Comparison is an obvious methodology in the field of archaeology. One tries to find a parallel in order to obtain a dating, a deeper understanding and a more thorough knowledge of the object at hand. This method is well-known and the basis for comparison is normally found within the closest cultural sphere as well as through the study of trading and communication route influences. Archaeologists in the Nordic countries typically seek such external influences in the regions to the south, since Nordic culture can be seen as a product of these areas. This is not, however, the case with Bulbrogård: parallels with several elements in the basic architectural structure of the complex must be sought to the north. In 2011, I visited the excavation of the fornborg (i.e. ancient fort) Runsa in Mälardalen, Sweden. There, for the first time, I saw something that resembled what I had myself excavated at Bulbrogård by the lake Tissø in Zealand, Denmark. Runsa appeared to have several construction elements in common with the large hall at Bulbrogård despite the fact that there were also great differences. One of the two places succeeds the other, so to speak, insofar as Runsa is thought to have been burnt down and overlaid by new activities around 550, when Bulbrogård was established.
Fig. 1 Overview of the Tissø settlement on Zealand, Denmark, with the aristocratic residences at Bulbrogård and Fugledegård, pit-houses along the lake shore and the market and crafts site. At that time, the settlement was surrounded by water and wetlands on all sides, and was thus for all intents and purposes on an island.
Tissø and Bulbrogård

Denmark’s fourth largest lake, Tissø, is located in western Zealand. The settlement area is 2–300 metres wide and extends in a 1.5 km long belt along the western lake shore from north to south (fig. 1). The south end of the site is demarcated by a small river, Halleby Å, which gives access to the sea as well as to the west and north by the wetland areas Maderne and Ejle Mose.

Under the leadership of the research professor Lars Jørgensen and in collaboration with Kalundborg Museum, the National Museum of Denmark conducted investigations at the site between 1995 and 2003. The investigations were then resumed in 2011 and ran through 2013 as part of the research project “Pre-Christian Cult Sites”. A total area of about 91,000 square metres has been investigated and more than 12,000 detector finds have been registered at the site.

Bulbrogård was investigated in 1995, between 2002 and 2003 and then again in the year 2012. The investigations concluded in 2013. In the latest investigation, another hall phase at Bulbrogård has been uncovered, but Phase 1, which was uncovered in 2002–2003, will be dealt with here. The building complex at Bulbrogård has emerged as a spectacular totality, consisting of a surrounding palisade and two hall buildings with a small enclosure situated in between (fig. 2).1

With its trapezoid shape, the palisade demarcated an area of about 13,000 square metres, which is three-to-four times larger than both ordinary and slightly larger residences from the same period. The palisade’s construction is unique and particularly resource-intensive for the purpose of appearing distinct and powerful.

The large hall site is 38 metres long, 7 metres at the widest point and has 5 metre wide gables (fig. 3). The hall had six sets of large roof-bearing posts set at a depth of 1–1.5 metres beneath the cleared surface. The roof-bearing posts stood at a uniform distance from the wall. The fact that the distances between the individual sets of roof-bearing posts increase towards the central place. During the gatherings, a market place with craft activities would also take place in the southern part of the hill island by Halleby Å. The site has many remains and traces of offerings, cult and ritual activities. The objects found testify to, among other things, the presence of an important centre with an aristocracy, arms-bearing men and contacts with the rest of Europe.

Bulbrogård

Bulbrogård is situated in the northern part of the site and is the first-established aristocratic residence at the site, built around the middle of the sixth century. The residence burned to the ground, ostensibly, in the last half of the seventh century. At the end of the seventh century, a new aristocratic residence was built about 600 metres to the south at Fugledegård, which can be traced through several phases until the middle of the eleventh century, when the place lost its significance and the aristocratic residence was demolished.

Along the lake shore, the settlement took the form of several hundred pit-houses associated with the functions of the site as a gathering-
part of the hall means that the long walls were slightly convex. The slightly curved long walls consisted of double planks spaced at 20–30 centimetres and set in a wall trench. The hall had a total of three door openings, with two of them in the southern long wall (at the eastern and western ends). The third door was in the northern long wall opposite the southeastern door. The two doors in the east were strongly marked and are the only places in the building where there have been replacements.

