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Fy nghyf / My ref :

Dyddiad / Date : 1st August 2001

Gofynner am /
Please ask for : Gavin Evans

Llinell Uniongyrchol /
Direct Line : 01267 231691

PRN 11857

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RECEIVED - 3 AUG 2001

Dear Jenny,

Some information for the SMR.

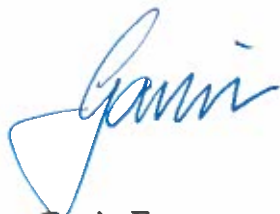
I imagine that you do have a PRN for this object - a small wooden figurine - said to have come from the vicinity of Strata Florida in the 19th century, but expert opinion at the time reckoned it was an exotic ethnographic artefact.

However, at this very moment, the figurine in question is being admired by the Queen of Denmark, in a display case at Silkeborg Museum, home of Tollund Man. Impressed? Don't answer.

Basically - information and references enclosed - the figurine is carved from boxwood, which allows a European/Mediterranean provenance, and is 2000 years old (AMS Lab, University of Groningen, Holland).

Could you let me know its PRN for our records?

All the best,



Gavin Evans

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MOSENS GUDER

Antropomorfe træfigurer fra Nord- og
Nordvesteuropas fortid

IMMORTAL IMAGES

Ancient anthropomorphic wood carvings from
northern and northwest Europe

Wijnand van der Sanden
Torsten Capelle

Silkeborg Museum



Mosens Guder

Antropomorfe træfigurer fra Nord- og Nordvesteuropas fortid

af Wijnand van der Sanden og Torsten Capelle

Udgivelseskoordinator Maiken Hansen

Øversættelse hollandsk/engelsk Susan Mellor

Øversættelse engelsk/dansk Annette Lerche Trolle.

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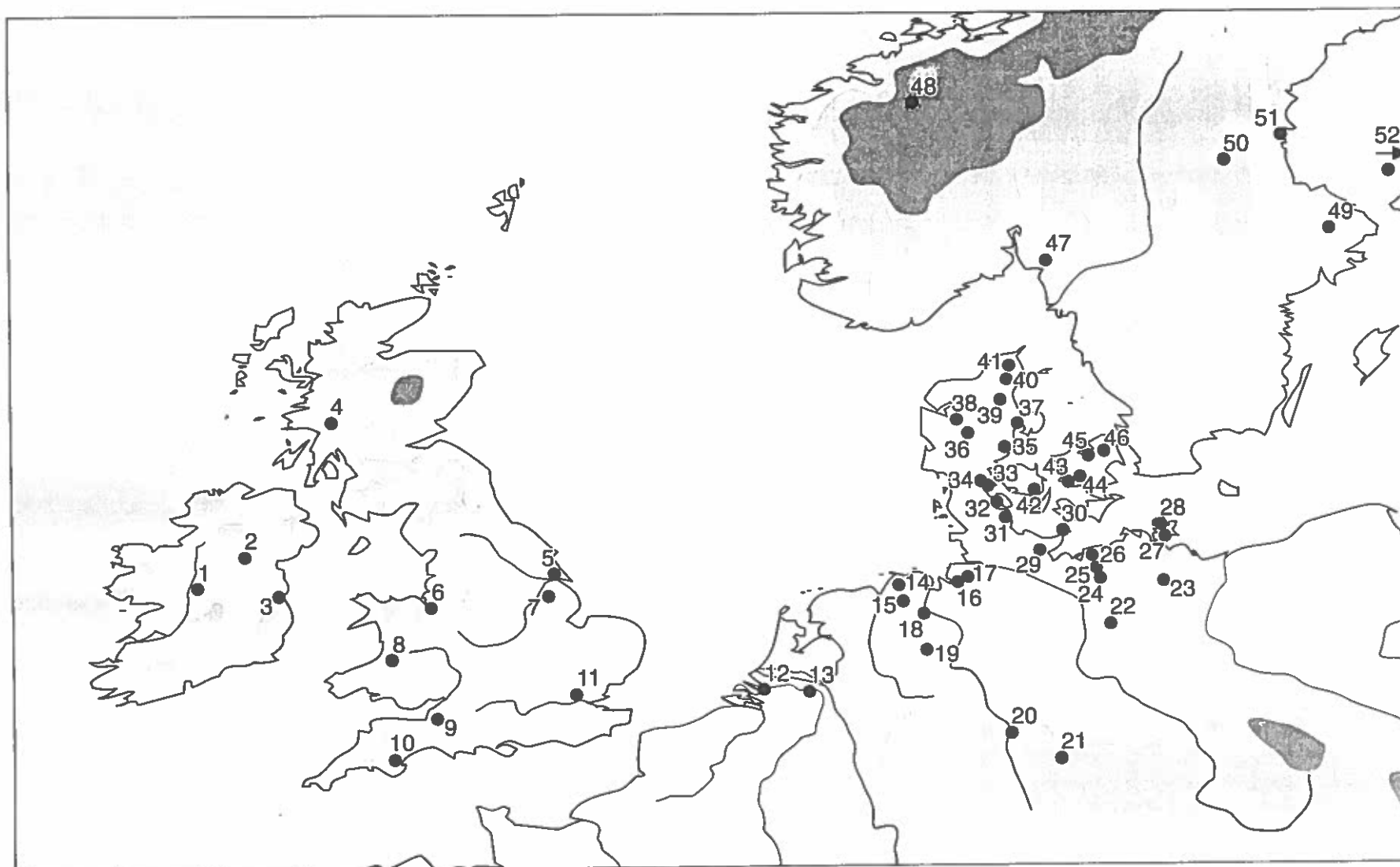
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Fig. 3
De vigtigste fundsteder, som er
omtalt i denne bog.

Fig. 3
The most important findspots
discussed in this book.



