



Fredrik Fahlander

SIZE MATTERS: HYPERBOLISM IN SOUTH SCANDINAVIAN ROCK ART

Abstract

This text discusses aspects of hyperbolism in south Scandinavian rock art as a particular mode of material articulation. In the Late Bronze Age (900–500 BC), a limited number of extraordinary large-scale motifs begin to appear on the rocks. This hyperbolic mode is generally restricted to anthropomorphs, boats and encircling motifs up to ten times the normal size. The phenomenon is represented at most of the major rock art clusters of southern Scandinavia (Trøndelag, Østfold, Tanum, Scania, Norrköping, and Uppland), and is here examined in detail through a case study of the Boglösa area of central eastern Sweden. It can be shown that the increased size does not add detail to the motifs; the images are basically enlarged versions of pre-existing motifs. It is argued that the enlargement of certain motifs is not primarily about symbolic representation or increased visibility but is related to a function of the petroglyphs as magical devices.

Keywords: Bronze Age, hyperbolism, magic, material articulation, rock art, size

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INTRODUCTION: SIZE, MATTER AND TIME

In archaeology, imagery has mainly been understood in terms of symbols, representations and stylized depictions (e.g. Aldhouse-Green 2004; Tilley 2008; Bradley 2009). This view of imagery tends to emphasise issues of style and form on the one hand and similarity and difference on the other, but overlooking other properties such as materiality and size (Fahlander 2013). The latter is important because the material basis of an image affects what an image is and what it can do (Cox et al. 2015). Size and scale are also closely related to the production and experience of an image based on practical, aesthetic, ritual, symbolic and technical considerations, which often have unintentional consequences (Spaulding 1977). For example, individual elements may be lost by reduction while others may be accentuated or multiplied in larger dimensions. The material and the tools also set the bounda-

ries for what it is possible to do (Stewart 1993; Conneller 2011).

Size and scale is thus far from an innocent aspect of artefacts, images or constructions. It is a performative property of materiality that affects the experience and can generate unintentional slow processes over time (see Jones 2012: 32; Fahlander 2013). A large burial mound, for instance, does not necessarily signify higher status than another smaller one solely from the difference in size. A medium-sized mound may at some point in time actually have been the largest and most prestigious, but then instigated a process in which larger and larger mounds were erected over time in relation to the previous. The same relation is also valid for how different rock art motifs relate to each other. Older motifs on the rock panels are normally still visible when images accumulate, and thus continuously affect the style, shape, and size of the new additions. Displacements

in size can thus involve generative aspects in more ways than one.

The experience of size relies to some extent on perspective – something is only larger or smaller than something else and is not necessarily a given property per se. In relation to the human body, natural formations, animals, vegetation, and other things tend to be experienced as ‘normal’, ‘large’ or ‘small’. No one would argue that spiders are big, but a specimen can appear extraordinarily large for its species and be experienced as such under certain conditions. However, size also constitutes an ontological fact. It is a *real* property that has consequences. A small rock art motif is not the same as an identical but much larger one. They have different visual properties, different abilities, a different manner of production and use etc. An extra-large petroglyph takes considerably more time to produce than a normal-sized one, which can be significant in ritual contexts. It affects the value of the motif as a votive offering, and as a magical device, the size of the motif equals greater power and effect. These issues of materiality, temporality and relative nature of size are thus potentially important aspects to understanding the meanings and functions of rock art.

In south Scandinavian rock art, there is a general dimensional span for the common types of motifs, but also a significant variation in size and cutting depth. A special category comprises the super-sized petroglyphs that begin to appear on the rocks during the Late Bronze Age (900–500 BC) in southern Sweden and Norway. These motifs are up to ten times

the size of normal motifs, and the types are generally restricted to anthropomorphs, boats and various encircling motifs (cloaks, chairs and semicircles). The anthropomorphs and boats especially stand out in how they can dominate a panel by size and cutting depth. In this text, I explore the potential of discussing large-scale motifs in terms of hyperbolicism and how this can contribute to our understanding of the practice of making petroglyphs.

SIZE AND SCALE IN SOUTH SCANDINAVIAN ROCK ART

South Scandinavian rock art is traditionally interpreted as a cultural expression of a relatively homogenous Bronze Age ideology and cosmology (e.g. Kaul 1998; Bradley 2009: 125; see also Goldhahn & Ling 2013). Different motifs are commonly ‘read’ as depictions or symbols of real entities following traditional art historical iconography. Abnormally-sized motifs are in this perspective normally understood in terms of greater emphasis. For example, Burström (1999), equals size with power and divine status (see also Malmer 1981: 106). He suggests that variation of size among some anthropomorphic

Fig. 1. A typical hyperbolic anthropomorph that dominates the panel and superimposes older motifs (Tanum 75). The two boat motifs are also in larger scale than normal (2.2 m), but are adjusted to the other motifs. Tracing by Coles (2005: 147).



figures is employed to impose the heavenly order of power on the rocks in order to legitimize a hierarchical social structure on earth. For example, the extraordinarily large (2.3 m tall) anthropomorph on Tanum 75 (Fig. 1) is argued to dominate the rock ‘just as gods dominate man’ (Burstrom 1999: 628). Ling and Cornell (2010: 38; Ling 2013) also briefly discuss variations in size of rock art. They suggest that the relative difference between large anthropomorphs and smaller boats on certain panels can be ‘read’ in terms of a greater control over the building, crewing and launching of boats. They also point out that large anthropomorphs in the Tanum area tend to be situated on higher ground, but do not elaborate further on what that may imply. In both these examples, size is thus understood as meaningful in symbolic terms.