In each corner, there was a large corner post, rectangular in cross-section with dimensions of 25 × 60–70 centimetres. The posts were set diagonally with the narrow side leaning in the longitudinal direction. A centrally placed straight vertical post was located between the corners.

Outside, along the long walls, two rows of smaller posts had been set in pairs at distances of 0.5 and 1.4 metres from the wall, respectively.
The posts were straight and vertical, so they cannot be interpreted as bracing posts. There is no precedent for these posts. Their dimensions are relatively small, and it is assumed that they functioned in connection with a kind of terrace or platform.

The large hall thus has a long narrow form with slightly convex long walls, and it appears that an effort was made to make the building taller or more striking with a kind of terrace.

The small hall (building 4) was basically constructed in the same way as the large hall, differing only in a few respects (fig. 4). It was 23 metres long and 7 metres at the widest point with a gable width of 4.5 metres, giving it a more curved long wall than the large hall. The roof was borne by just three sets of roof-bearing posts set at depths of 1.35–1.50 metres from the cleared surface. The posts were set such that in the west there was a span between them of no less than 9 metres. The small hall, too, had corner posts, but these were straight and vertical. Nothing has been preserved of any gable constructions. The hall had two opposite entrance doorways, also with relatively large door posts. The small hall is thus shorter and slightly plumper in shape than the large hall.

Bulbrogård has the appearance of a building complex that formed a continuous unit. It was built at some point in the middle of the sixth century and was burnt to the ground at some point after that – probably in the second half of the seventh century. The complex at Bulbrogård has the appearance of an architecturally well-formed, monumental work where nothing has been left to chance or quick solutions. There was no stinting on either quantity or quality.

Fig. 3 Bulbrogård, Phase 1. The large hall (building 3) is 38 metres long and 7 metres wide at the widest point. The hall has six sets of large roof-bearing posts, corner posts and a gable post. Scale 1:400.

Fig. 4 Bulbrogård, Phase 1. The small hall (building 4) is 23 metres long and 7 metres wide at the widest point. The hall has only three sets of roof-bearing posts and corner posts. Scale 1:400.
Parallels to Bulbrogård – a comparison with Runsa

Parallels of the building complex at Bulbrogård can be sought in terms of several parameters. One can look at the overall building structure formed by the individual buildings, or one can look at the construction and architecture of the individual buildings themselves. There are no direct parallels of the halls at Bulbrogård – especially not in the ordinary farm buildings. Runsa and Bulbrogård are not quite contemporaneous, but they are close in time, inasmuch as the Runsa hall is assumed to have been burnt down in the middle of the sixth century, around the same time Bulbrogård was being built. The two halls are almost equally large – Runsa has a length of c. 32 metres, only slightly shorter than the large hall at Bulbrogård. On the other hand, the hall at Runsa is rather wider, since the long walls there are considerably more convex – and a good deal more so than the small hall at Bulbrogård. This is a rather interesting detail, as the very slightly convex walls in both halls at Bulbrogård have been determined by their uniform distance from the roof-bearing posts to the wall. The distance between the posts in each set increases towards the central part of the hall, indicating that the long wall curves a little. At Runsa, however, the roof-bearing posts are in a long straight row with a uniform or almost uniform distance between the posts in the individual sets, which is why the convex line of the wall can only be seen as intentional. One can imagine that this was determined by differences in the actual construction.

The Runsa hall has an as yet unclarified number of roof-bearing posts (fig. 5). Looking at the ground plan suggests the possibility that the posts were raised in three modules of four posts each; that is, a total of six sets of roof-bearing posts. All the posts were held in place by stones at the base and were c. 0.5 metres in diameter – they were not sunk particularly deeply (between 20 and 60 centimetres). Unfortunately, there are no post traces (or else they have not yet been described) that can demonstrate the true dimensions of the posts. The shallow and variable depths have been attributed to the local...
geological conditions of rocky ground. These dimensions and foundations are strikingly different from those seen at Bulbrogård.

