel of Gotlandic style is found in chamber grave 20, on the graveyard famous mainly for the slightly later boat-graves. Another richly decorated vessel, with close parallels in the material from the Danmark graves, comes from an ordinary grave found in Kroksta, Åkerby par. in Uppland. The decoration consists of entrelac bands similar to the jugs from Sorunda in Södermanland.⁴⁴ Two main hypotheses may explain the observations through the thin-sections.⁴⁵ The first hypothesis is that there are more natural deposits of non-calcareous clay on Gotland and perhaps on Öland. The second is that potters have worked on the mainland, *i.e.* they were brought up in the Gotlandic tradition. One such site could be Helgö. New XRF-analysis can verify whether vessels made in the gotlandic style have been manufactured on the mainland.⁴⁶

Vendel Period and Øsløs vessels

The tradition continues on Gotland in period E1. Gradually, the tradition undergoes a transformation in the number of forms and the impoverishment in decoration. The older and richer variety of forms decreased, and a new form of bag-like vases became common (Fig. 1). The older forms of this type are broader and often have a horizontal division marked by lines. The types of stamps also became fewer with a preference for diamonds, squares, and rectangles with grid patterns. During period E2, the form of the vessels becomes slender, and the decoration becomes even coarser. This has often been seen as a swan song of the old vessel tradition that disappears at the end of the period.⁴⁷ Vessels with the same character are also found in Denmark and Norway; their style of ornamentation has been seen as rigid and uninspired.⁴⁸ Some of the vessels from Jutland, Norway, and the Swedish west coast are made in a slightly different and quite sophisticated tradition.⁴⁹ Still other vessels, for instance from Värmland, Östergötland, Småland, Södermanland, and Uppland, are made in a coarser way, with thick walls and unevenly impressed stamps. They must be seen as mere local products or imitations, probably of a later date (SHM, inv. no. 6638, 17550, 18671, 20110, 28402).⁵⁰

This form and decoration schemes are widely spread among the Germanic areas during the period

⁴⁰ Ekengren 2009; Løchsen Rødsrud 2012, 29ff.; Eriksson 2016.

⁴¹ Hulthén 1992; Wexell 2008.

⁴² Hulthén 1992, 6ff.

⁴³ Rundkvist 2003a, 205ff.

⁴⁴ Nordahl 1952.

⁴⁵ Hulthén 1992, 6ff.; Stålborg 2009, 2ff.

⁴⁶ Eriksson, Lindahl forthcoming.

⁴⁷ Nerman 1967, 93ff.; 1969, figs 761, 773–782; Polásková 1998, 31.

⁴⁸ Brøndsted 1966, 309; Ramskou 1976; Gudesen 1980, 67f.

⁴⁹ Sarauw 1923, 333f.

⁵⁰ Petré 1984, 82; Lundborg 1994; Hamilton, Östlund 2012, fig. 16.

c. 500–700 AD. Close to the Scandinavian parallels are, e.g., Anglo-Saxon finds from c. 500–550 AD.⁵¹ Some finds from western Scania are very close to some of the Anglo-Saxon examples.⁵² More slender forms, often with a carinated shoulder, are also found in Holland and are dated to around 510–680 AD.⁵³ Bertha Stjernquist has previously studied the material from Southern Sweden,⁵⁴ and she has interpreted them as a product of influences mainly from Western Europe. A similar origin has also been suggested for finds from eastern Scania.⁵⁵

Many tempting parallels are also found in connections to the Gepids and Lombards in Central Europe and north Italy. Slender vases with grid stamps, often in the form of rectangles, aces, and crosses, evolve during the end of the Migration Period in Hungary.⁵⁶ They become a key artefact for Lombardic influences in Italy during the 6th century.⁵⁷ The similarities between the vessels made in the Gotlandic style cannot be a coincidence. There are more connections between Gotland, Mälaren Valley, and the Lombards, such as the rich weapon-graves, Vendel-styles, and even the finds of brooches.⁵⁸

The spread of the pottery tradition outside Gotland is more interesting (Fig. 6). One of the most important points is the lack of pottery with stamped décors on Öland. The island has previously been one of the major regions with this type of pottery. There are two possibilities for explaining the dearth. One explanation is that the tradition of producing or/and importing decorated vessels had ceased. Many indications suggest that Öland underwent a rather dramatic change during the end of the Migration Period and the 6th century. The hoards of Roman solidi disappear during the beginning of the 6th century and comparatively few gold items are found from the Vendel Period, at least compared to Gotland. The decrease on Öland is also shown in datings from settlements and ring-forts.⁵⁹ The old system of settlement undergoes a change and the ring forts indicate a violent period. The loss of the decorated pottery of Gotlandic style is another sign of a breakage in the external network of Öland. There are of course always source-critical aspects of a statement relying on the absence of special features. However, the number of excavated and

published graves on Öland is so abundant that the shortage is statistically significant.