- | | | | | | | | |
|----------------|------------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| 1 Corlea | 8 Strata Florida | 15 Backemoor | 21 Possendorf | 28 Arcona | 35 Forlev Nymølle | 42 Svendborg | 49 Gamla Uppsala |
| 2 Ralaghan | 9 Somerset | 16 Severn | 22 Altfriesack | 29 Braak | 36 Kragelund | 43 Sorbylille | 50 Sundborn |
| 3 Lagore | 10 Kingsteignton | 17 Westerwanna | 23 Fischerinsel | 30 Johannisberg | 37 Hedeliskær | 44 Rude Eskildstrup | 51 Nordmyra |
| 4 Ballachulish | 11 Dagenham | 18 Wittemoor | 24 Parchim | 31 Thursberg | 38 Broddenbjerg | 45 Kjæring | 52 Pohjankuru |
| 5 Roos Carr | 12 Willemstad | 19 Grosses | 25 Gross Raden | 32 Nydam | 39 Hjed | 46 Rappendam | |
| 6 Oakhanger | 13 Oss-Ussen | Moor/Dümmer | 26 Bad Doberan | 33 Haderslev | 40 Rebild | 47 Grimstad | |
| 7 Misson-Haxey | 14 Aurich | 20 Oberdorla | 27 Ralswiek | 34 Ejsbøl | 41 Spangerholm | 48 Hegge | |

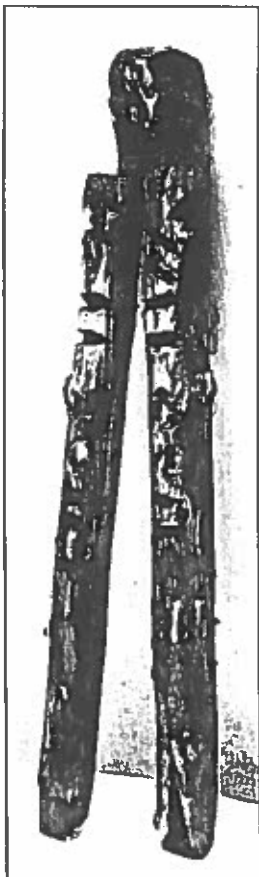


Fig. 20
Den 122 cm høje Sundborn figur er et praktisk taget utiltdannet stykke, som er fra ca. 1000. Nogle få økselug var nok til at markere et hoved (med øjne og mund), skuldre, bryster? og knæ.

Fig. 20
The 122-cm long Sundborn figure is a virtually uncarved natural product dating from around 1000. A few strokes of an axe sufficed to indicate a head (with eyes and a mouth), shoulders, breasts? and knees.

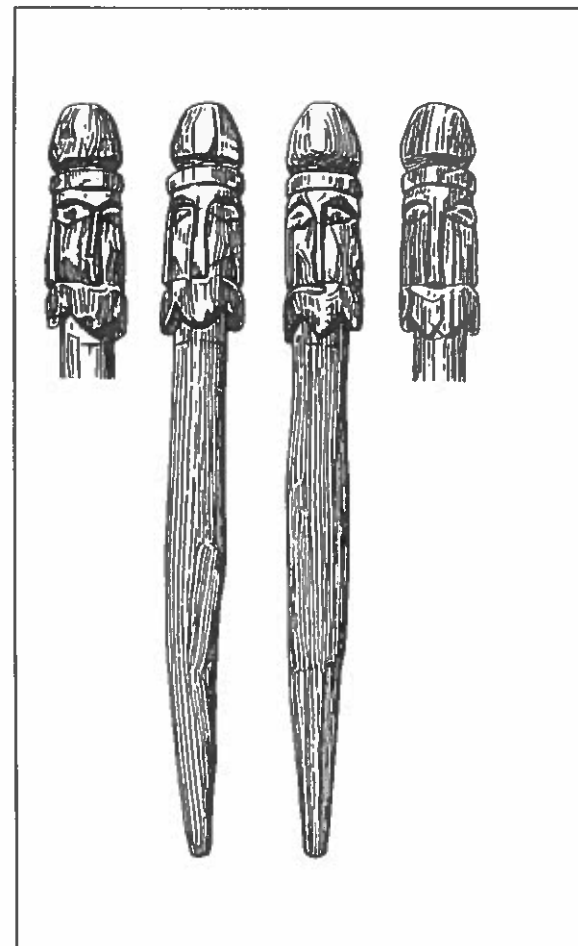
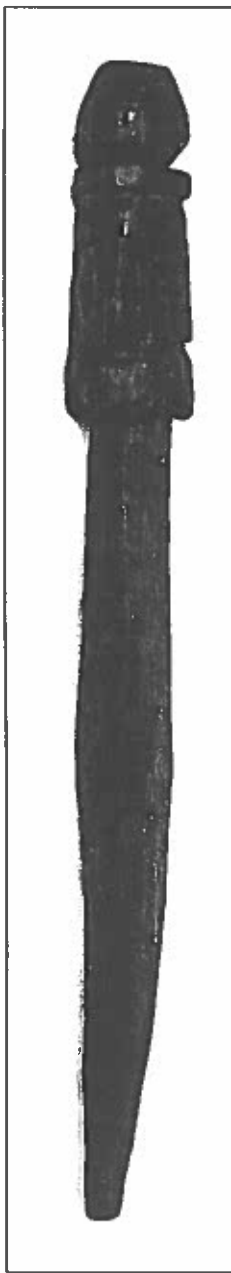


Fig. 21
Svantevitfiguren med de fire hoveder er fra Svendborg (13,5 cm høj). Den dateres til ca. 1100.

Fig. 21
The four-headed Slavonic deity Svantovit from Svendborg (h. 13.5 cm) dates from around 1100.

of votive sites. This is certainly true of the figure from Ejsbøl (Jutland) (Fig. 17), which marked the site of a large deposit of weapons, possibly offered in gratitude for some victory. The three larger-than-life-size men's heads that have come to light at the findspot Nydam (Jutland) in the past few years seem to belong to a different category of finds (Fig. 18). They probably served to adorn a ship.

Far more abstract than the Nydam heads is a seemingly anthropomorphic plank with a surviving length of almost 1 m that was recently excavated at a settlement near Backemoor (Lower Saxony, Germany) (Fig. 19). Where it stood before it was incorporated in the lining of a well we can only guess.

The only English figure that is known from this period, the beautifully carved Strata Florida manikin, is quite small, measuring no more than 13 cm. It's obvious that the Roman-period figures vary considerably in size and appearance. This is undoubtedly connected with the kind of people who had access to the figures.