Because size to a certain extent is a relative aspect, we need to question what actually constitutes ‘large’ in this case. In Scandinavian Bronze Age rock art the average length of the common boat motif ranges from between 20 and 70 cm and the anthropomorphs are generally between 20 and 30 cm in height. Very few motifs are made larger than one-to-one, and natural size seems to be restricted to foot soles and weapons. Aspects of size are not only relative to different motifs, but also between different attributes of the same motif. Consider, for instance, a small anthropomorph holding a natural-sized axe (e.g. Simrishamn 23:1). Is the axe enlarged or is it in natural size held by a miniaturised anthropomorph? (Almgren 1962: 63). For all that we know, the anthropomorph could also represent a life-sized gnome. Figures with oversized attributes are an integrated part of the Bronze Age rock art that partly constitutes its particular style (Fahlander 2013). Most common are prolonged legs and accentuated phallus and calves, but most of such motifs are not larger nor stand out from the rest in any other respect.

A more conspicuous category concerns the aforementioned group of large-scale motifs, particularly anthropomorphs, boats, and encircling motifs that span over several metres. They rarely relate to other motifs on the rocks but stand out as individual additions with a different function and purpose. In many of these instances, size is exaggerated to a point where it overshadows what the figure seems to repre-

sent. They stand out from the rest as material statements of almost iconoclastic character in the way that they dominate the rock and superimpose older motifs. This suggests that a need to separate large petroglyphs in general from a particular category of *hyperbolic* ones. Hyperbolicism is originally a linguistic term referring to intended amplification for rhetorical purposes to emphasize, evoke strong feelings, and create strong impressions (Waldenfels 2012: 11). Some of the super-sized motifs are indeed over-sized while other petroglyphs are simply larger than the standard size, but not exaggerated and overstated in visual terms. Hyperbolicism is thus not a question of scale in absolute terms; that is, that any motif over a certain size can be considered hyperbolic. The concept is employed here for a particular visual mode that comprises motifs that are not only larger than average but also stand out in other ways.

The concept of *punctum*, developed by Roland Barthes, can be applied to illustrate the difference. A punctum is something that ‘pricks’ the beholder: something striking that ‘rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me’ (Barthes 1981: 26–8). The hyperbolic rock art figures often work in such a way; they stand out from the rest and catch the eye like the large anthropomorph at Litsleby (Tanum 75) does. To qualify as a hyperbole, a motif needs not only to be considerably larger but also situated at a key position on a panel, be deep cut, fully hammered out, or superimposing smaller motifs. For instance, there are a diverse group of over 2 m long boat motifs that are larger than normal, but because they are only rarely fully hammered out or superimpose older motifs, not all of them qualify as hyperboles. This example can be contrasted to two similar cases of ‘lure-blowers’, only c 0.6 m tall in the Tanum area. One group of three lure-blowers (Tanum 248) are fully hammered out and superimpose several older boat motifs, while the other (Tanum 405) does not (Fig. 2). The first group is dominating the rock and the older motifs while the other is rather integrated with the other normal-sized motifs on the panel. These cases illustrate the need for a relative definition of hyperboles that have to be determined on a case-to-case basis in comparison to the other motifs on the same rock.

Site	Type	No	Size (m)	Relations	Comment
Boglösa 109	Anthropomorph	1	c 1.1 (tall)	-	Holding a boat
Boglösa 119	Anthropomorph	1	c 1.1 (tall)	-	Prolonged legs
Boglösa 155:3	Anthropomorph	1	c 0.8 (tall)	-	Only the legs and lower body, full size over 1 m
Boglösa 298	Anthropomorph	1	c 1.6 (tall)	Related to a boat	A 'shield-carrier'
Boglösa 94:3	Anthropomorph	1	c 1 (tall)	-	Only a pair of legs, full size over 1 m
Vårfrukyrka 93	Anthropomorph	1	c 1 (tall)	-	No special attributes
Askum 78	Anthropomorph	1	c 1.1 (tall)	-	Adoring gesture
Bottna 43	Anthropomorph	1	c 0.5 (tall)	Superimposed by a large boat	Only a pair legs, full size over 1 m
Brastad 1	Anthropomorph	1	c 1.4 (tall)	Superimposing boats	Adoring gesture (the 'shoemaker')
Kville 124	Anthropomorph	2	c 0.8 (tall)	Superimposing circular motifs	One is fully hammered out, the other is contour-cut
Tanum 1	Anthropomorph	4	c 1 (tall)	-	Holding axes, three of them carry 'shields'
Tanum 12A	Anthropomorph	4	c 0.9 (tall)	-	Holding axes
Tanum 12B	Anthropomorph	1	c 0.9 (tall)	-	Archer
Tanum 76	Anthropomorph	1	c 2.2 (tall)	Superimposing several boats PI-II	Holding a spear
Tanum 158	Anthropomorph	2	c 1.1 (tall)	-	Juxtaposed archers
Tanum 248	Anthropomorph	5	c 1.6 (tall)	All superimposing boats	One holding an axe, one is partial, and three blow lures
Tanum 255	Anthropomorph	1	c 0.9 (tall)	-	Holding an axe
Tossene 58:5	Anthropomorph	1	c 0.9 (tall)	Superimposes a partial boat	Holding an axe
Tossene 79:1	Anthropomorph	1	c 0.9 (tall)	-	Adoring gesture
Skee 608	Anthropomorph	1	c 1 (tall)	-	Holding a spear
Järrestad 13:1	Anthropomorph	1	c 0.8 (tall)	-	The 'dancer'
Östra Eneby 84:1	Anthropomorph	1	c 0.7 (tall)	Either merging with a boat or superimposes it	Holding a spear/boat, emphasised calves
Fredriksdal (N)	Anthropomorph	2	c 0.7 (tall)	-	Horned with wide calves
Skeplanda 20:1	Boat	1	c 3 (long)	-	LBA, pecked on a vertical rock face
Ramsta 3	Boat	1	c 2.8 (long)	Superimposing a partial boat?	Period VI
Boglösa 109	Boat	1	c 4.2 (long)	-	The 'Brandskog boat', Period V
Boglösa 109	Boat	1	c 2.2 (long)	-	Many 'crew-strokes'
Boglösa 131	Boat	1	c 2.2 (long)	-	Only eight 'crew-strokes'
Litslena 176	Boat	1	c 3 (long)	-	Inward-turned prows
Östra Eneby 1	Boat	2	c 2.5 (long)	-	Inward-turned prows
Angarn 62	Boat	1	c 3.6 (long)	-	LBA/PRIA
Askum 2	Boat	1	c 3.2 (long)	Joined with a smaller boat	Partial, lacks full gunwale
Bro 607:2	Boat	1	c 2.4 (long)	-	S-shaped prows

Table 1. Examples of potentially hyperbolic motifs in southern Scandinavia. EBA – Early Bronze Age, LBA – Late Bronze Age, PRIA – Pre-Roman Iron Age.