Common to the hall at Runsa and both halls at Bulbrogård are the relatively large corner posts. They seem to have had, if not of the same, then similar dimensions of those found in the roof-bearing posts. But here there is a small difference insofar as in the large hall at Bulbrogård there is a post placed centrally in the gable.

The Runsa hall was built on so-called terraces, which can be regarded as a kind of foundation or artificial building plateau. These are not necessarily present beneath the whole building; only where it was necessary to level the terrain. The south Runsa hall terrace levels the terrain in a way that made it possible to erect the building at that very point. The northern part, on the other hand, projects out over the actual compass of the hall, which may be due to an earlier or perhaps more likely a later, longer building. A trench along the western long wall and the gable on the terrace in the north indicates such a possibility.

**Other halls**

Bulbrogård and Runsa are far from the only hall buildings known of in the Nordic area. Frands Herschend points out, without clarifying further, that in the case of Bulbrogård, among others, we see an architecture of central Swedish origin. Herschend is very likely on the right track here; however, similarities cannot be found as much in the complete copy of a layout, as in the construction elements and the overall visual architectural expression – at least in the ground plan.

To find parallels of Bulbrogård, then, it seems reasonable to first turn towards sites such as Gudme and Gammel Lejre, located,
respectively, on Funen and Zealand in Denmark.

The large hall at Gudme dates to the 3rd–4th centuries and is thus older than the material discussed here. At 47 metres, it is about 10 metres longer than Bulbrogård (fig. 6). The roof of the building was borne by eight sets of large roof-bearing posts standing in two straight rows. The long walls are also straight and the gables are slightly curved.6

At Gammel Lejre, around the same time as the excavations at Bulbrogård, the hall at Fredshøj was found and investigated (fig. 7). The two building complexes at Bulbrogård and Fredshøj have identical features: they were both built in the sixth century, and each complex consists of two hall buildings: one small and one large.

Just like Bulbrogård, the complex at Fredshøj ‘moved’ about 500–600 metres to the south, where a new hall complex was built at Mysselhøjgård.7

The large hall at Fredshøj has several similarities to Bulbrogård. However, it is difficult to discuss them in great detail, since the whole investigation has not been published; furthermore the material is presently not available. The hall at Fredshøj had the same width (7 metres), but at 48 metres it was longer than Bulbrogård. The reason for the increased length is that, compared with the hall at Bulbrogård, there is one more set of roof-bearing posts – that is, a total of seven sets. The long walls are only very slightly convex, because the distance from the roof-bearing posts increases in towards the middle of the building, while the distance from the wall is uniform – just as at Bulbrogård. Only relatively few wall posts have been preserved, and one cannot tell from the plan published so far what the wall construction was like.

However, it is possible to establish that the corner and gable construction was quite different from the one at Bulbrogård. The small hall at Fredshøj, some 30 metres north of the large hall, has certain things in common with the small hall at Bulbrogård. Both have three sets of roof-bearing posts and in both cases one set is displaced towards the west so that they form a larger span and a longer space. The 9
metre span at Bulbrogård is about 3 metres longer than that at Fredshøj.\(^8\)

Unfortunately, the hall at Fredshøj’s degree of preservation is not as good as that of the wall posts, which are only partially preserved, and the published material is insufficient as a basis for further interpretation. However, it certainly seems that the corner posts of both halls at Bulbrogård did not exist in the halls at Fredshøj. To find such corner posts one must look even farther east, where there are several halls that are contemporaneous with the halls at Bulbrogård and Runsa.

In 2001, at Påarp in Scania, Sweden, a magnate residence in several phases was investigated (fig. 8). There Buildings 1, 2 and 3, among others, all had corner posts of almost the same size as the large hall at Bulbrogård; but there, too, the number of roof-bearing posts is different, just as the state of the wall post preservation is so poor that it is not possible to say anything about their course and construction. Of the three buildings only building 1, which is 38 × 6.5 metres, is contemporaneous with Bulbrogård and Runsa; the other two have a more general dating, which does, however, fall within the period.\(^9\) The buildings there are all
of the same long, narrow type as the large hall at Bulbrogård. Unfortunately, their wall posts are not so well preserved that it is possible to determine whether the apparently successively increasing distance between the roof-bearing posts in the sets in towards the middle of building 1 and building 3 indicate a uniform distance from roof-bearing posts to the wall.