After the Roman period

The earliest written records referring to representations of deities in the Germanic world date from after the migrations, *i.e.* from after the 5th century. Of particular interest in this context is the bishop Gregory of Tours, who lived in the second half of the 6th century. In his 'History of the Franks' he has Clotilda address the following words to her husband Clovis: 'The gods whom you worship are no good. They haven't even been able to help themselves, let alone others. They are carved out of stone or wood or some old piece of metal. The very names which you have given them were the names of men, not of gods.'

Only two figures have survived from this period and they moreover differ considerably from one another. Both came to light at findspots in Denmark. One is an approximately 4-m-tall *Astgabelidol* that was found at Ejsbøl, near the youngest deposit of weapons discovered at this site. The other is a plastic figurine from Rude Eskildstrup, Zealand. The latter represents a seated, bearded man wearing a triple neck-ring and holding something indefinable in his lap. The modelling of this remarkable carving was clearly no longer dictated by natural shapes.

Fig. 27

Kun når træ udelukkes fra kontakt med atmosfærisk luft, som i dette tilfælde i torven nær Oberdorla, har det en chance for at overleve i årtusinder. Udgraverne må anvende særlige teknikker, når de afdækker sådant træ, da det ellers, på trods af den lange overlevelse, vil gå i opløsning.

Fig. 27

Only when wood becomes excluded from atmospheric air does it stand a chance of surviving for millennia, as in this case in the peat near Oberdorla. Specific measures must then be taken by the excavators who expose such wood or else it would still decay after surviving for such a long time.



statuetten, der blev fundet hele otte meter under hollandsk normalvandstand. Roos Carr gruppen blev bevaret under ganske andre forhold. Ifølge fundrapporten, som er nedskrevet i 1840, lå træfigurerne indlejret i et lag af blåler i en tidligere biflod til floden Humber. Et andet fund, som også stammer fra et lerlag, er Grimstad statuetten. I dette tilfælde mener man dog, at leraflejringen er figurens sekundære kontekst. Også Kingsteignton figuren, som blev fundet på floden Teigns venstre bred, var formentlig indlejret i et lag af ler.

Pohjankuru statuetten blev derimod fundet i et mudderlag dannet i Østersøen, i et område, som under en landhævning dukkede frem af havet. Oss-Ussen planken lå på bunden af en brønd i nærheden af en

reported as archaeological finds. So the small number of figures that are actually known to us today are the proverbial tip of the iceberg.

The vast majority of the wooden figures that are now in museums and private collections were found in bogs of varying sizes. They were discovered by chance when the peat of those bogs was dug away or dredged. The best-known examples are the Ralaghan, Ballachulish, Dagenham, Somerset Levels, Nordmyra, Sundborn, Broddenbjerg, Ejsbøl, Forlev Nymølle, Nydam, Rebild, Rude Eskildstrup, Altfriesack, Braak, Oberdorla and Wittemoor figures. The impressive series of anthropomorphic planks that formed part of the temple of Gross Raden and lined its access route were also preserved in peat. And the Willemstad figurine was likewise found in a peat deposit, in this case at the great depth of 8 m beneath Dutch Datum Level (which is about mean sea level).

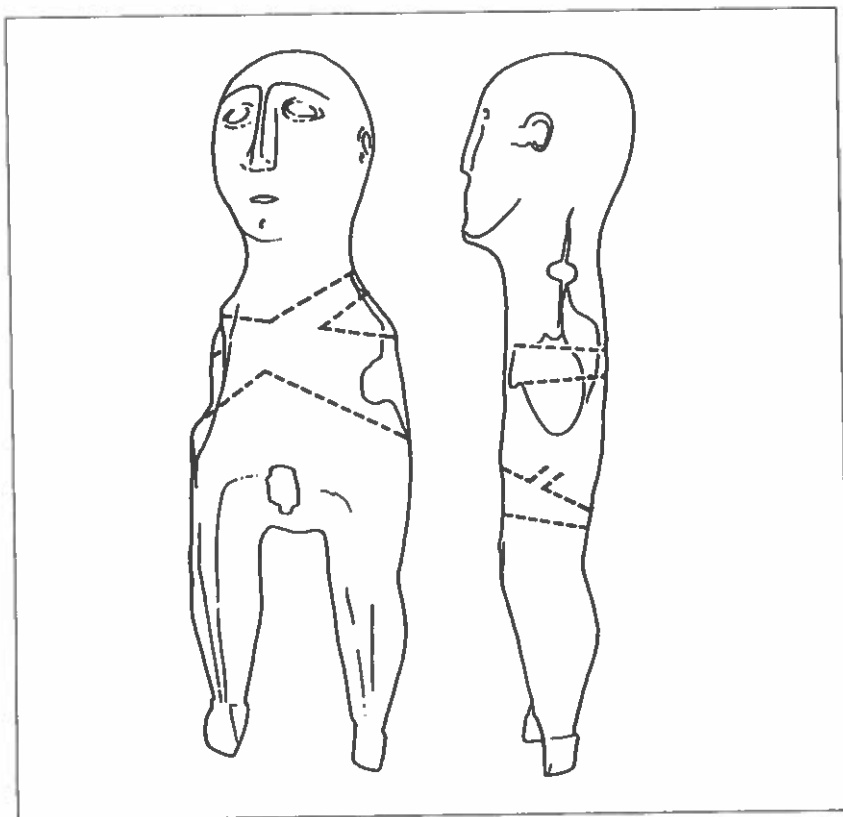
The Roos Carr group had survived in an entirely different matrix; according to the report of their discovery, written in 1840, the wooden objects were found in a layer of blue clay in a former tributary of the Humber. Another find that was recovered from a layer of clay is the Grimstad figure, though it is suspected that in this case the clay deposit was a secondary context. The Kingsteignton figure that was found on the left bank of the Teign was probably also preserved in a clay deposit.

The Pohjankuru figurine was found in a layer of mud formed in the Baltic, in a region that emerged from the sea when the land underwent a raise. The Oss-Ussen plank was lying at the bottom of a well not far from the contemporary settlement. The Backemoor plank was also recovered from a well, but here the figure had been incorporated in the well's lining.