Site	Type	No	Size (m)	Relations	Comment
Bottna 43	Boat	1	c 2.2 (long)	Superimposes pair of anthropomorphic legs	
Hogdal 216	Boat	1	c 2.4 (long)	-	Anthropomorph holding boat?
Kville 101	Boat	1	c 3 (long)	-	S-shaped prows but no 'crew'
Kville 157	Boat	1	c 4.3 (long)	-	Many 'crew-strokes'
Tanum 1	Boat	1	c 3.5 (long)	Superimposing a smaller boat	S-shaped prows with a 'lure-blower'
Tanum 65	Boat	1	c 3.4(long)	-	EBA?
Tanum 75	Boat	2	c 2.2 (long)	One superimposes a boat	LBA
Tanum 408	Boat	3	c 2-3 (long)	The largest superimposes anthropomorphs	Three different sizes
Björnsta (N)	Boat	1	c 4 (long)	-	On a vertical cliff, S-shaped prows with animal heads
Solberg (N)	Boat	1	c 3 (long)	-	
Barstad (N)	Boat	4	c 2.5 (long)	Superimposing smaller motifs	Inward-turned prows
Åmøy	Boat	1	c. 5.5 (long)	Superimposing smaller motifs	LBA
Tunaberg 365	Boat	1	c 2 (long)	-	Deeper cut than the others, situated high on the rock
Munktorp 129:1	Boat	1	c 4.2 (long)	-	Inward-turned prows, partly hammered out. Many 'crew-strokes'
Boglösa 58	Encircling motif	2	c 0.8 (diam.)	-	Cross-wheels
Boglösa 131	Encircling motif	1	c 1.6 (tall)	Superimposing boats	The Hemsta 'chair'
Boglösa 138	Encircling motif	1	c 1.6 (tall)	Superimposing boats	The Rickeby 'chair'
Boglösa 238	Encircling motif	1	c 1.6 (tall)	-	A 'chair'
Litslena 159	Encircling motif	1	c 3.1 (wide)	-	Semicircle
Vårfrukyrka 188	Encircling motif	1	c 1.9	Superimposing boats	Kidney-shaped semicircle or 'cloak'
Vårfrukyrka 189	Encircling motif	1	c 3.3 (wide)	Superimposes a boat	Semicircle
Villberga 51	Encircling motif	1	c 2.2 (wide)	-	Semicircle
Simrishamn 23:1	Encircling motif	1	c 2 (wide)	Superimposing P I boats	A 'cloak'
Tanum 12B	Encircling motif	2	c 0.8 (diam.)	One superimposing three boats	Cross-wheels
Tossene 73	Encircling motif	1	c 1 (diam.)	-	Cross-wheel
Svenneby 5:1	Encircling motif	3	c 1.7-2.5 (wide)	-	Only two other motifs on the rock
Sankt Johannes 14:1	Encircling motif	2		Superimposing a foot sole	Kidney-shaped semicircle or 'cloak' and an undefined animal-like shape
Östra Eneby 1	Zoomorph	1	c 0.4 (long)	-	A boar
Tanum 12A	Zoomorph	2	c 0.9 (long)	-	A bull (with two smaller ones)
Tanum 351	Zoomorph	1	c 0.6 (long)	-	A bull
Östra Eneby 23:1	Weapon	1	c 1.2 (long)	-	EBA-style sword

Table 1 (continued). Examples of potentially hyperbolic motifs in southern Scandinavia. EBA – Early Bronze Age, LBA – Late Bronze Age, PRIA – Pre-Roman Iron Age.

