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AIA Essay

Paviken: A Viking Age Harbor Site
Field School Experience, Summer 2013

Undisturbed since abandonment in AD 1000, Paviken is now accepted as an important site of trade and manufacture, a powerful link in the chain of Viking age ports on Gotland (Carlsson 2013, Linquist 2014, Jankhuhn 1982). The site (Figure 1) consists of two areas: Paviken I, the harbour site, and Paviken II, next to a large cemetery (Carlsson 2013). Paviken I was excavated 1967-73 and phosphate mapped by Per Lundstrom and Jan Peder Lamm.



Figure 1. Paviken, Gotland. Paviken I is the northern most highlighted area. Map courtesy of Amanda Karn.

Photo of Paviken site (trenches 1,2, and 3). Jenna Franklin, 2013.

Dan Carlsson's current project aims to discern how Paviken (together with Vastergarn) operated within the trade system of Gotland and the Baltic, especially in reference to two other harbor sites, Frojel and Visby, in order to understand how they "balanced each other in question of trade and manufacturing on a wider scale over time" (Carlsson 2013, p. 4). Carlsson's 2013 excavation is an attempt to define Paviken's significance in a larger framework of Viking age trade and manufacture on Gotland. Lundstrom's excavation covered 1000 square meters. Carlsson's 2013 excavation covered approximately 64 square meters. The squares were measured 2 meters by 2 meters. In Carlsson's excavation, three trenches were opened. Trench 1

reached layer B, consisting of sand and compact clay. Trench 2 reached layer B as a well, taking a few constructions down past this layer of sand, clay, and gravel. Trench 3 reached far past layer B and consisted of many large rocks. Because Paviken has been undisturbed since the Viking age, these layers offer an accurate representation of how they existed in 1000 AD.

At Paviken field school this summer, each student was assigned an artifact to conduct a spatial analysis of. I was assigned amber, garnet, and rocky crystal, important precious gems in the trade sphere of the Baltic, and Gotland especially. My project resulted in a database of these artifacts, GIS map of each gem type (Figure 2), and cumulative paper on the use of these artifacts in Viking Age Gotland.

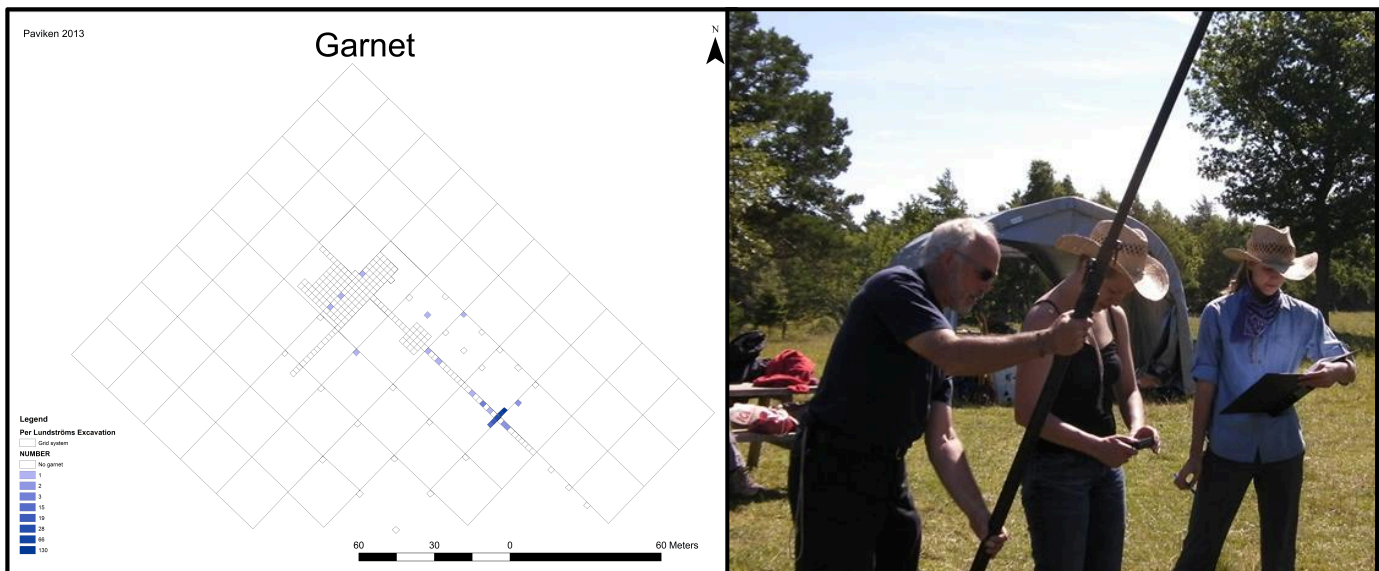


Figure 2. Example of a GIS map of artifact spatial distribution. Garnet. Jenna Franklin.

Photo of students taking layer photos at the site, 2013. I am the person on the far right.

Through my project, I made several conclusions about the use of garnet and amber at Paviken (no rocky crystal was found). The high presence of amber and garnet support the fact that Gotland was an island of wealthy merchant-farmers as a result of their ideal placement for Baltic trade. It seems likely that Paviken operated well within Gotlandic and Baltic trade routes during the Viking age, offering not only a stopping ground for ships, but also local shops that manufactured precious gems. Furthermore, due to the above shown spatial distribution of amber and garnet, it

also seems apparent that certain areas were dedicated to specialized crafts at this harbor site.

Now that I described the excavation site and my own small project, I would like to express my personal experience at Paviken. I loved being on site daily, the gritty excavation work, and the community of like-minded people. I loved taking down my square, resolutely pulling back the earth from bones, metals, and even a Viking age post-hole still cradling ancient fragments of wood. The diversity of students was also an eye-opening, wonderfully refreshing aspect of the field school. I learned more about the world by talking to Norwegians, Australians, Spaniards, and Swedes than I could ever absorb in any anthropology class. I feel more globally aware and more culturally sound after this experience.

In addition, these five weeks of work and play were essential to my ability to make decisions about my future. I learned a lot about myself this summer. I loved the site, the work, and the people. However, I learned that archaeology is not my calling. I am now very excited to acquire licensure to teach high school in America. My experience in Gotland opened my eyes to the world, but also made me even more aware of American cultures. We are a very diverse country and our education system needs help. I want to give back to my country through teaching. I will never forget Paviken and I will always harbor an interest in archaeology, but I look forward to contributing to society in other ways.

I humbly thank the American Institute of Archaeology for allowing me to have this life-changing experience in Gotland, one I will carry with me always. I returned a more enlightened and self-assured person.