In one case we don't know where the figure originally came to light. That's the remarkable figurine that is said to have been found at Strata Florida (Fig. 28). This figurine suddenly made its appearance in 1902. At the time, an expert of the British Museum doubted its alleged provenance, believing the object to be an import. Now that we know that the figure is 2000 years old and made of wood from what is thought to have been a native species, it is very tempting to assume that the figurine was found in the Tregaron peatbog, close to the Cistercian abbey of Strata Florida. But we will never know for sure.

samtidig bosættelse. Også Backemoor planken blev fundet i en brønd, men i dette tilfælde var der tale om genbrug, idet figuren var indføjet i brøndrammen.

I et enkelt tilfælde ved vi intet om figurens oprindelse. Det drejer sig om den bemærkelsesværdige statuette, som skal være fundet ved Strata Florida (Fig. 28). Figuren dukkede op i 1902, og dengang tvivlede en ekspert ved British Museum på dens påståede proveniens. Han mente, at figuren måtte være importeret. Nu hvor vi ved, at figuren er 2000 år gammel og fremstillet af træ, som formentlig er en hjemlig træsort, er det fristende at antage, at statuetten er fundet i Tregaron tørvemosen i nærheden af cistercienserklosteret Strata Florida. Men det vil vi aldrig kunne vide med sikkerhed.



Han lod den gamle billedstøtte af guden Svantovit, som blev tilbudt af alle de slaviske folk, bringe til sig og gav ordre til, at en løkke skulle lægges om figurens hals og at den skulle trækkes gennem hæren for øjnene af slaverne og derpå hugges til småstykker og kastes på ilden. Han ødelagde også helligdommen og hele kulten og plyndrede templet for dets rigdomme.

He had the ancient representation of the god Svantovit, which was worshipped by all the Slavonic peoples, brought to him and ordered that a noose be placed round its neck, that it be dragged through the military in front of the Slav's eyes and that it be hacked to pieces and cast into the fire. He also destroyed the sanctuary and its entire cult and plundered the valuable temple treasure.

All the wooden figures illustrated in this book have survived because they became excluded from the atmospheric air shortly after their period of use. The number of figures that have *not* survived the ravages of time will be many, many times larger. They are the figures that did not happen to end up in a preserving matrix and instead decayed in the soil or on the ground. But also the figures that were deliberately destroyed by people with different religious beliefs, who hacked them to pieces or burned them, branding them as idols and their makers and users as heathens (Fig. 29).

Fig. 28 - til venstre
Den usædvanlige Strata Florida figur (13 cm høj) har været kendt i omkring 100 år, men først for nylig har man opdaget, at den ikke er et stykke importeret etnografika, men derimod et lokalt arbejde fra omkring Kristi fødsel. Statuetten har flere huller, som kan have holdt løse arme og en fallos.

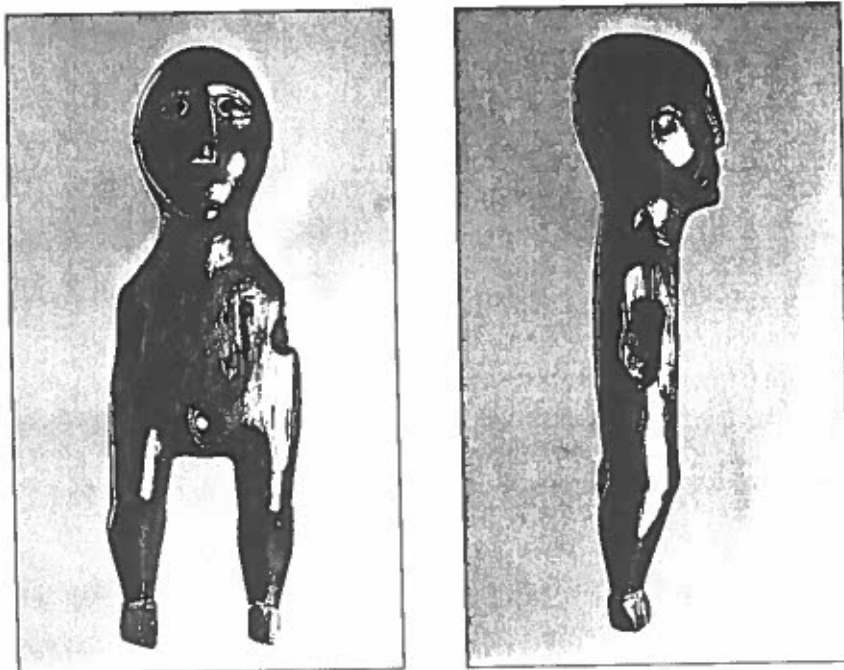
Fig. 28 - left
The unusual Strata Florida mannikin (h. 13 cm) has been known for some 100 years, but it has only recently been discovered that it is not an ethnographic import, but a native artefact dating from around the beginning of the Christian era. The figurine shows several holes, which may have held (separate) arms and a phallus.

Fig. 29 - til højre
Således beskrev Helmold af Bosau (2.bog, 108) ødelæggelsen af Svantovitfiguren i Arkonas tempel.

Fig. 29 - right
This is how Helmold of Bosau (2nd book, 108) described the destruction of the representation of Svantovit in the temple of Arcona.

Fig. 38
Analyser af gamle fund kan give nye, værdifulde oplysninger. Denne statuette fra Strata Florida viste sig for eksempel at være et fremragende lokalt arbejde og ikke et mistænkeligt, eksotisk importstykke.

Fig. 38
New analyses of old finds can yield valuable information. The Strata Florida figurine, for example, was thus found to be an outstanding native work of art instead of a 'suspect', exotic import.

