

Animals as a Structural Principle in the Construction of Human Identity in Bronze Age Europe.

Presentation of the initial thoughts and aims

The starting point of this thesis is a conviction that animals and humans together engage in a dialectic relationship in which both parts affect each other. It will be argued that this relationship has consequences for, and is connected to, issues regarding mental processes and the construction of social identity in humans. By mental processes I mean individual and group processes, involving thought and emotions, that are active and formative in the structuring of the social and cultural practice that the material record is the remains of. The thesis will explore how the implications of this relationship might be understood and examined through the material remains of human actions. My axis of investigation will be on a temporal and spatial level, and will deal with the actions of the agents in prehistoric societies within the dynamic and fluid vibrancy of agency (Barrett 2000). Animal bones and their spatial distribution on settlements will be the main object of study. If possible, the context shared between animal bones and pots will also be examined.

Animals in the European Bronze Age

I want to explore how the relationship between humans and animals has been established and constructed in the late European Bronze Age and early Iron Age. The Bronze Age is a period in European pre-history that in many ways came to mould our early roots of history, and recent research has shown that it is possible to look at it from multiple perspectives (Kristiansen 1998). The introduction of bronze led to several re-negotiations concerning the foundations of structures within the society (Sofaer Derevenski & Sørensen 2001), but did also create far-reaching networks that spread both objects and ideas from peripheries to centres and back again. And in the middle of this feverish networking there were fully domesticated animals, completely integrated in the individual households. The influence of the animals is something that needs to be taken into consideration when trying to grasp what is going on in the structuring of the Bronze Age societies.

In this period animals are no longer in the process of being domesticated. The domesticated animals are firmly and solidly established in society, and they have come to stay. The tending of animals, and the utilization of both primary and secondary products, is

cultivated into society. The animal's cultural presence has become naturalised and implemented, and thus imbedded in the society's conscience and culture. Studying animals in this period gives an extra dimension to the understanding of the society at large, what happens to the animals when the networks and the exchanges start taking place? How do they fit into the broader picture of all the changes that start happening?

Some initial thoughts on identity and its construction in relation to animals

Experience and the multiple layers of roles life lays on one affect human identity. It is also reflexive in the way that humans to a certain extent create their own identity by subtle distinctions (Bourdieu 1995), this might be deliberate, but can also be an unconscious process. This way of organizing ones actions and dealings with the world can be regarded as *structuring principles* (Barrett 2000). This is not a passive form of structuralism, but rather a system of active categories that forms a drive in which the agents can operate in their own life-space, and with the world at large. The structuring principles additionally provide tools to think with in order to structure ones strategies.

“ *Structuring principles* (...) are the means of inhabiting certain structural conditions: they are expressed in the agent's abilities to work on those conditions in the reproduction and transformation of their own identities and conditions of existence. Structuring principles are therefore created in the active maintenance of traditions of knowledgeability whereby experiences are read with reference to the opportunities and constraints within which agents operate. Structuring principles are discovered in ways of seeing and feeling, and in ways of moving and action, and are thus the penetration of structural conditions through an embodied knowledgeability (Barrett 2000:65).”

I will argue that animals form one of these structuring principles that in an active way shape and modifies human behaviour and provides the agent(s) that is dealing with animals one of her/his layers of identity. Identity not only operates at diverse levels / areas, but is also made up of multiple layers, like a web with many colours that are all intertwined and do together form a coherent pattern. By this I mean that identity is multifaceted both as regards extent (level), but also regarding depth (layer). The agent's active interference forms how one chooses to relate to the structuring principles.

This argument is based on the simple acknowledgement that humans are not alone in this world (Clark 1988:30), even though this assumption can easily be gained when approaching literature concerning archaeology, and also anthropology. The idea that humans share their inhabited space with animals is so banal that its implications are rarely taken fully into consideration. Archaeology has traditionally been preoccupied with material culture, and

although being used in an active way (Hodder 1982; Shanks & Tilley 1996; Appadurai 2001 [1986]), the material culture itself remains passive. The material culture will never jump you or wag its tail at you, it will never attack you or run away from you. The only way that the material culture can be active is through human manipulation, it can be invested with meaning and be used in i.e. power strategies, but it will always remain an empty vessel that must be invested with meaning in order to become viable in active use.