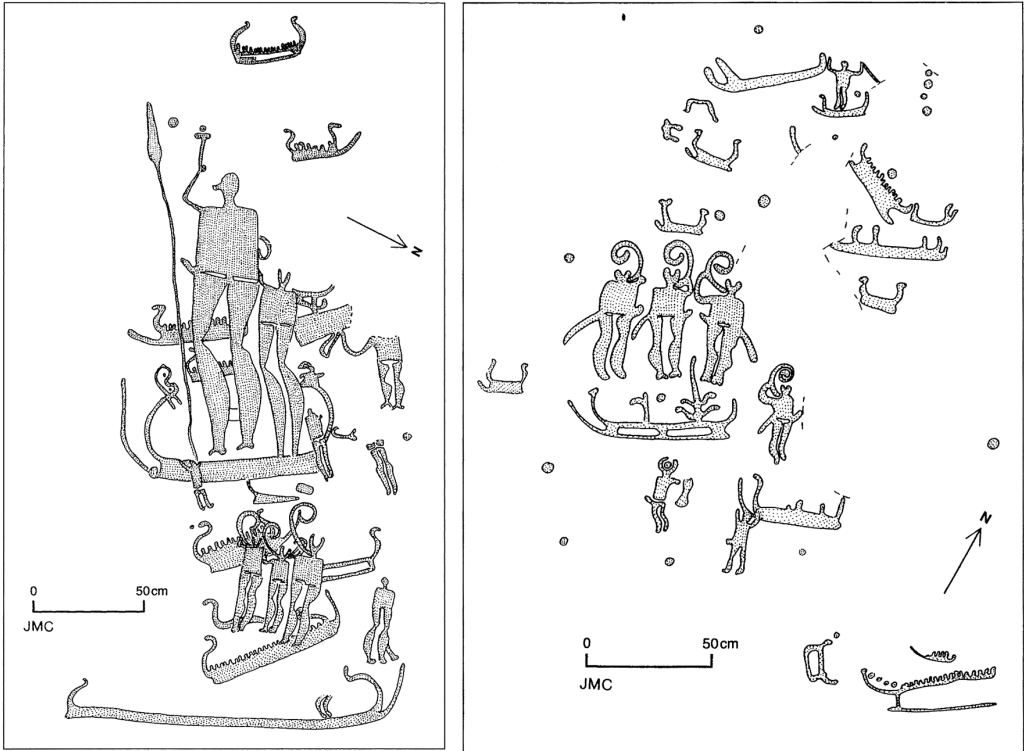


Fig. 2. Groups of 'lure-blowers' in different settings: Tanum 248 (left) and Tanum 405 (right). Tracing by Coles (2005: 157, 166).

HYPERBOLIC PETROGLYPHS IN SOUTHERN SCANDINAVIA

Large-scaled motifs are found at all major Bronze Age rock art regions of southern Sweden (although not evenly distributed). The Swedish west coast holds the majority of the extra-large anthropomorphs and boat images in Bohuslän (Table 1). In central eastern Sweden, hyperbolic motifs are mainly found in the Boglösa area outside Enköping in south-western Uppland. There are also two larger boats in the Uppsala area at Örsta (Angarn 62) and Kibrunna (Ramsta 3). At Häljesta, in Västmanland County, is a 4 m long boat (Munktorp 129), and a single 0.5 m tall anthropomorph (Munktorp 128). The Norrköping area includes a large quadruped, a 1.2 m long sword, three 2.5 m long boat motifs (Östra Eneby 1, Bro 607:2), as well as a 0.7 m tall anthropomorph (Östra Eneby 84). In Scania, there is only one large anthropomorph, the so-called

'dancer' (Järrestad 13:1) and a 2 m wide encircling 'cloak' figure (Simrishamn 23). Hyperbolic motifs are also found in Norway, for instance, the 5.5 m long boat in Åmøy, the 4 m long boat in Björnsta, a 3 m long boat motif in Solberg, and four large (3–4 m) boats superimposing smaller motifs in Bardal, Trøndelag. In Østfold at Backehaugen is a 2.3 m long boat with animal heads on the prow, and at Fredriksdal there are two 0.7 m tall anthropomorphs.

As Table 1 shows, there are several aspects that many of the large-scale motifs have in common: They are generally of late date; it is not possible to stylistically date all types, but the anthropomorphs tend to have Late Bronze Age attributes such as emphasised calves or carrying scabbards with chapes of the Hallstatt type (Vogt 2012: 82–3). The encircling motifs are more difficult to date, but the fact that they often superimpose Early and Middle Bronze Age boats indicate that they too can be dated to the later part of the period (cf. Malmer 1981: 54). The large

boats comprise a more heterogeneous category but the majority over two metres have S-shaped prows and other attributes that also put them in the late part of the period.

The large-scale motifs are quite similarly articulated in the whole of southern Scandinavia but nonetheless display a certain regional variability in style and frequencies. The majority (26) of the 36 large-scale anthropomorphs are found on the Swedish west coast. They generally have legs, arms and heads; only a few of them are partial. They usually hold weapons (axes, bows, spears and shields) or raise their arms in the air. The size of the large anthropomorphs ranges from 0.8 to 2.3 m tall with a median of about 1 m. Twelve of them superimpose or directly relate to other motifs (all but two are from the Swedish west coast). Also the larger boats are mainly found on the Swedish west coast (13 of 31). Their sizes range from 1.7 to

5.5 m long and twelve of them superimpose or relate to older motifs. It is, however, a heterogeneous category. The mid-sized boats (1–2.5 m) especially are varied in style and were produced throughout the entire Bronze Age. As previously argued, only a few of these boat motifs are truly hyperbolic as most of them do not stand out in any way other than by size. The four zoomorphs (0.6 to 0.9 m long) and the 1.2 m long sword motif also differ from the other large-scale motifs. In a certain respect, they stand out as punctums on the rock, but the zoomorphs are also involved in scenes and relate to other smaller motifs in a way that the hyperbolic anthropomorphs and boats never do.

Finally, nine of the 18 encircling motifs are found in Uppland, and measure between 1.6 to 3.3 m in width. They comprise a mixed category of ‘chairs’, ‘cloaks’, ‘saws’ and ‘wheel-crosses’, of which eight superimpose old motifs. This cat-

Site	Type	No	Size (m)	Relations	Alt. (m a.s.l.)	Date	Comment
Boglösa 109	A	1	c 1.1	-	26	LBA/PRIA	Holding a boat
Boglösa 119	A	1	c 1.1	-	20	LBA	Prolonged legs
Boglösa 155	A	1	c 0.5	-	19	Period IV–V	Only the lower part of body, full size over 1 m
Boglösa 298	A	1	c 1.6	-	26	LBA	‘Shield-carrier’
Boglösa 94:3	A	1	c 1	-	25	LBA	Only a pair legs, full size over 1 m
Vårfrukyrka 93	A	1	c 1	-	20	LBA	No special attributes
Boglösa 109	B	1	c 4.2	-	26	LBA	The ‘Brandskog boat’
Boglösa 109	B	1	c 2.2	-	26	EBA	Many ‘crew-strokes’
Boglösa 131	B	1	c 2.2	-	25	EBA	Diverging orientation
Litslena 176	B	1	c 3	-	26	EBA	Inward-turned prows
Boglösa 58	E	2	c 0.8 (diam.)	-	20	LBA	Cross-wheels
Boglösa 131	E	1	c 1.6	Superimposes boats	23	LBA?	The Hemsta ‘chair’
Boglösa 138	E	1	c 1.6	Superimposes boats	26	LBA?	The Rickeby ‘chair’
Boglösa 238	E	1	c 1.6	-	25	LBA?	A ‘chair’
Litslena 159	E	1	c 3.1	-	25	-	Semicircle, solitary on the rock
Vårfrukyrka 188	E	1	c 1.9	Superimposes boats	20	-	Kidney-shaped semicircle or ‘cloak’
Vårfrukyrka 189	E	1	c 3.3	Superimposes boat	20	LBA	Semicircle
Villberga 51	E	1	c 2.2	-	24	-	Semicircle