Building 2, on the other hand, appears to have two straight rows of roof-bearing posts like those we see at Runsa.

In 2000, at Järrestad, in the eastern part of Scania, a building complex was found which had many resemblances to the one at Tissø. There, too, were several building phases, the oldest
of which has been dated to the same period as Bulbrogård. With their $37 \times 6.5-7$ metres, the early halls are almost identical in size to the large hall from Bulbrogård. It is unfortunately not so clear how many sets of roof-bearing posts there were in the two halls from Järrestad; it does, however, appear that the roof-bearing posts in buildings 11/12 (phase 1) stand at increased distances in the sets with a uniform distance between the long walls and the roof-bearing posts (fig. 9); thus, a construction with slightly convex walls. The corner posts are not found in the halls, but in the smaller building (building 1); in this case they are straight and vertical, within the enclosure associated with the halls from Phase 2. Here no traces of the wall construction have been preserved.\textsuperscript{10}

The halls at Slöinge in Halland are, unfortunately, under-investigated, which gives the material a degree of uncertainty (fig. 10). Slöinge building I had a length of more than 18 metres and was about 5.5 metres wide. Only a few of the roof-bearing posts have been identified, as have parts of the course of the walls, so it is unknown whether the halls had corner posts. Here it appears that both the roof-bearing posts and the walls were in straight rows. Building II had seven sets of roof-bearing posts and had two phases, c. 30 metres long and 8.5 metres

---

**Fig. 10** Building II and Building III from Slöinge, Halland, Sweden. None of the halls had corner posts (after Lundqvist 2002). Scale 1:500.
wide. The wall posts, however, have only been preserved or identified over a relatively short stretch of time that provides no information about their form. The distance between the posts in the roof-bearing sets increases, however, towards the middle of the building, so it seems reasonable to assume that Building II had slightly convex walls. South of Building II lay Building III. Building III has not yet been fully uncovered either, and the posts that have been revealed as belonging to Building III have not all been investigated, which means that the interpretation is subject to some uncertainty. Inferring from the interpreted plan, there is a variable distance between the posts in the roof-bearing post set, which increases towards the middle of the building. The courses of the walls are clearly marked by wall trenches, and there is no doubt about their slightly curving character. There are no proper datings for the individual buildings. For example, Building I has a broad dating of 370–710, Building III was built around 710 and Building II in the late part of the eighth century.11

In 2001–2002, at the site Lunda, in Södermanland, Sweden, a very interesting settlement site was found with buildings, graves and a cult site. There, too, a hall in several phases was identified (fig. 11). The oldest phase – Building 52 – has been dated to c. 300–450. Building 52 is 29 metres long and up to 7.4 metres wide and is a so-called terrace building. Just four sets of roof-bearing posts were recognizeable

---

Fig. 11 Lunda, Södermannland, Sweden, has two halls – Building 52 and Building 51 – which may both have had corner posts (after Skyllberg 2008). Scale 1:400.
there, which is far from all of them. The distance between the roof-bearing posts is not uniform, since the outermost sets are drawn in somewhat. Building 52 has four corner posts and straight gables. In the east, part of the terrace is preserved. Only a few wall posts are preserved, but enough to determine that the long walls were very slightly convex, evident — as at Bulbrogård — from the fact that the distances between the roof-bearing posts in the sets increase in towards the middle of the building, while at the same time a uniform distance from the long wall is maintained. The rather later Building 51 has been dated to 450–650 and is thus contemporaneous with Bulbrogård. Building 51 is about 50 metres long and 10 metres wide with terraces at both ends. Here there appears to be only a single corner post and a whole set of ten roof-bearing posts in two long, straight rows. The long walls are apparently straight. However, it seems that the hall has several phases, since the terraces at both gable ends were built outwards, although this has not yet been possible to demonstrate. This must also be the case with the roof-bearing posts, which not only vary in size, but also stand very close at certain points.

Two construction types
The above review shows that, in general, within what we can call elite architecture from the 5th–6th century, we have two types of building construction.