Animals, on the other hand, are active agents with their own will based both on instincts and a possible consciousness of themselves as beings in this world (Midgley 1988). However debatable their ability to reflect and make assumptions may be, they most certainly have schemes of their own. And in carrying out their schemes, they are active, and they exercise their schemes upon the world they inhabit in an active way. In this way they take up active space in the world as opposed to passive.

Some animals are demanding in terms of being tended, they control the human's everyday cycle, and also the annual cycle. Other animals might need pastures, and it is important to bring them to good pastures. Consequently access to pastures, fodder, and the work invested in these activities and other activities must be negotiated and delegated within a society, but also with other groups. The shared life-space therefore gives both humans and animals roles and responsibilities that they would not have without each other. Thus their coming together in the shared life-space implies a reciprocal and dynamic relationship in which both parts manipulate and affect each other.

Formulating questions

My initial question concerns how animals and humans together engage in the world, in the space that they occupy, and how their *shared life-space* affect the way humans in a Bronze Age cosmology see themselves. Shared life-space signifies how a settlement is inhabited by humans and animals together, and how movement in space through time intermingles animal and human actions, and creates the experience of a shared being-in-the-world on both a spatial and a temporal level. The shared life-space is thus not only an analytical tool, but also a physical phenomenon. I will look at how this shared life-space is constructed in some settlements from different places in Europe, and how this construction can be understood as the remains of a *social practice*. I take the archaeological record to reflect the social practices of the past, and to reflect how people organized their lives (as postulated by Barrett 2000 [1988]:28-29). By comparing different sites I will look at the differences and similarities

between the sites, to get an understanding of how the social practices were carried out, and to investigate what aspects of the human-animal bond it is that is related to identity.

This question is directly related to issues such as identity and selfhood, and the way these concepts are constructed and perceived, not only in an abstract way, but also in the active sphere of practice (Bourdieu 1990). The next question inevitably leads to how to examine the material culture in such a way that factors concerning human identity and its construction can be understood. The type of material suitable will have to be examined.

But before these two last questions can be solved, it is essential to understand why the first question, how animals and humans together engage in the shared life-space, is important, and what separates it from the work that has already been done by zooarchaeologists and archaeologists within the environmental field. There are a number of analyses performed in regard to the relationship between animals and humans, and how the human has affected the animal, mainly based upon an economic way of thinking (e.g. Clutton-Brock 1988; Halstead & O'Shea 1988; Payne 1973).

“Much of the research that begins with the identification and analysis of animal bone remains from archaeological sites has concerned itself with the reconstruction of husbandry practices and patterns of consumptions at subsistence level. This is perhaps unsurprising as the development of archaeozoology was very closely linked with the “economic archaeology” of Grahame Clark and Eric Higgs.” (Grant 2002:17).

This might account for why animals have been dealt with in a rather simple way, in which the human-animal relationship has been considered to be a one-way influence. A number of analyses have been performed in regard to the relationship between animals and humans, most often these postulate and explore how humans have affected animals through exploitation. Going “beyond subsistence” (Grant 2002:17; Hesse 1995) has traditionally not been seen as a possibility. Rather, socio-economic strategies such as when it is most profitable to kill animals, considering the costs of feeding them in comparison with the secondary products they give back, has been studied extensively (Payne 1973 etc.). Parsimony and rationality is always implied in the conclusion of these studies.