Table 2. Potentially hyperbolic motifs in the Boglösa area. A – Anthropomorph, B – Boat, E – Encircling motif; EBA – Early Bronze Age, LBA – Late Bronze Age, PRIA – Pre-Roman Iron Age.

egory diverges from the other large-scale motifs because there are no smaller counterparts (except the wheel-crosses). The common interpretation of the large encircling motifs is that they represent natural-sized clothing items (Mannering et al. 2012). Be that as it may, because they are individual additions of a late date that dominate the rock by superimposing older motifs, they are part of the Late Bronze Age hyperbolism.

The motifs in Table 1 thus represent a varied category of large-scale motifs. Some of them may indeed be enlarged to indicate greater importance in narrative scenes and represent aspects of religion and/or social structure as Malmer, Burström, Ling and Cornell suggest. The majority of the extra-large motifs, however, comprise singular instances that rarely relate to other motifs in any narrative way. This category represents a different type of material articulation that occurs during a brief period at the end of the Bronze Age rock art production. What else besides narrative underpinnings could have initiated such a displacement in scale? Is a large anthropomorph the same as a small one besides

different dimensions? Is there something inherent in the practice of making petroglyphs or are the reasons found ‘outside’ regional and/or social developments? To elaborate on such questions, we need a more focused and detailed view on the petroglyphs besides their representational aspects. Because there are certain variances between main rock art areas, it is essential to keep the discussion specific in order not to let large-scale variability obscure local patterns. In the following, I take a closer view on hyperbolism in the Boglösa area outside the modern city of Enköping of central eastern Sweden.

HYPERBOLIC PETROGLYPHS IN BOGLÖSA

The large-scale petroglyphs in Boglösa area are few in numbers; only 19 of more than 3000 motifs (Table 2). It is, however, a well-documented material, considering the relations between the petroglyphs, the rock, the water and the landscape, which is thoroughly mapped (Kjellén & Hyenstrand 1977; Coles 2000; Ling 2013; Fahlander 2018). The majority of the rock art in

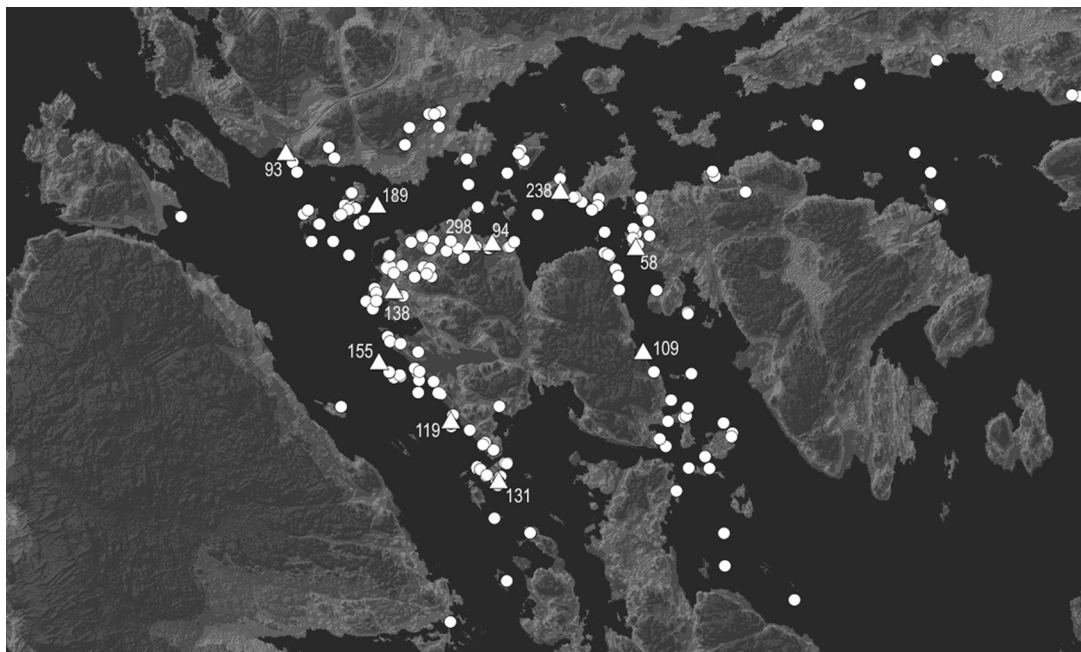


Fig. 3. Map of the central Boglösa archipelago with adjusted water levels to the Early Bronze Age (24 m a.s.l.). White dots are panels with figurative motifs (cup marks omitted) and white triangles are hyperbolic motifs. Map: F. Fahlander (in Arcmap 10.2).

