

## **RADICALLY DIFFERENT? RESPITE AND RESILIENCE OF THE BRONZE AGE IN THE NORDIC REGION**

Laura Ahlqvist<sup>1</sup>, Helle Vandkilde<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Aarhus University*

The paper discusses the extent to which '1200 BC' impacted S. Scandinavia. The Nordic Bronze Age was utterly reliant on European metal trade and should logically respond to interrupted channels of metal transfer. Indeed, significant changes occurred in the North during this tumultuous time: they tie up with European-scale crises, but were also rooted in the preceding period. An environmental downturn is observable immediately prior to 1200 BC, seemingly linked to generations of unsustainable, aggrandizing mound construction (land) and house-building (timber). The Lössen glacial maximum (c. 1300–1100 BCE) may be understood as an overall background of environmental instability.

In Scandinavia, the time around 1200 BC appears generally less troubled by collapse and crisis than other parts of the Bronze Age world. The 'fall' of 1200 BC in the North marks a significant threshold out of which the culturally distinct Nordic Bronze Age (c. 1600–600 BC) appeared born anew through the integration of rooted tradition with Urnfield and Mediterranean ideas. Especially the period 1000–750 BC was a booming climax driven by European partnerships and political control of metal trading until interrupted c. 750–700 BC when deep crisis began to manifest likely connected to the Göschenen glacial maximum (c 800–700 BCE).

The paper asks how susceptible Scandinavia was to change and collapse in the Bronze Age world through complex explanatory models. A *longue-durée* approach looks for continuity and disruption, degrees of success and failure. Should the Nordic region be regarded as 'respite' or 'resilience'? Drawing on evidence from mortuary traditions, hoarding, conflict, landscape use as well as ritual and spiritual developments, glimpses of crisis as well as resilience transpire. These fluctuations appear intertwined with accelerating influx of impulses from the Urnfield region and even further away, which encourages a renewed cultural frame of reference for people in the Nordic region.

### **Keywords**

Nordic, Bronze Age, Collapse, Resilience, Cultural change, Environment

### **Note/comment**