There are also numerous studies in which the passive part played by animals in ritual sacrifices is being explored (e.g. Hill 1996; Wilson 1992). One can further find anthropological and ethnographic studies in totemism (Lévi-Strauss 1964; Eliade 1998 [1951]), in which animals are given a constructive role in the formation of identity. But the rather evident factor that animals also play a part in, and might even to a greater extent be influential to, the forming of mental processes and structuring principles in the dealings of everyday life have up till now been a subject of investigation that has barely been touched

upon by archaeologists. The influence that animals hold in mental processes has been pushed into the borderland of esoteric knowledge, religious sacrifices and rituals, and also totemism. The obvious reason for this is that in archaeological contexts such as these the link to mental processes is superficially more evident, and it is possibly perceived as a more challenging topic of research.

But contexts in which one can find ritual behaviour and the execution of sacrifices are not the only contexts where animals can be found. Animals have a life before they turn into food, and although the main purpose of keeping animals may be for economic reasons, the life the domesticated animals have before the moment of slaughter, followed by consumption, is often in a close relationship with humans. The animals need care, they have to be tended and fed, and the process of feeding them is in particular not a random business. What the animals eat humans will later eat, and in this sense the feeding of the animals is affected by the same taboos and preferences that humans themselves have. One wouldn't want to eat taboo food even in an indirect form (Douglas 1997 [1966]). A psychological relationship on behalf of the humans is also upheld between humans and wild animals, whether these are being hunted or not. The knowledge that they are out there, roaming the wild, makes humans take certain precautions. This does also form the way people think and feel about areas inhabited by wild animals; the wild as a place of danger, i.e. the "feros", as postulated by Hodder (1990), and the consequences for the apprehension of the wild in the hunting practice of farming societies (Hamilakis 2003 in press).

Why investigate these questions?

Why is it important to look at animals from this kind of perspective? The dialectic relationship, sometimes outspoken and at other times implicit, between humans and animals is something that makes a life changing impact on both parties and can reveal a wider picture of the processes of thought through prehistory. Furthermore it can reveal similarities and dissimilarities between different ethnic groups inhabiting different parts of Europe in the same period, and also diachronically. The question of ethnicity will not be investigated, as the scale of my analysis will not allow this issue to be discussed in a meaningful way. As Siân Jones (1997) has shown us, the issue of ethnicity is full of possible pitfalls, and requires careful consideration. However, this kind of relationship is not necessarily something that different groups would use to differentiate their ethnicity from that of other groups, but rather a factor

that reveals their attitudes towards life and how they go about in their basic dealings with the world. Sharing ones life-space with animals thus becomes a part of ones social practice.

The challenge of identity and its construction

“The study of agency is not the study of individuals *per se*. Agency is always situated in the resources of time/space, a being-in-the-world whose actions carry the past into the future and which make reference to absent places in the locations of its own operations (Barrett 2000:61). “The issue of identity is related to the nature of the agents forming the agency that humans together shape, this consists of agents that are in a temporal and spatial relationship with the world and implies a fluidity in which many layers are present simultaneously. This “thick description” involves layers of different character, the relationship to animals forming one of them.

It is through actions, social practice, that identity is manifested to one’s self, and subsequently signalled to others. In this context action is a selection of what one chooses to do, which praxis one follows and inside what *habitus* (Bourdieu 1990) one performs oneself. Social identity and its construction is in a dialectic way balancing the border between the being as a state and an ongoing process. In being a state it is static, stabile and fixed within its own trajectory, whereas identity as an ongoing process is simultaneously negotiating and reflective in its relation to the outside world. In other words: identity is a state of mind that is being formed and reformed through the meeting with the world, both in an abstract way, and also through encounters with materiality and material objects. Thus the mind does not stop with the skin (Bateson 2000 [1972]; Ingold 2000:3). I will argue that animals are present as well in mentality, and in processes of thought, as in materiality.