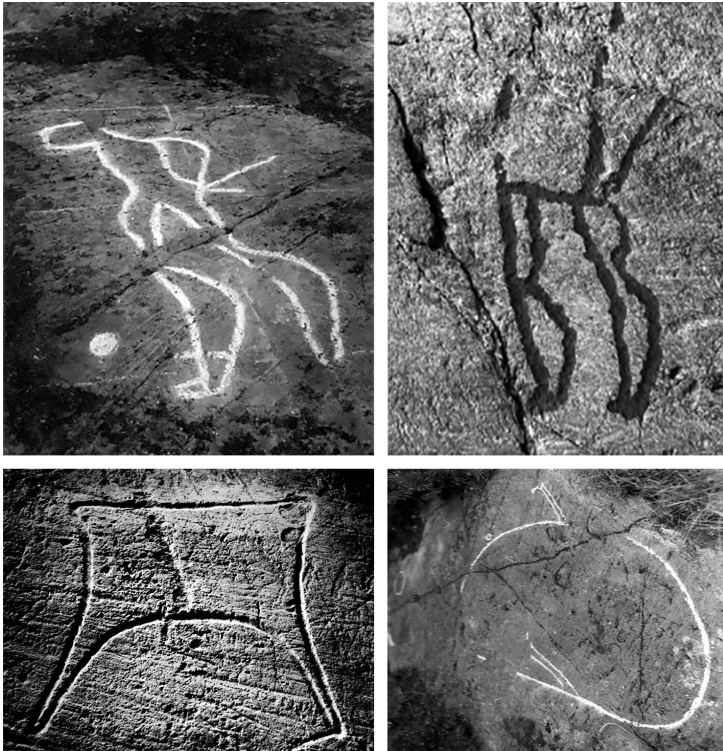


Fig. 4. Large-scale anthropomorphs and encircling figures (not to scale); top left: a 1 m tall anthropomorph (Vårfrukyrka 93), top right: a partial, c. 0.5 m tall (Boglösa 155); below left: the 1.6 m wide Rickeby 'chair' (Boglösa 138), below right: a 3.3 m wide 'cloak' (Vårfrukyrka 188). Photos: E. Kjellén, Enköpings museum.

terms of size and in relation to the water's edge. A detailed study of the hyperbolic motifs provides some clues for this development.

The five anthropomorphs (of which two are partial) are all contour-cut with emphasised calves that can be dated to the Late Bronze Age (Period IV and V). A similar

the Boglösa area is dated to the 2nd millennium BC and was situated on the former shoreline of Lake Mälaren, which at the time was a bay of the Baltic Sea (Fahlander 2018: 53). The post-glacial land uplift in this area is substantial and today we find the Bronze Age rock art between c 19 and 26 metres above present-day sea level. However, during the time of production, the rock art was tightly associated with the water's edge and clustered along waterways in a coastal archipelago (Fig. 3). When the land uplift caused water routes to dry up and small islands became part of the mainland, petroglyphs mainly continued to be produced on panels that still face the water (Fahlander 2018: 64).

Interestingly, the hyperbolic petroglyphs differ from this general pattern. While the majority of rock art follows the receding waterline, many of the large-scale motifs are pecked on panels of higher altitude (c 24–6 m a.s.l.) together with old motifs from the Early Bronze Age (1700–900 BC) (Fahlander 2018: 58; see Ling 2013: 30). It thus seems apparent that something changed at the very end of the rock art production in this area, and that the tradition became altered in

date is also likely for the seven encircling motifs, of which four superimpose older ones from the early and middle part of the period (Fig. 4). The boat motifs are also less consistent in the Boglösa area. The 2–3 m long boats are generally of Early Bronze Age style. The 3 m long boat motif at Litslena (176), with its long inward-turned prows, particularly resembles the carving on the Rörby sword, dated to Period Ib (Kaul 1998: 74; Ling 2013: 72). These medium-sized boats do not dominate the panels nor superimpose old motifs, which suggest that they comprise a different category of large-scale motifs that is not hyperbolic. In the Mälaren region, there are a few other hyperbolic boat motifs at Häljesta (Munktorp 129:1), Kibrinna (Ramsta 3), and Örstad (Angarn 62), but in the Boglösa archipelago the only hyperbolic boat motif is the impressive 4.2 metres long Brandskog boat (Fig. 5), stylistically dated to Montelius Period V (Ling 2013: 84–5).

An interesting aspect of the hyperbolic motifs is that they do not include more information than the small ones. It is evident that a 15 cm small anthropomorph can never be much more than

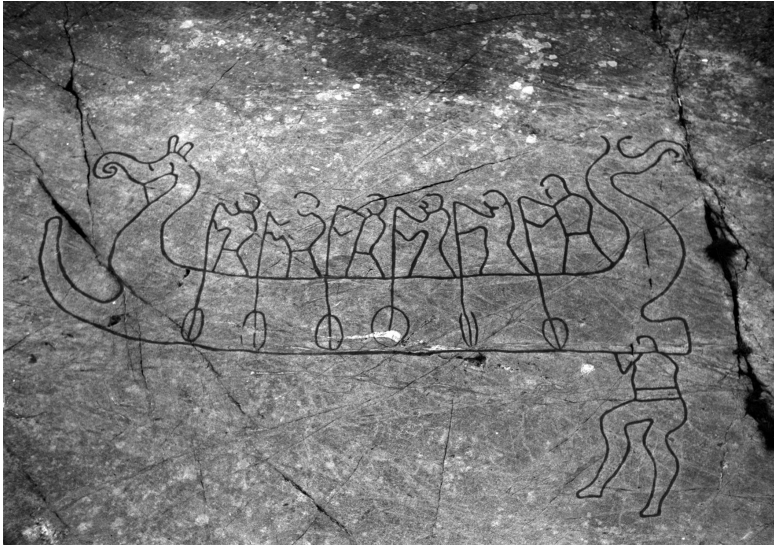


Fig. 5 (above). The 4.2 m long boat motif at Brandskog (Boglösa 109). Photo: E. Kjellén, Enköpings museum.