I. The distances between the individual roof-bearing post sets increase in towards the middle of the building. Determined by the uniform distance between wall and roof-bearing posts, the walls are convex.

II. The roof-bearing posts stand in two straight or almost straight rows, with the same or almost the same distance between the roof-bearing posts. The walls are curved with a variable distance from the roof-bearing posts.

The central difference between the two types consists of the elements that determine the distance between the roof-bearing posts and the long wall.

The first construction type is found in Denmark at Bulbrogård and Fredshøj and in Sweden, at Pääp (Building 1 and Building 3), Lunda (Building 52), Järrestad and Slöinge Building II and Building III, whereas construction type II is found exclusively in Sweden at Pääp (Building 2) and at Runsa.

Gudme matches Lunda (building 51) and probably Slöinge building I, outside the two main construction types, since the walls have a straight course, which in the case of Gudme is dependent on the very early dating, where the construction type has its roots in earlier and contemporaneous buildings that are characterized by these very features — straight post rows and straight wall courses. This could also be the case at both Lunda and Slöinge, given the early dating. This group of halls is therefore earlier than the type I and type II constructions.

Corner posts can be seen on construction type I at Bulbrogård, Pääp (Building 1 and Building 3) as well as at Lunda (building 52) and on construction type II at Runsa and Pääp (Building 2). Thus, corner posts are not directly associated with a given construction
type, but instead they are clearly a more Swedish phenomenon, since the corner posts at Bulbrogård are so far the only ones in Denmark.

**Chronological and typological development of the buildings**

Looking at the chronological development and design of buildings in the Danish area, one sees an ongoing development of their construction over time. It is thus possible (in broad terms) to estimate the age of the individual building based on the ground plan and the relative placing of and distances between the roof-bearing posts.

In the Roman Iron Age, the buildings had several sets of roof-bearing posts spaced at uniform distances. The distance from the roof-bearing posts to the wall is equally uniform, which is why the long walls appear quite straight, and it is precisely such a construction that occurs in the Gudme hall. During that period the buildings became successively longer and longer. Later in the course of the Germanic Iron Age, they become rather smaller, or shorter, and the outermost sets of roof-bearing posts at the gables are drawn in slightly; that is, the posts in the individual roof-bearing post sets stand a little closer to one another than the posts in the other roof-bearing post pairs. Since the distance between the walls and the roof-bearing posts is uniform, it follows that long walls become convex. The central aisle in the buildings becomes narrower, which means that the weight of the roof shifts from the roof-bearing posts out to the walls. In Sweden this transition is designated as a development from the so-called ‘balanced’ to the ‘underbalanced’ building construction.

In the last part of the Germanic Iron Age the buildings grow wider. The roof-bearing posts now stand in curving rows, where the intervals between the posts in each set increase towards the middle of the building, the end effect of which is a wall with a curving course. In the Viking Era, the roof-bearing posts may have had a variable number and sometimes there are three- and two-aisle constructions in the same building, for example at Toftegård, building 3 from the ninth century (fig. 12), where the posts now more or less stand in straight rows again. The walls, on the other hand, are still convex, but now it seems as if the form is curved with intention and not something caused by a uniform distance between wall and roof-bearing posts.

Most of the halls from the 5th–6th century are of construction type I – Bulbrogård, Påarp building 1, Påarp building 3, Fredshøj, Järrestad, Lunda Building 52 and Slöinge Buildings II and III – and thus belong to the period when the distance between the posts in the individual sets of roof-bearing posts decreases out towards the gables, and thus creates a curved wall length. This aligns well with the Danish building chronology as well as the datings obtained for the buildings of construction type I. From construction type II, Påarp building 2 has two straight rows of roof-bearing posts and straight long walls; lines of posts that are in accordance with the typological and chronological development of buildings that are rather earlier than Bulbrogård, for example.

Viewed from the Danish chronological perspective, the Runsa building, however, appears – with its straight post rows and
convex long walls – to belong to the latest part of the Iron Age and the Viking Era, which does not accord with the present dating for the building. On the basis of the above division into construction types and in terms of the building chronology found in the Danish area, buildings of construction type I should be older than buildings of construction type II. Runsa, currently, is situated in the central Swedish area, so the Danish building chronology cannot be taken at direct face value, and it therefore seems reasonable to cast a glance at the Swedish chronological work.