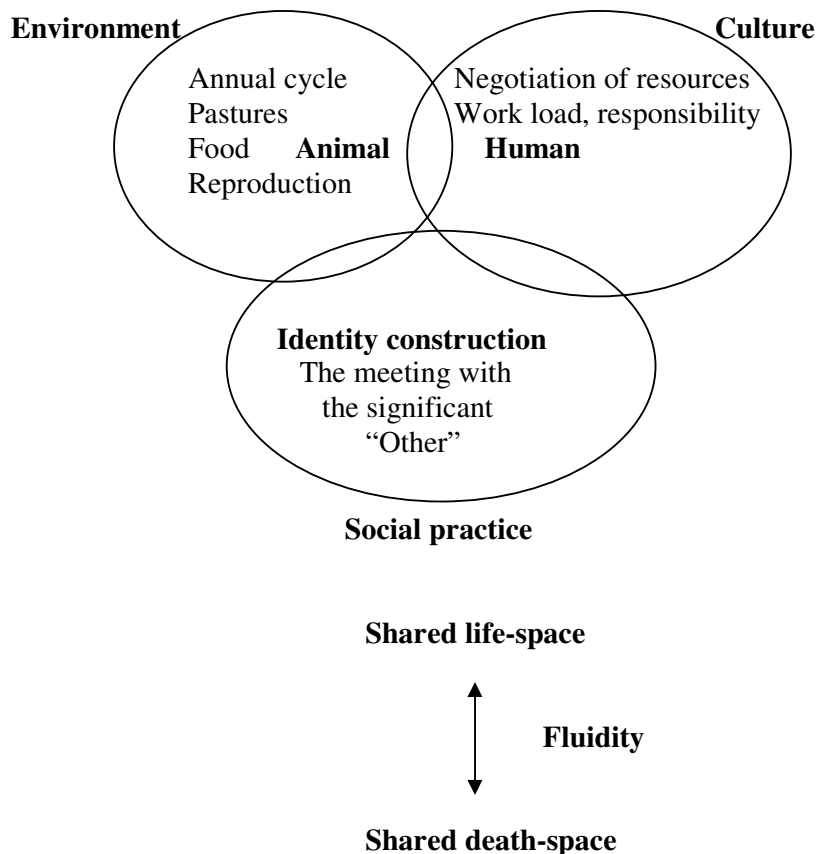
Outline of a different approach

The presence of animals, the living matter, in mentality is apprehended as a structuring principle that affects the way the material record is formed, used and deposited. The link between mentality and materiality is thus a result of the process that the ways you think and structure in your mind effect the way you act. The material record is the traces of the practice, and the practice is embedded in mental processes.

How can the effects and implications of the relationship between humans and animals be investigated? The dealings with animals are something that can be achieved in different ways, using different technologies or techniques. The way a person or a group handle animals, and which of the qualities of the animals that are being exploited reveals both a basic attitude

and knowledge of what the animal can give in return, but it also reflects a carefully chosen strategy of getting what one wants from the animals. In order to get the qualities that one is after in an animal, the animal's behaviour and bred qualities can be manipulated. But this is not a one-way relationship, as the animal also manipulates the behaviour of humans in order to achieve, as outlined above.

The shared life-space of humans and animals will be explored in a spatial perspective within settlements as the articulation of the animal-human relationship. The shared death-space of humans and animals will be explored not only in the relationship between the settlement and the cemetery, but also in the way that dead animals remain with the living, how their remains are treated and disposed of. This points at fluidity in how life and death is articulated and perceived within the shared life/death space. Further this fluidity will reflect how the animal-human bond was formed and executed, and in what degree the animals have become integrated within the group *habitus*.



Sites

The project will analyse two settlements, one from Northern Europe and one from Southern Europe. A direct link between the two sites will not be assumed, rather the two sites will be taken to represent two independent expressions of a social practice. They will be investigated as different ways of constructing the shared life vs. death space. The construction of difference will be emphasised.