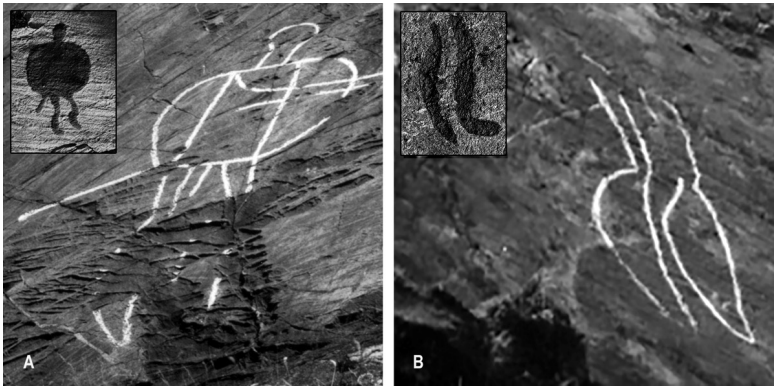


Fig. 6 (below). Two categories of enlarged motifs; A) small (30 cm) and large (160 cm) anthropomorphs with circular bodies and swords (Boglösa 128:2 and 298), B) small (13 cm) and large (1 m) pair of legs without bodies (Boglösa 94:1 and 94:3). Modified from photos by E. Kjellén, Enköpings museum, by the author.

a stick figure; the coarse properties of the rock and the tools do not allow for much elaboration or detail. It is therefore noteworthy that the hyperbolic figures are also rather anonymous. For example, one of the hyperbolic anthropomorphs, the 1.6 m high figure at Boglösa 298, is more or less a copy of the other c 30 cm high anthropomorphic ‘shield carriers’ (Fig. 6a). The large figure has precisely the same attributes as the normal-sized counterparts. The only difference is the two lines outlining the body behind the ‘shield’ (which is hidden when fully hammered out). The same phenomenon also concerns the 1 m tall pair of legs at Boglösa 94, which mimic another, only 13 cm tall, pair of legs on the same panel (Fig. 6b). Also the Brandskog boat, despite its hyperbolic size, does not convey much more information than the normal, schematic boat

motifs. The animal head on the prow is indeed more elaborated, but it is still not possible to determine what kind of being it represents. Similar details, such as a wavy snout and ears, are also found on boat motifs of

average size (e.g. Villberga 51). The anthropomorphic ‘crew’ of the Brandskog boat are also curiously anonymous. Their heads are only fragmentarily sketched and they all lack faces (Fig. 5). There is thus little surplus information in the hyperbolic motifs. In an iconographical sense, they are not really different from the smaller ones, besides their size. Still, they are clearly not the same.

DISCUSSION: IMAGES OF POWER OR POWERFUL IMAGES?

What is happening in the Boglösa area in the Late Bronze Age during the final phase of rock art production? What initiated the making of much larger motifs, and why were they no longer situated at the water’s edge? In iconology, ex-

aggerated size is generally interpreted as a visual trope to emphasise greater importance (Lorenz 2016: 85). A king, chief, or god is often found portrayed in a larger size than ordinary human figures. However, in this particular case, the hyperbolic motifs appear as singular instances that do not engage in an activity with other motifs. Thus, the reasons for this particular enlargement do not seem to have narrative underpinnings. Another reason to make large-scale images is to enhance visibility and/or cognitive impression. The larger the size, the better the motif is seen from a distance and potentially has a greater effect on the beholder. On the Swedish west coast, some of the large motifs can indeed be understood along such lines because they are fully hammered out and situated in the centre on the panels.

This is, however, not the case in the Mälaren region. To some extent, the hyperbolic motifs at Boglösa are situated on higher grounds in the archipelago (25 m a.s.l.). The Brandskog boat (Boglösa 109), for instance, occupies a quite

central position on the rock with good visibility from the shallow bay beneath it (Fig. 3). The majority of the hyperbolic motifs, the anthropomorphs and encircling motifs, are, however, cut far down on the rocks, below the older motifs (Fig. 7). They would only be detectable at close distance and do not differ much in visibility from the normal-sized motifs higher up on the same rocks. Furthermore, the increased size has apparently little to do with the level of detail since the hyperbolic motifs are more or less enhanced versions of similar normal-sized motifs. As demonstrated in Fig. 3, the hyperbolic motifs are also evenly distributed in the main area and are not made at any especially conspicuous or prominent places in the archipelago. The fact that everything but size is similar suggests that hyperbolic size is about something other than visibility and impact from a human point of view.

If the hyperbolic size is not primarily about visual impact or added detail, what conceivable reasons may have instigated the radical enlarge-



Fig. 7. The Boglösa 94:1 panel. On the upper level is a dense cluster of over 100 motifs from the Early Bronze Age (cup marks, boats, foot soles, anthropomorphs, and zoomorphs). The middle level contains no rock art at all, and on the lowermost level (which at times was below the water during the early part of the period) is the 1 m tall pair of super-sized legs in Late Bronze Age style. Modified from photo by E. Kjellén, Enköpings museum, by the author.

ment? In archaeology, the appearance of new artefacts or new styles has been taken as indications of the arrival or contact with peoples of different background and traditions (Kristiansen 2001; Fahlander 2018: 114–9). Interestingly, there are indications of a gap in time between the old tradition of rock art and the later enlarged versions in the Boglösa area. Many of the hyperbolic boat and anthropomorphic motifs are either made on previously unused rocks or situated far down on the rock leaving a spatial gap between the old and the late rock art. This is especially apparent at Boglösa 94 where over 100 motifs are crammed on the upper part of the rock while a single hyperbolic pair of legs are pecked at the very bottom of the rock – despite there being plenty of room in between (Fig. 7). If there was unbroken continuity between the normal and the hyperbolic motifs, one would also expect a continuous enlargement of the motifs over time. Instead, there are thousands of regular-sized motifs of the rocks but only a few super-sized ones.

Thus, one conceivable scenario is that alteration in scale represents the presence of, or influences from, other groups in the area (see e.g. Turpin 2011). Indeed, the hyperbolic expression suggests a quite different idea of rock art – potentially a reorientation or misunderstanding of the original idea. After at least 800 years of rock art production, almost all smooth rocks in the Boglösa archipelago are more or less filled with petroglyphs. Although they may be difficult to see, they would nonetheless be noticed by people moving about in the area (as they still are today). This world of imagery could indeed have encouraged ideas about their origin and meaning, and incited an image production that promoted size instead of a close relation to the increasingly distant water level. The late hyperboles could thus be made by, or influenced by, new groups with different backgrounds and traditions. There is, however, little other contemporary evidence to support such a social development. Moreover, the differences between the older rock art and the hyperboles are mainly about the position on the rocks and size, and less about style or type of motifs.

