

English summary: Rock carvings in context .

The dissertation aims to contextualise the Danish rock carvings and place them in their topographical and social setting in Bronze Age society.

Previously not much attention has been given to the Danish rock carvings outside the island of Bornholm. This is unfortunate, as they are able to give valuable information about the use of rock carvings in Bronze Age society in Denmark. The dissertation set out to examine and compare the Danish material divided in two regions characterised by their different geology; the island of Bornholm where bedrock occurs and the rest of Denmark where bedrock is nonexistent.

Analyses show that the motifs found in the Danish rock carvings overall correspond with the southern Scandinavian rock carving tradition. However, for the Danish material, motifs do not seem to have been as significant as the context they appear in.

In the area outside Bornholm rock carvings appear in many different contexts mainly regarding Neolithic megalithic tombs and burial mounds from the Bronze Age. Free standing boulders are also known but are not as common as they would have been in the Bronze Age due to the intensification of cultivation through time. In Bornholm most rock carvings are found on bedrock on the northern part of the island but carvings on boulders and in burial contexts are also known.

Viewshed analyses showed that rock carvings on boulders have a markedly different topographic setting than rock carvings in burial contexts (both megalithic tombs and burial mounds). The boulders are placed topographically much lower in the landscape and in areas with low visibility to other rock carvings. Rock carvings in burial contexts and on bedrock are placed topographically higher and have good visibility to the surrounding landscape and other rock carvings.

These observations led to the conclusion that rock carvings in different contexts have contained different meaning to the contemporary society. Rock carvings on boulders appeared in a closed landscape setting and therefore required a local knowledge of the area which seems to relate to smaller local groups or individuals. Rock carvings in burial contexts or on bedrock are placed in an open landscape setting which seems to involve the society as a collective where burials and rituals have taken place presumably to secure the world order and the power of the elite.