The Northern European site of Apalle is situated in the eastern part of Sweden, close to Stockholm. This site was excavated by the National Board of Antiquity in the early 90ies. It is thoroughly documented digitally, scientific analyses are carried out, and all results are available. The site dates from 1200 to 700 BC. The settlement was extraordinarily well preserved, 850 kg faunal remains were found and have been analysed. The good preservation of architectural features and objects makes this settlement important in the understanding of the functional divisions of the long houses. The long houses from the younger period, 900-700 BC, have been functionally divided with humans living in one part and an extended structure for animals living in the other part.

The Southern European site of Monte Polizzo is situated on a hilltop in the western part of Sicily. A large settlement covered the hilltop from 900-500 BC. The site has been partly excavated by the SSAP-project, and documented digitally. One household unit, *house 1*, will be analysed. All analyses have been carried out, and are available. 4-5 kg faunal remains were found and have been analysed. Architectural features and objects are well preserved, which makes it possible to do a distribution analysis within the house. So far nothing seems to indicate that animals have been living inside the house. Therefore this house will represent a non-shared life space.

Methodology

The faunal remains will be the main object of study, but other objects that are related to the animal bones, both contextually and functionally, will also be included in the study. Pictorial representations that depict animals and humans, and are related to either of the sites will be studied.

One of the major contributions of this thesis will be to work out a methodology that deals with animal-human issues from a different perspective than the traditional methods and aims. The methodology is being moulded, and I attempt to find new ways of employing the traditional methodologies to look at alternative forms of patterns.

Work plan

Year 1: 2002 – 2003

- Semester 1: Participating in MA in osteoarchaeology “Aims and methods in Zooarchaeology”, performing animal bone analysis, participating in and reading up to class discussions. General background reading, formulating questions of research.
- Semester 2: Participating in MA in osteoarchaeology “Bones in context: human-animal interaction” participating in and reading up to class discussions. More focused reading, especially on theory. Writing project report for “Emergence of European Societies”, 1. year report for Southampton University and chapter on theory.
- Summer: Trip to assess material

Year 2: 2003 – 2004

- Semester 1: Primary research phase, data collection, further specific reading, planning of methodological research. Trips to assess and collect archaeological material.
- Semester 2: Upgrade paper. Review of research that is done, and assessment of what should be included. Trips to assess and collect archaeological material.

Year 3: 2004-2005

- Semester 1: Final research phase
- Semester 2: Write up final synthesis of research, write up and submit first draft to supervisors and advisor.
- Summer: Complete and submit thesis.

Synopsis

Chapter 1. Introduction. Quick why and how, research questions, preliminary introduction of the animal-human bond.

Chapter 2. Animals in BA Europe. Traditional research questions regarding animals and animal bones; the zooarchaeological tradition. General BA background.

Chapter 3. Animals as “the significant other”. Arguing for the animal-human bond as an embodied experience / habitus, the articulation of the shared life-space versus the shared death-space. Fluidity between categories; fragmentation of categories. Identity construction in relation to animals. Animals as active agents.

Chapter 4. Case one, Monte Polizzo. The shared life-/death-space on a settlement in Southern Europe – the none-shared dwelling experience. Spatial distribution of animal bones in relation to other objects and architectural features. Fragmentation and fluidity; how are bones fragmented and how are they integrated with other objects? Have they been transformed into other forms?

Chapter 5. Case two, Northern Europe. The shared life-/death-space on a settlement in Northern Europe – the shared dwelling experience. Spatial distribution of animal bones in relation to the life-space of the animals. How are the concepts of fragmentation and fluidity represented in this interchangeable context, where the shared life-space comes together with the shared death-space?

Chapter 6. The shared life-space and death-space revisited. Are they separated or are they fluid? The articulation of the lifespan and of death, how are animals integrated within these spheres in the case studies? The fragmentation and transformation of animals into other categories.

Chapter 7. Identity revisited. How animals as active agents shape and formulate the shared life-space, and how the shared life-space becomes articulated as the shared death-space, as formed by the human identity.

Chapter 8. How it all comes together. The human-animal bond as a future research topic, how post-processual theory can be integrated within the zooarchaeological tradition.

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