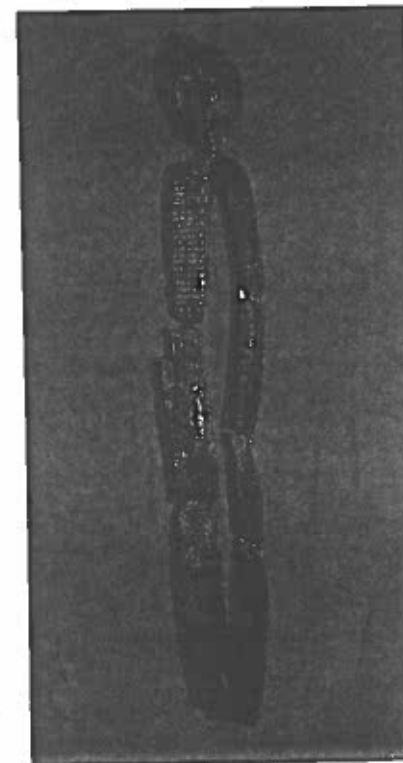


der på det seneste er blevet rapporteret fra Rusland. Siden 1800tallet er talrige genstande af organisk materiale fundet i Sjigirskij moserne på Uralbjergenes østside (Fig. 39). Blandt disse fund er der også antropomorfe figurer. I de seneste år er tørveaflejringerne i området blevet systematisk undersøgt for tilstedeværelsen af arkæologisk interessante områder. Denne indsats har givet en omfattende række objekter af organisk materiale, herunder slæder og dele af både, ruser, buer, spader, årer, kurve og skeer. Heldigvis er ældre fund ikke blevet glemt i undersøgelserne. C-14 analyser af tidligere fundne, kunstfærdigt udskårne antropomorfe træfigurer har vist, at de er særdeles gamle. De C-14 dateringer, der i øjeblikket er tilgængelige, peger på 8. årtusinde f.Kr. Det gør dem langt ældre end de vesteuropæiske figurer, hvoraf den ældste, „Willemstad manikin“ er fra 6. årtusinde f.Kr. De tidlige Uralfigurer har fungeret i en verden af jægere og samlere og dermed i en fundamentalt anderledes sammenhæng end næsten alle de nordvest-europæiske figurer og statuetter.

unusual, if not sensational, are the discoveries recently reported from Russia. Since the 19th century numerous objects of organic material have been found in the Shigirsky bogs on the eastern flanks of the Ural mountains (Fig. 39); among these finds are also wooden anthropomorphic figures. In the past few years the peat deposits in this area have been systematically investigated for the presence of archaeological sites. These efforts have yielded a varied range of objects of organic materials, including sledges and parts of boats, fish traps, bows, spades, oars, baskets and spoons. Fortunately the older discoveries are not being forgotten in the analyses. C14 analysis of the lavishly carved previously found wooden anthropomorphic figures has shown that they are extremely old. The C14 dates currently available point to the 8th millennium BC. That makes them much older than the figures known from northwest Europe, the oldest of which, the 'Willemstad manikin', dates from the second half of the 6th millennium BC. The early Ural figures functioned in a world of hunter-gatherers, so in a context fundamentally different from that of almost all the northwest European figures and figurines.

Fig. 39
Figuren her blev i 1880 fundet i Sjigirskij tørvemoserne i Rusland. Den er nu 335 cm lang, men har oprindeligt målt hele 530 cm. I 1997 viste undersøgelser udført i Moskva og St. Petersburg, at træskærerarbejdet stammer fra første halvdel af 8. årtusinde f.Kr.

Fig. 39
This figure, whose surviving length is 335 cm, but which was 530 cm long originally, was found in the Shigirsky peatbogs (Russia) in 1880. In 1997 research in Moscow and Saint Petersburg showed that this carving dates from the first half of the 8th millennium BC.



Kapitel 5

Mere eller mindre antropomorfe



Studerer man illustrationerne i denne bog nærmere, vil man bemærke, at betegnelsen „antropomorf“ er et vidt begreb. Medens ingen kan være i tvivl om, at en række af figurerne har skullet ligne mennesker, så er der andre, hvis menneske-lighed er mere tvivlsom. Jo færre detaljer, der er skåret ind i træet, jo større er tvivlen. Desuden er det ikke alle figurer, der forestiller et helt menneske. Fra det omhandlede område er der adskillige eksempler på figurer, der kun forestiller en større eller mindre del af menneskekroppen. Det gælder for eksempel hovedet fra Pohjankuru, hovederne fra Nydam, torsoerne fra Somersæt Levels og Bad Doberan samt fallosserne fra Hedeliskær og Spangerholm. Og hvad angår disse partielle figurer er nogle også lettere at genkende end andre, som man straks vil se ved en sammenligning mellem de to fallosser.

De mest åbenlyst antropomorfe figurer er uden tvivl dem fra Irland og Storbritannien. Figurerne fra Lagore, Ralaghan, Ballachulish, Dagenham, Kingsteignton (*Fig. 40*), Strata Florida og Roos Carr er alle ubestrideligt antropomorfe. De har tydeligt afgrænset hoved, hals, torso og ben. Hovederne har ofte, om end ikke altid, øjne, næse, mund og ører. Et enkelt usædvanligt træk, som ikke kendes fra kontinentet, er de små sten (næsten altid kvarts), som er indsat i øjenhulerne på figurerne fra Roos Carr og Ballachulish. I øvrigt synes ingen af disse figurer at have haft nogen antydning af hår.

Yderligere har alle de irske og britiske figurer et par ben, men ikke alle har også arme. Således mangler der arme på figuren fra Ralaghan, og det samme gælder dem fra Lagore og Dagenham. På Ballachulish figuren er armene markeret på overkroppen, med hænderne hvilende på maven. De øvrige figurer har huller til fastgørelse af løse arme. Hullerne er placeret korrekt i skulderhøjde, kun Kingsteignton figuren har et hul boret gennem halsen. Armene på Roos Carr gruppens figurer diskuteres stadig. Der synes at være to slags: figur 1 og 5 har lange arme med luffeformede afslutninger med hul igennem, medens de

Chapter 5

More and less anthropomorphic



Anyone studying the illustrations in this book will see that 'anthropomorphic' is a fairly broad notion. Some figures are more clearly identifiable as anthropomorphic than others. Nobody will doubt that certain figures were intended to resemble human beings, whereas others do raise such doubts. The fewer the details carved into the wood, the greater the amount of doubt. The figures moreover don't all represent complete human beings. From the area considered here we know of several examples of figures consisting of only a small or larger part of the human body, such as the Pohjankuru head, the Nydam heads, the Somersæt Levels and Bad Doberan torsos and the Hedeliskær and Spangerholm phalluses. In the case of these partial figures, too, some are more clearly identifiable than others, as we can immediately tell by comparing the two phalluses.