The contacts between the eastern part of Svealand and Gotland continue and seem to flourish. This can also be seen for instance in the distribution of E-bracteates, dress brooches, picture stones, and Vendel styles.⁶⁰ The material can be divided into two groups. The first group consists of bowls with a more distinctive Gotlandic character with impressions of mostly small diamond-shaped stamps. One example comes from an excavation made in 1847 in a mound called Gullhögen in Gamla Uppsala (SHM, inv. no. 1411). The excavation does not satisfy the modern standards, but the finds are rich with golden and bronze jewellery and gaming pieces.⁶¹ Only one small pottery fragment is preserved, but this has a clear Gotlandic character. Another example comes from a boat grave from Smedby, Hammarby par. in Uppland. The boat was about 5 m long and contained a knife, many rivets, and two pottery vessels with stamped décor (SHM, inv. no. 33365.A17). The other boat graves and large mounds in Mälardalen barely contain any pottery; thus, the graves in Gullhögen and Smedby are unique. The context in Gamla Uppsala, at the same cemetery as the three ‘royal’ mounds surrounded by a large complex with workshops, halls, ritual enclosures, and a settlement, is particularly interesting. The vessel found here is the only decorated ceramic vessel found in graves so far, and it highlights a connection between one of the cores of Svealand and Gotland. A possible find of a vessel of Gotlandic type is from Johannishus, Hjortsberga par. in Blekinge (SHM, inv. no. 7869). It may be seen in the light of an elite in eastern Blekinge with contacts with islands in the east.⁶²

A late form of Gotlandic type is a very narrow and tall vessel with a sharp angle on the body.⁶³ The form has often a close connection to Lombardic vessels. This type is the final expression of a dying tradition, and it is not the type’s best artistic expression. So far, the type has not been found in graves in the Mälaren Valley. It appears instead in the complex around house foundation III at Helgö.⁶⁴ The example from Helgö is a crude one, with comb impressions and lines in the form of bows. The former fineness has disappeared forever (Fig. 1).

⁵¹ Myres 1977, fig. 1014; Hills, Lucy 2012, fig. 3.29.1823.

⁵² Myres 1977, fig. 2254, 2335; Lindahl *et al.* 2002, fig. 214–215.

⁵³ Siegmund 1998; Theuvs, Van Haperen 2012, 109–113.

⁵⁴ Stjernquist 1992.

⁵⁵ Brorsson 2003, 351, 363f.

⁵⁶ Bocsi 2008, 424–428; Hegewisch 2008; Tejral 2009, 62ff., 71.

⁵⁷ Bierbrauer 2008a, 472f.; 2008b, 113–116.

⁵⁸ Magnus 2008, 183ff.

⁵⁹ Nerman 1925, 193; Herschend 1981, 155; Beskow-Sjöberg, Arnell 1987, 407; Victor 2015, 114f.

⁶⁰ Olsén 1945, 110f.; Arrhenius 1960; Gaimster 1998, 71f.; Rundkvist 2003b, 112; Gustavson *et al.* 2006; Mangelsdorf 2007, fig. 2; Hamilton 2012.

⁶¹ Ljungkvist 2006.

⁶² Fischer 2005, 218ff.

⁶³ Nerman 1969, figs 1288–1291.

⁶⁴ Reisborg 1981, 161f.

The Scandinavian vessels of this type must be at first seen at two scales. There are several different regional styles. A Gotlandic style with an evolution in forms from rounded vessels to slender vases with a sharp angle on the belly and the progressive degeneration in décor. This type can be found in Mälardalen and Blekinge. The second type can be traced in Scania, where it appears with Anglo-Saxon similarities. The third type is a more exclusive and elaborately decorated vessel of Øsløs type found in Jutland, Western Sweden, Norway, and Bornholm. The fourth type is simpler, and its coarse imitations are found over a larger area.

On a macro scale, this late offshoot of stamped décors is a more widespread tradition that can be traced in many continental contexts. The spread of the tradition may be seen as a manifestation of a more international style dispersed among the Germanic tribes and their neighbours; in a Swedish perspective, it can be seen as a loss of regional styles during the Migration Period.