A more plausible alternative is that the late hyperbolicism is related to the ritual function of rock art. Bronze Age rock art is generally understood as a form of ritual communication

between humans and divine powers (Kaul 1998; Kristiansen 2010; Goldhahn & Ling 2013). The main question, however, is if the images are made primarily to *represent* or to *present*; that is, are they depictions of something somewhere else or material articulations in their own right made to *do* something (see Freedberg 1989; Gell 1998)? The position of the rock art close to the water's edge is significant. It more or less excludes that the images were primarily made to be venerated or as the focus of subsequent rituals. There is simply no room for such activities in the water beneath the rocks. Moreover, the location by the water also means that they were regularly washed over by waves. As a matter of fact, it is quite likely that the motifs were *supposed* to be immersed in water to vitalise or to animate them (Fahlander 2019; see Hauptman-Wahlgren 1998: 94; Helskog 1999). Thus, because of these reasons, the rock art motifs in the Boglösa area are less likely to be representations of something else but rather a type of magical devices made to *affect* something in the local milieu (Fahlander 2019).

To have such generative effects an image need not to be seen; the main point of such imagery is that it is made in the right way at the right place (Gell 1998). The materiality of the rock is also important here. The rock provides a stable and durable 'canvas' for the imagery that resists the wear from water and wind. This, however, also makes large-scale motif significantly more laborious and time-consuming in relation to normal-sized motifs. The hyperboles thus comprise a significantly greater effort with potential ritual importance. As magical devices, the increased size of the hyperbolic motifs can hence constitute a way to achieve greater effect in a similar way that an object with a high level of embellishment is often considered more powerful (Gell 1999: 166; Willerslev 2007: 102). The question is what could have warranted such an enhancement in size and power?

Viewed as devices of a vitalist technology, the main purpose of rock art would be to affect something in the local milieu. The close relation between the rock art and the water implies that the prime target was to affect particular bodies of waters or whatever humans, animals and spirits that dwell therein. Interestingly, the change in size coincides with radical changes in the local

archipelago during the transition from the Early to the Late Bronze Age. The land uplift process conveyed several important transformations. For example, some waterways became blocked, which would have affected social interaction in the area as well as the currents and the occurrence of fish and wildlife, for better or worse. More importantly, during this period, no more suitable rocks emerged from the retracting sea. The ground under c 15 m a.s.l. consists of silted clay with few rocks available for making rock art. Thus, when the water receded from the old rocks, the relation between the rock art and the water became lost, which means that the special properties of the area that made it suitable for rock art no longer worked. To radically enlarge the motifs may thus comprise a last attempt to continue to affect the gradually more distant water-world with rock art. There is support for this hypothesis in the way that many hyperbolic motifs are situated on the lowest part of the old rocks (e.g. Boglösa 94, 131, 298). That they represent a short phase of final activity in the area also makes sense because when the shallow bays at Boglösa became wetlands, the need for, or point of, rock art seized to be relevant.

CONCLUSION

In the Late Bronze Age, a limited number of large-scale petroglyphs begin to appear at the major rock art regions in southern Scandinavia. It is a uniform phenomenon but is articulated differently in different regions. On the Swedish west coast, the hyperbolic motifs are generally fully hammered out and occupy a central position of the panels, while in the Mälaren region in eastern Sweden they are contour-cut and mainly situated below the older rock art. There are, however, certain similarities between the main areas with hyperbolic motifs. A mutual aspect concerns the type of motifs that are enlarged (anthropomorphs and boats), that they are of late date (Period IV-VI), and singular additions on the rocks which often superimpose older motifs.

Matters of size are complex and the Late Bronze Age hyperbolism is not an issue of scale only. For example, a number of mid-sized 1–3 m long boat motifs are just larger than average and do not stand out as ‘punctums’ on the rock in the same way as the Brandskog boat and the other

hyperbolic motifs. The case study of Boglösa shows that the super-sized motifs in this area are virtually the same as the smaller ones, and do not add detail or more information. Because they occur as singular instances with no apparent relation to other smaller motifs, scale is less likely to have symbolic or narrative underpinnings. Because the hyperboles are not made at particularly prominent locations in the archipelago, or centred on the rocks, the increased size is less likely to be about greater visibility or cognitive impact.

It is argued that the displacement in size in Boglösa is an index of changing environmental circumstances. During the transition from the Early to the Late Bronze Age, the land uplift process changed the settings of the area to a point which altered the conditions and the purpose of rock art. Because the rock art seems to be dependent on access to water to work, it is argued that the lack of new rocks by the water's edge due to the land uplift process led to the change of size. In order to compensate for the increasing distance to the water, the size of the motifs was radically enhanced to continue to have effect. Because the hyperboles in the area are always singular instances it was apparently a short-termed attempt that never took hold. The particular circumstances of the Boglösa archipelago cannot directly be extrapolated to other areas but the differences should not be exaggerated either. That the hyperboles on the Swedish west coast are more often situated on the middle of the rocks and to a greater extent superimposing older motifs need not to be particularly social. The superimpositions indicated a similar gap in production, and the style of being fully hammered out could as well be a local adaptation to make them more powerful when the distance to water increases.

The study of hyperbolism in Bronze Age rock art emphasises the need to supplement iconological and interpretative approaches with other aspects such as size, materiality and landscape setting. Even though symbolic interpretations of size are not refuted, the study of hyperbolism nonetheless indicates that the Bronze Age petroglyphs are not primarily about symbolism, but are more likely to be magical devices made with a purpose. In this particular case, the hyperbolism seems to be about vitalist power and efficiency, and less about representation and status.

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