The most explicitly anthropomorphic figures are without doubt those from Ireland and Great Britain. The Lagore, Ralaghan, Ballachulish, Dagenham, Kingsteignton (*Fig. 40*), Strata Florida and Roos Carr figures are all indisputably anthropomorphic. They have clearly defined heads, necks, torsos and legs. The heads often, though not always, have eyes, a nose, mouth and ears. An unusual feature which has not been encountered on the continent is that the Roos Carr and Ballachulish figures have pebbles (almost all of quartz) inserted in their eye sockets. None of these figures incidentally appears to have had any indication of hair.

All the Irish and British figures moreover have two legs, but they don't all have arms, too: that from Ralaghan has no arms and neither have those from Lagore and Dagenham. The arms of the Ballachulish figure are outlined on the body, with the hands resting on the stomach. The other figures have holes for attaching separate arms. Those holes are in the correct position, at shoulder height; only the Kingsteignton figure has a hole drilled through the neck. The arms of the images of the Roos Carr group are still under discussion. There seem to be two

bedste dateringsmetode for figurer, der er fundet isoleret. I de sidste få årtier er 17 figurer blevet dateret ved hjælp af denne metode, herunder nogle få, som allerede var dateret ved hjælp af tilhørende oldsager. De fleste er dateret ved hjælp af et accelerator masse spektrometer (AMS), som kun behøver ganske små træprøver. Figurerne, der på listen herunder er opstillet i kronologisk orden, er dateret ved hjælp af C-14 analyser.

Resultatet af C-14 dateringen af Lagore figuren var en stor overraskelse. Denne figur blev fundet i en *crannog* (en boplads bygget på en kunstig ø i åbent vand) fra tidlig kristen tid, som var ret ødelagt af senere forstyrrelser. C-14 dateringen viser, at genstanden intet som helst har at gøre med bopladsen, idet den er 2500-3000 år ældre.

C-14 dateringerne for Broddenbjerg figuren passer fint med den datering, der tidligere er fremkommet ved hjælp af tilknyttede oldsager

(for arriving at statistically reliable statements) are in principle suitable for such research. It is moreover impossible to conduct a good measurement without damaging a figure, and few museum curators are willing to go to such lengths. And even if the aforementioned requirements are met, it is possible that a measurement can't be placed in any of the available master sequences, as was recently found in the analysis of the Westerwanna plank (Fig. 60). So C14 dating is really the best way of determining the age of figures found in isolation. In the past few decades 17 figures have been subjected to this dating method, including a few that had already been dated via associated finds. Most have been dated with the aid of an Accelerator Mass Spectrometer (AMS), for which only small samples of wood are required. The following figures, arranged in chronological order, have in the meantime been dated through C14 analysis:

Willemstad:	6400 ± 85 BP	5471-5307/5527-5085 f.Kr.
Dagenham:	3800 ± 70 BP	2397-2073/2461-2037 f.Kr.
Lagore:	3650 ± 70 BP	2135-1923/2269-1779 f.Kr.
Kragelund (store):	3030 ± 70 BP	1389-1131/1429-1051 f.Kr.
Ralaghan:	2830 ± 70 BP	1123-899/1253-829 f.Kr.
Wittemoor (2):	2420 ± 95 BP	759-401/797-261 f.Kr.
Ballachulish:	2490 ± 70 BP	765-519/791-411 f.Kr.
Roos Carr:	2460 ± 70 BP	759-411/781-405 f.Kr.
Broddenbjerg:	2450 ± 35 BP	757-411/761-407 f.Kr.
Kingsteignton:	2310 ± 70 BP	481-205/757-175 f.Kr.
Braak (kvinde):	2313 ± 28 BP	401-381/405-261 f.Kr.
Braak (mand):	2273 ± 29 BP	393-235/399-207 f.Kr.
Strata Florida:	1990 ± 50 BP	43 f.Kr.-e.Kr. 67/111 f.Kr.-e.Kr. 127
Grimstad:	1690 ± 50 BP	e.Kr. 261-413/237-529
Altfriesack:	1470 ± 100 BP	e.Kr. 440-660/385-775
Kragelund (lille):	310 ± 80 BP	e.Kr. 1485-1651/1435-1949

Willemstad:	6400 ± 85 BP	5471-5307/5527-5085 BC
Dagenham:	3800 ± 70 BP	2397-2073/2461-2037 BC
Lagore:	3650 ± 70 BP	2135-1923/2269-1779 BC
Kragelund (large):	3030 ± 70 BP	1389-1131/1429-1051 BC
Ralaghan:	2830 ± 70 BP	1123-899/1253-829 BC
Wittemoor (2):	2420 ± 95 BP	759-401/797-261 BC
Ballachulish:	2490 ± 70 BP	765-519/791-411 BC
Roos Carr:	2460 ± 70 BP	759-411/781-405 BC
Broddenbjerg:	2450 ± 35 BP	757-411/761-407 BC
Kingsteignton:	2310 ± 70 BP	481-205/757-175 BC
Braak (woman):	2313 ± 28 BP	401-381/405-261 BC
Braak (man):	2273 ± 29 BP	393-235/399-207 BC
Strata Florida:	1990 ± 50 BP	43 BC-AD 67/111 BC-AD 127
Grimstad:	1690 ± 50 BP	AD 261-413/237-529
Altfriesack:	1470 ± 100 BP	AD 440-660/385-775
Kragelund (small):	310 ± 80 BP	AD 1485-1651/1435-1949