A cultural interpretation

The contacts between the Lake Mälaren valley and Gotland are crucial for understanding the growth of chiefdoms around the Lake Mälaren valley. Gotland and Öland were a link between Svealand and the continent on the route from Eastern and Central Europe, especially from phase C and onwards. The south-eastern corner of Södermanland, around Ösmo and Sorunda, seems to be a bridgehead for those contacts. Sorunda has one of the largest accumulations of large grave mounds in Södermanland, indicating a high-status milieu during the Vendel and Viking periods.⁶⁵ The meaning of the name Ösmo is probably the heath of Uppsala öd, *i.e.* a part of the royal domain.⁶⁶ There are other metal finds from the parish that show close connections between Gotland, Helgö, and Ösmo during the Migration Period.⁶⁷ Helgö might also have a royal connection through the Hundhamra complex with rich grave finds in mounds at Norsborg.⁶⁸ The axis between Gotland and the Uppsala area via Ösmo/Sorunda and Helgö is therefore well founded. The material culture on Gotland and Öland has many similarities to the Dollkeim-Kovrovo culture. They testify to contacts between the regions where the islanders have played an important and mediating role between Svealand and the Balts.

The graves with Gotlandic style in the area are not the richest ones but might indicate more low-scale migrations or intermarriages. In central Uppland, in periods B and C, the Gotlandic style appears on gravefields with rich finds and high status items. The contacts continue during the Migration Period, but they are probably channelled through Helgö. In the mead halls at Helgö, drinking vessels of Gotlandic style were used in order to consolidate alliances and bonds. The cluster around Uppsala is also the main feature with finds in chamber graves in Valsgårde and Danmark. The other chamber graves around the Mälaren Valley and Norrland lack finds of pottery of Gotlandic type.⁶⁹

Svealand is remarkable in that it is the only region on the mainland with this mixture of styles of pottery with influences from southern and western Scandinavia and Gotland. The connection between Sjaelland and Svealand during phase C can be seen in fibulae and other jewellery.⁷⁰ Some of the pottery in Svealand may also indicate contacts with Västergötland. There are also indications that not merely vessels but also potters moved to the mainland and continued to evolve their style.

During the Vendel Period, the contacts continue along the axis from Gotland to Uppsala. One clue of the importance of the ceramics is that the only fragment of pottery found in the larger mounds at Gamla Uppsala is of Gotlandic character.

It is tempting to combine the finds with the tradition in the Gutasaga in the Gutalag about Avair Strabain. He was sent to the king of Svealand and arranged a treaty between Gotland and the Svear that regulated taxes and trade.⁷¹ A further matter of interest is the lack of vessels in the Gotlandic style along the shores between Södermanland and Blekinge. The geographic closeness between Småland and Öland makes this especially remarkable. One suggestion is that the connections between the regions were hostile. The network between Gotland, Öland, and Svealand was maintained on friendly grounds, at least periodically.⁷² Gotland and Öland have played an important role in the cultural transmission between Central and Eastern Europe and Svealand since phase C.⁷³ There is also evidence that the production on Helgö reached both Gotland as well as the eastern part of the Baltic Sea.⁷⁴ The late stamp décor of Gotlandic character can also be seen during the Migration Period in the south-eastern part of the Baltic.⁷⁵

⁶⁵ Bratt 2008, 129f.

⁶⁶ Wahlberg 2003.

⁶⁷ Bemann 2003, 172ff.; Franzén 2007.

⁶⁸ Ambrosiani 1985, 32f.

⁶⁹ Fischer 2014.

⁷⁰ Lund Hansen 2001, 164f.; Fernstål 2004, 122ff.; Przybyła 2009, 55f.

⁷¹ Faulkes *et al.* 1999.

⁷² For the martial relations between the regions, see Gräslund 2018, 143ff, 218ff.

⁷³ Bolin 1926, 304; Näsman 1984, 114ff.; Lund Hansen, Przybyła 2010, 262–271.

⁷⁴ Waller 1996, 21ff.

⁷⁵ Machajewski 2001; Bitner-Wróblewska 2008, 148, tabl. LI, LII, CXLIV, CLVII.

The distribution must be seen as a common practice of decoration in all the cultures on Gotland and Öland as well as parts of Poland and Germany and later among the Anglo-Saxons. A shift in influences and mutual contacts might be traced in the slender beakers with late stamped décors during the transition between period D and E. The earlier routes and contacts between Svealand-Gotland and the south-eastern part of the Baltic are

replaced by a route to Central Europe and northern Italy. The resemblances between the late Gotlandic style and especially the beakers among the Langobards and Gepids cannot be neglected. The shift in more western influences can be seen in many ways but is probably most obvious in the formerly neglected beakers in eastern Scandinavia.

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