Herschend introduced the Swedish division of the buildings according to a typological and chronological system: ‘balanced’, ‘overbalanced’ and ‘underbalanced’ constructions. This categorization was determined by the distribution of the weight of the roof. Göthberg uses this as a point of departure, with the main emphasis on the balanced and underbalanced building constructions, which have been dated respectively to the period from the Late Bronze Age to the Roman Iron Age, and the period from the Roman Iron Age to the Early Middle Ages. The two construction types are further subdivided, with the emphasis being on the distance between the roof-bearing post sets as well as a focus on the function and distribution of space. However, this does not mean that the buildings are placed within a more narrow dating framework. There are weaknesses in Herschend’s and Göthberg’s divisions because the material is relatively limited and the datings are so broad that they cannot, in reality, be used for anything but general reflections. Some building types, for example, exist over a period of time spanning several archaeological cultural eras; the Late Iron Age in particular exhibits many variations. Additionally, the Swedish building material has been, in general, limited, but many recent archaeological investigations have provided a good basis for working further
with the dating of the Swedish house remains. An example is Svante Norr’s article on building chronologies and types from the Roman Iron Age in the Mälaren Valley. Norr concludes that the development of the buildings in central Sweden corresponds to that seen in the Danish area, which accords well with a shared cultural area where the object material appears homogeneous. Might one suppose, then, that this uniformity – the shared cultural features – existed for a longer time? The uniform object material that is found in the common cultural area to which both Denmark and Sweden belong might be an indicator of such a situation.

Many of the above-mentioned buildings and halls belong in Sweden, and a small number in Denmark. This poses a challenge in terms of the datings, since there are substantially different methodological approaches to the typology and dating of the buildings, partly rooted in national traditions. Here it should surely be unnecessary to point out that factors such as stratigraphy and related finds – object finds that can be directly attributed to the individual construction – are of course part of the methodology used in Sweden as well as in Denmark to date the archaeological material. In this respect, Slöinge Building III is a good example of building material that gives us a more precise dating on the basis of the object material in the postholes (the small images known as guldgubber) as well as direct datings of the fragments of the actual posts which were still preserved in the roof-bearing postholes. In general, then, one can postulate that the Swedish tradition takes its point of departure from what can be called a direct dating criterion, since it is the sampled \(^{14}\text{C}\) datings which, if possible, provide a dating of the individual features and constructions. But this method surely has its source-critical challenges in terms of what the datings are based on, especially at sites with several phases. In addition, the functional divisions of the buildings are in focus rather than their construction, and this is conditional to the fact that a uniform structure has been difficult to find in the limited material. In Denmark, there is a more typological approach to the, the main emphasis being on the construction of the building, and on this basis alone the individual buildings can be dated with relative precision. This substantial difference may make it difficult to conduct comparative studies based on the settlement traces alone. There is also the fact that the building customs over such a large area must be assumed to have had their differences and variations, simply in view of the presence or absence of different soil and bedrock conditions.

**Corner posts – bearing or symbolic?**

Most of the halls discussed here have corner posts – Bulbrogården, Runsa, Järrestad Phase 2 small hall, Pärarp, Lunda Building 52 and possibly also Lunda Building 51. On the face of it, it does not seem that their occurrence is chronologically determined, since they appear in the Early as well as the Late Iron Age; and although one can claim that they belong within a particular period and are thus characteristic of this late part of the Iron Age, they are not a consistent characteristic of the period.