Kapitel 8

Figurer ved kultsteder og templer



For mange antropomorfe figurers vedkommende er vi ubekendte med den sammenhæng, hvori de oprindelig blev fundet. Med andre ord har vi ingen viden om eventuelle andre oldsager, der kan være knyttet til figurerne, eller om de kan være fundet i forbindelse med et anlæg som for eksempel en vej, en stabel sten eller en stolpekonstruktion. Vi ved således, at Westerwanna-planken blev fundet i en tørvemose i 1962 eller lidt tidligere, men vi har ingen oplysninger om, hvorvidt den lå ved siden af en vej. Der vides heller intet om konteksten for Strata Florida-statuetten. Somme tider har vi ingen *sikkerhed for*, at der er nogen forbindelse mellem en figur og en genstand fundet i dens nærhed. Skelettet af et stort dyr, formentlig en hjort, blev således fundet i kort afstand fra Dagenham figuren, men det kan ikke længere fastslås, om de er fra samme tid og derfor knyttet til hinanden. Det er indlysende, at det er vanskeligt at tolke et fund, hvor (pålidelige) informationer om konteksten mangler. Figurerne fra Westerwanna, Dagenham og Strata Florida blev alle fundet tilfældigt, og ingen hæftede sig ved deres omgivelser. Også figurer, som er fundet under arkæologiske udgravninger, kan være omgærdet med mystik. Oss-Ussen-planken blev for eksempel fundet i bunden af en brønd på en boplads fra sen jernalder. Her var den blevet anbragt efter at den var gået ud af brug. Men hvor den *oprindelig* har stået – og hvilken funktion, den dér har haft – kan man kun gisne om. Dette gælder heldigvis ikke for alle fundene, og for en række figurers vedkommende kender vi lidt til den sammenhæng, de er indgået i. Først og fremmest kan vi skelne mellem to grupper, nemlig figurer knyttet til kultpladser og figurer knyttet til veje. Sidstnævnte gruppe bliver behandlet i næste kapitel. Her vil vi kaste et blik på de figurer, som er fundet ved kultpladser – her forstået som steder, hvor man mente, at overnaturlige kræfter holdt til, og hvor der regelmæssigt blev udført ritualer. Vi kender til såvel kultsteder i det

Chapter 8

Figures at open-air cult sites and temples



In the case of many anthropomorphic figures we are ignorant of the context in which they were originally found. In other words, we don't know whether there were any other objects near the figures, or whether they were associated with a structure such as a trackway, a stack of stones or an arrangement of posts. For example, we know that the Westerwanna plank was found in a peatbog in or before 1962, but we have no information telling us whether it lay, say, next to a trackway. Nothing is known about the context in which the Strata Florida figurine was found either. Sometimes we don't know *for sure* whether there is any connection between a figure and an object found in its vicinity. The skeleton of a large animal, possibly a deer, was for example found at a fairly short distance from the Dagenham figure, but whether they both date from the same time, and are hence associated with one another, can no longer be ascertained. Needless to say, the absence of (reliable) contextual information makes it difficult to interpret a find. The Westerwanna, Dagenham and Strata Florida figures were all three found by chance, and little or no attention was paid to the surroundings in which they came to light. This is not to say that none of the figures that have been recovered in scientific excavations hold any secrets for us. The Oss-Ussen plank, for example, was found at the bottom of a well in a Late Iron Age settlement. That's where it was deposited after its period of use. But where it stood *originally* - and hence what function it had – we can only guess. Fortunately this does not hold for all the figures, and in the case of a relatively large proportion we do know something about the contexts in which they functioned. In the first place we can distinguish two main groups, of figures associated with cult sites and figures that have been found alongside trackways. Those of the latter group will be discussed in the next chapter. In this chapter we will take a look at the figures that have been

og Kingsteignton forestiller – eller på en eller anden måde er forbundet med – Thor eller en forgænger for denne guddom.

De flertydige figurer synes at være knyttet til Odin. Om Odin troede man, at han hængte sig fra *Yggdrasil*, verdenstræet. Skrevne kilder beretter, at det pågældende træ var et asketræ, men det beskrives også som „stedsegrønt“, og et alternativt forslag er, at det var et takstræ. For at opnå visdom og forstand ofrede Odin sit ene øje til en brønd ved foden af dette træ (Fig. 89). Da Odin var troldmand eller shaman, blev han af de øvrige guder betragtet som tvekønnet.

De to figurer af asketræ, som er fundet ved plankeveje, forbinder Coles med den skabelsesmyte, hvori Odin og hans to brødre fandt to stykker træ på en strandbred og gav dem liv som den første mand (*Askr*) og første kvinde (*Embla*). *Askr* betyder ask, *Embla* betyder måske elm. Set ud fra dette synspunkt repræsenterer figurerne fra Corlea og Somerset Levels måske forfædre, opsat som vejvogtere med det formål at beskytte rejsende eller at forhindre uønskede individer eller ånder i at benytte vejen.

Den kvindelige Ballachulish figur, som er skåret af elletræ, falder uden for systemet.

Coles er udmærket klar over, at hendes otte figurer spænder over næsten to årtusinder, og at selv den yngste er hele 1500 år ældre end de kilder, hun lægger til grund for sine konklusioner. Hun tilføjer med rette, at hendes tolkninger blot skal betragtes som forslag. Det ville derfor være interessant at se, om nye informationer, blandt andet om de træsorter, der er brugt på kontinentet, kan støtte eller modbevise hendes teorier.

Træanalysen for Strata Florida statuetten, som blev foretaget i år 2000, har introduceret en ny træsort, nemlig buksbom. Ligesom fyr og taks er buksbom en stedsegrøn træsort. Dette passer ind i Coles' teori vedrørende figurens type – seksuelt dobbelttydig, eftersom den har et hul i underlivet. Denne statuette, som er fra begyndelsen af vor tidsregning, passer ind i det foreslåede mønster (om end det venstre øje tilfældigvis ikke synes at være ødelagt). Papirfiguren fra Misson-Haxey, som ifølge beskrivelsen ligeledes kunne bestemmes som en mand, skal have været af eg. Denne figur passer således også ind i Coles' mønster. Vi ved dog ikke, hvor pålidelige disse informationer er.

Coles also found that the left half of the faces of some of the figures had been damaged in antiquity, especially around the eye. This was the case with the Ralaghan (Fig. 88), Dagenham, Roos Carr (Image 3) and Ballachulish figures – with the exception of Ballachulish all 'ambiguous' figures. Combining these observations with elements of Norse mythology, she arrived at the following interpretations.

As oak trees are associated with the god Thor, and the two unambiguously male figures are both made of oak, it seems reasonable to assume that the Lagore and Kingsteignton figures represent, or are in some other way connected with, Thor or his predecessor.

The ambiguous figures seem to be connected with Odin. Odin was the god who hung himself from *Yggdrasil*, the World Tree. Written sources inform us that the tree in question was an ash, but as it is also described as 'evergreen', an alternative explanation is that it was a yew. Odin sacrificed one of his eyes in a spring at the foot of the tree to gain wisdom and understanding (Fig. 89). As Odin was a sorcerer or a shaman, the other gods regarded him as sexually ambiguous.

The two ash figures found near trackways Coles associates with the creation myth in which Odin and his two brothers came across two logs on the shore and brought them to life as the first man (*Askr*) and woman (*Embla*). *Askr* means ash, *Embla* may mean elm. Seen from this viewpoint, the Corlea and Somerset Levels figures could represent ancestors, erected as guardians of the tracks for the purpose of protecting travellers or preventing the passage of undesired individuals or spirits.

The female Ballachulish figure, carved from alder wood, is a find apart.

Coles is well aware of the fact that her eight figures span almost two millennia, and that even the youngest is 1500 years older than the sources on which she bases her conclusions. She quite rightly adds that her interpretations should be seen as mere suggestions. It would therefore be interesting to see whether new information, some of it relating to the wood species that were used on the continent, supports or contradicts her suggestions.

The results of the analysis of the wood of the Strata Florida figurine carried out in 2000 introduce us to a new species: box. Like pine and

Bevæger vi os til kontinentet, så synes Coles' mønster straks at opløse sig fuldstændigt. Her er den mest anvendte træsort eg, og den er brugt til både mandlige og kvindelige figurer samt til figurer, som er rejst ved plankeveje. Figurerne fra Willemstad, Oss-Ussen, Grimstad, Broddenbjerg, Kragelund (2x), Forlev Nymølle, Braak (2x), Wittemoor (5x) og Altfriesack, samt omkring halvtreds antropomorfe planker fra Gross Raden og Fischerinsel (2x), Ralswiek samt endelig Bad Doberan figurerne er alle af eg. Og det samme er i øvrigt fallossen fra Hedeliskær og formentlig også Backemoor planken.

Andre træsorter, som i mellemtiden er blevet identificeret, er birk (Rebild), fyr (Pohjankuru og Sundborn), elletræ (Aurich, Nydam (3x)) og gran (Nordmyra). Relativt få informationer er indtil videre publiceret om Oberdorla figurerne, men vi ved allerede, at de blev udhugget af asketræ, lind, hassel, hvidtjørn og bøg.

For så vidt angår papirfigurer, så er der kun en enkelt optegnelse, som giver oplysning om træsorten, nemlig den vedrørende Possendorf figuren. Den skal have været lavet af eg og de separat indsatte arme af asp. Desværre kan denne oplysning ikke længere bekræftes.

Alt i alt giver materialet fra kontinentet et ret forvirrende billede. Der synes ikke at være noget klart mønster – man kan blot konstatere, at eg synes at dominere. Og hvad kan man så udlede af dette? Havde egetræ en bestemt betydning, eller foretrak man det, fordi det var holdbart? Eller er de bevarede figurer netop dem, der er lavet af eg, fordi den mest holdbare træsort er bevaret i størst omfang? Disse spørgsmål kan ikke besvares på nuværende tidspunkt. Det kunne være interessant at vide, hvilken træsort, der er brugt til den siddende gud fra Rude Eskildstrup. Han menes at forestille Odin – ringen, han holder skal så være Draupnir. Ifølge Bryony Coles' hypotese burde denne statuette således være lavet af taks eller fyr. Tager man resultaterne af bestemmelserne af de danske figurer i betragtning, er det imidlertid mere sandsynligt, at den vil vise sig at være af eg. Hvad alt dette indebærer for det mønster, som Coles ser i Storbritannien og Irland, vides ikke. Underminerer materialet fra kontinentet hendes hypotese, eller har hun opdaget et mønster, som udelukkende gælder for Storbritannien og Irland? Der skal mange flere figurer til, førend vi kan komme frem til statistisk pålidelige konklusioner.

yew, box is an evergreen species. This is in agreement with Coles' theory concerning the figurine's nature - sexually ambiguous, for it contains a hole in the pubic area. So this figurine, which dates from around the beginning of the Christian era, conforms to the suggested pattern (though its left eye does incidentally not appear to be damaged). The paper Misson-Haxey figure, which according to its description was likewise identifiable as male, was said to have been made of oak. This would mean that this figure also conformed to Coles' pattern, but we don't know how reliable this information is.

When we move on to the continent Coles' pattern seems to dissolve completely. Here, the type of wood most frequently used, not only for male figures, but also for females and for the carvings erected along trackways, is oak. The Willemstad, Oss-Ussen, Grimstad, Broddenbjerg, Kragelund (2x), Forlev Nymølle, Braak (2x), Wittemoor (5x) and Altfriesack figures, some fifty anthropomorphic planks from Gross Raden and the Fischerinsel (2x), Ralswiek and Bad Doberan figures are all made of oak. As is also the stray Hedeliskær penis and most probably the Backemoor plank.

Other wood species that have meanwhile been identified are birch (Rebild), pine (Pohjankuru and Sundborn), alder (Aurich, Nydam (3x)) and spruce (Nordmyra). Comparatively little information has so far been published on the Oberdorla figures, but we do already know that they were carved from the wood of ash, lime, hazel, hawthorn and beech trees.

As far as the paper figures are concerned, the records of only one specify the wood species from which it was made, notably the Possendorf carving. This figure is said to have been made of oak and its separately inserted arms of aspen wood. Unfortunately this information can no longer be verified.

So all in all, the continental evidence yields a rather confusing picture. There seems to be no clear pattern. All that can be said is that oak appears to dominate. What could this mean? Did oak wood have a special meaning or was it perhaps preferred because of its durability? Or could it be that precisely the figures made of the most durable wood species have survived in the largest quantities? These questions can at present not be answered. It would be interesting to know from what

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Capelle 1995: Fig. 5, 30, 33, 42, 65, 66 (højre/right).
Coles 1990: Fig. 40 (højre/right), 86.
Coles 1993: Fig. 28.
Coles & Coles 1996: Fig. 24.
Fansa & Schneider 1998: Fig. 74 (øverst/top).
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Raftery 1990: Fig. 80.
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