The corner posts are absolutely a Swedish phenomenon, and Bulbrogården with such posts in both halls is quite unique within the contemporary Danish area. Posts with this kind of placing can also be found in other
spectacular buildings such as the cult house from Uppåkra\textsuperscript{24} and the hall on Helgö,\textsuperscript{25} and the question is then whether they belong in special buildings. Such a relationship can, however, be dismissed relatively quickly, since buildings with corner posts are apparently found at all social levels. Although the corner posts mainly occur in areas with artificial foundations or terraces, they are apparently also found in building constructions on ordinary field surfaces, which may be a temporal development factor where the corner post goes from the special to the ordinary. However, this has not been investigated in any detail, indeed it would be difficult to do so given the very broad datings of the buildings.\textsuperscript{26}

It is assumed that these particular posts, along with one or more gable posts, had a stabilizing effect on the construction along the building, and not least that they (of course) bore the roof. Whereas the latter is evident, although not necessary, the former suggestion lies outside the range of expertise here, but it may seem remarkable that such a construction has been considered necessary in some and not in other building types which are otherwise comparable – Bulbrogård and Järrestad phase 1 being good examples. Unfortunately, the corner and gable posts suffer from the research traditions and have not been investigated in their individual construction elements, which means that their presence is often simply noted.

That the corner posts do not have a direct constructional function beyond the obvious one of bearing the roof may mean that they also have another, not so functional significance, determined solely by their presence and relatively powerful appearance. This must, in particular, be the case with the very large corner posts found in the Bulbrogård, Runsa and not least the Uppåkra cult buildings, which with its almost extreme corner posts emphasized such a dual function. The corner posts may, by virtue of their size, underscore the size of the buildings, and the large surface is not only a conspicuous but also an obvious place to decorate and thus clarify the special status of the building. In Denmark, where there is a scarcity of stone, larger numbers of ashlars in the foundations were, in later periods, a symbol of wealth and magnificence. Do these large corner posts carry the same message?

**Conclusion**

The typological and chronological challenges posed by the Swedish building material make dating comparisons difficult. It would appear that the Swedish building material – at any rate in the Mälaren Valley – is more complicated in its typological-chronological development than the Danish, where the standard building, so to speak, has prevailed in all ages.

Despite the fact that there is a great distance between the Mälaren Valley and Bulbrogård, both belong within the same common cultural area, where one can trace a homogeneous development. The uniform object material along with the uniform common religious representations, expressions and rites, all testify to an area of relative cultural homogeneity. This homogeneity and shared understanding may also have been expressed in the architecture.

Precisely such corner posts are a feature shared by Bulbrogård and Runsa, where the two
building complexes are apparently otherwise substantially different in basic construction and layout. In the latter respect Runsa is more like the Toftegård hall in Stevns in Zealand, but the datings are far too different to permit us to argue for a connection.

The corner post is an absolutely deviant feature in the Danish area, and at the Bulbrogård complex emerges as the absolute exception that proves the rule. With a sporadic occurrence in the Scanian area, and far greater frequency in the central Swedish area, there can hardly be any doubt that the ‘idea’ of the corner post is, if not a phenomenon from the Mälaren Valley, then at least a phenomenon from Sweden. The question, then, is whether it only had a status-bearing function, or whether its function had a constructional purpose. One by no means precludes the other, and it is conceivable that there was a close connection. Large powerful corner posts may, as much as equally large door posts, emphasize the monumentality and importance of the building. When the traces that remain of the buildings of prehistory leave no evidence of decoration, such decoration can be difficult to demonstrate. Despite this, one can imagine these highly visible features could become objects of ornamental expression that would thus profile the building and its construction.
NOTES

1 Bican 2009; Bican 2010

2 See Olausson 2011 and the article in this volume for a review of the Runsa hall.

3 Olausson 2011

4 Olausson 2011

5 Herschend 2009, p. 239

6 Sørensen 1994

7 Christensen 2010

8 Christensen 2010


10 Söderberg 2002, pp. 55 f; 2003, pp. 390 ff

11 Lundqvist 2003

12 Jörpeland et al. 2003; Skyllberg 2008


14 Hvass 1993; Ethelberg 2003; Jensen 2004, also for further references

15 Olausson 2011

16 Herschend 1989

17 Göthberg 2000

18 Gustafsson 2007, p. 196

19 Norr 2006a, 2006b

20 Norr 2006b, p. 12

21 Lundqvist 2003

22 For example Göthberg 1993, p. 67; 2002, pp. 19 f

23 Ulvång 1992, p. 28; Göthberg 1995, p. 87; 2000, pp. 48 f

24 Larsson 2004, 2006

25 Herschend 1995


REFERENCES


— 2006b: Långa och ännu längre långhus från romersk järnålder. 


