CHARISMATIC OBJECTS

From Roman Times to the Middle Ages

M. Vedeler | I.M. Røstad | E.S. Kristoffersen | Z.T.Glørstad (eds).

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PREFACE

This volume is the result of a number of seminars and workshops in 2015–2016, organized by the research group ECHO – Charismatic Objects – at the Museum of Cultural History in Oslo. Through the combined efforts of national and international researchers from the fields of conservation studies, archaeology and art history, the seminars explored the ongoing scholarly debate on the relationship between objects' materiality, visual and emotional impact and social representativity. As humans, we understand and experience the objects and things around us through our senses: through seeing them, touching them, smelling them and maybe hearing them. Thus sense perception is our main access to the things surrounding us. But we also understand them on the basis of our cosmology and our perception of reality. When beliefs, norms and memories merge with the physical experience of the object, emotions are aroused. Extraordinary objects, things that express collective and conservation stories evoke extraordinary feelings. Both the physical characteristics of the objects and the myths surrounding them may increase their meaning, lending them an inherent power. The design, language of form, as well as the materials used are essential elements in creating the object's charisma and in the stories that are told about them.

Although the concept of charisma has been widely discussed in sociological literature, concentrating mainly on personal leadership, charismatic *objects* are far less commonly discussed. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to find examples of such objects, since they have existed throughout history. In this volume, we will explore the material world of charismatic objects through nine papers focusing on historical

examples dating from the Roman Period to the late Middle Ages. The papers cover a continuous chronological timeline that allows us to follow certain long-lasting perceptions and beliefs surrounding charismatic objects. The chosen timeline highlights the fact that there exist both obvious similarities and important differences between the periods in question as to how such objects are perceived and the ritual practices in which they are embedded. This enables us to follow the phenomenon of how specific objects take on a special meaning and significance, and how they in certain contexts are infused with charismatic and magical properties. It also allows us to glimpse or follow certain patterns and perceptions that seem to have survived the Christianization of Scandinavia. Furthermore, examples from present day experiences of prehistoric objects or antiques as charismatic objects demonstrate how some objects possess specific qualities that seem to outlive their period of use and allow them to take on new meanings in different historical contexts.

We would like to express our heartfelt thanks to all colleagues who have contributed to engaging discussions and with their expertise during the seminars. The work of the ECHO group and the publication of the present volume have been made possible through generous funding from the Research Council at the Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo and the Archaeological Museum, University of Stavanger, and we are most grateful for their support and encouragement.

Oslo, August 30, 2018,

Marianne Vedeler, Ingunn Marit Røstad,
Elna Siv Kristoffersen and *Zanette Tsigaridas Glørstad*

CHAPTER 1

THE CHARISMATIC POWER OF OBJECTS

Marianne Vedeler

For a number of years, there has been a discussion in archaeology and anthropology about agency, and whether objects have the capacity to act (e.g. Ahern 2001; Appadurai 1986; Gell 1998; Hodder 2004; Hoskins 2006; Kopytoff 1986; Steiner 2001). On the premise that objects can be perceived as actors within a common cultural space, some objects stand out as more powerful agents than others. How has such extraordinary power been understood and controlled? We will use the term 'charismatic objects' to distinguish objects that can arouse awe. In this view, the agency of objects depends on culture-specific cosmological ideas. Weber's definition of charisma will be used as a tool to understand and differentiate between different forms of acting objects and their biographies. But is it, as Weber suggests, a characteristic feature of these objects that the power added to them is transferable? And is Weber's postulate that objectified charisma must be depersonalized always the case?

Both the physical features of the object and the myths and stories surrounding it, can expand the meaning and value of an item. Cultures worldwide have individual objects that are believed to possess special powers. In this book, we will focus on some groups of objects that might have been given such power in different ways, but nevertheless within a cosmological framework, thus understanding both objects and humans as part of an animated universe.

The significance of material culture has gone unnoticed in the modern discourse of charisma, although the idea of charismatic objects is not new. The concept of charisma that has been widely discussed in sociological literature has concentrated on personal leadership. Still, Weber has described forms of charismatic power based on a belief that forces can enter an object, as well as animals and humans (Weber 1968a). In cases where this force is believed to be within a physical thing, it is no longer just another object, but a thing of great value and a possessor of an important collective narrative.

THE CONCEPT OF CHARISMA

Several scholars have pointed out that the very essence of the phenomenon charisma lies in the *extraordinary*, in the ability or power to arouse awe (Nisbet 1966; Shils 1965:200–201; Spencer 1973:342). But in line with Weber, we could also see charisma not so much as a quality of a person or an object, but as a magical, transcendental, or religious power endowed with volition: something that enters a concrete object and becomes the source of awe. In this view, the belief in such a power is the engine or foundation of charisma. In cases where the force is believed to be within a thing or object, this object becomes both powerful and dangerous.

Is charisma about controlling central parts of people's lives? It could be argued that the need to structure our understanding of the world is a general human trait. Existential questions related to understanding ourselves as beings in the world, need to be answered through a common structure or order. If so, those who are believed to create or maintain such an order have the potential to arouse awe (Shils 1965:201). Studies of

modern leadership show how great leaders work hard to articulate a vision that is sufficiently compelling to evoke attributions of greatness or charisma among their followers (Emrick *et al*. 2001:527).

Charismatic power has, on the other hand, often been seen as a power of God, or a magical power that influences human life and cosmology. As Weber sees it, charisma is

> ***a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities.***
>
> *Weber 1968b:48*

According to Weber, this form of charisma occurs in periods or cultures when the attitude towards awe is conceptualized into a system of fate, as part of a world controlled by spirits, gods and demons (Spencer 1973:341). In the same kind of spiritual world, it is also possible for depersonalized forms of charisma to be transferable through blood lines, through roles or attached to an institution (Weber 1968a:1136). It is within this concept that objectified charisma plays a key role. This objectified power can be transferred to others, and becomes a 'depersonalized' and thereby controllable force (Weber 1968a:1136).

In comparison to a rationalized and more abstract form of charisma, the belief in the enigmatic power of objects discloses the logic of this belief in a more genuine and possibly older manner. When studying prehistoric societies, material culture is the main contemporary source of information. The objectified type of charisma is therefore of special interest for archaeological studies.

To Martin Spencer, charisma historically occurs in two main forms, namely as supernatural and as secular charisma (Spencer 1973:341). Edward Shils, on the other hand, does not see any large difference between supernatural and secular charisma. In his view, an explanation, or an insight into creating order in existence can be made in different ways. It is, however, important that all these forms have the power to control the perception of reality. Sometimes this power is held by a man or an object that is perceived as divine or magical, other times through a person with reflective insight,

through scientific analysis or artistic expression (Shils 1965:201). This could be a fruitful approach in relation to archaeological objects. Special objects take part in various forms of human interaction: religious, secular or other kinds of interactions. They can be seen as carriers and representatives of cosmology, objects reflecting people's ways of envisioning the world and how it works.

THE ANIMATED COSMOS

The concept of social agency in objects, as formulated by Alfred Gell in his book *Art and Agency*, suggests in principle that all people 'form what are evidently social relations with things' (Gell 1998:18). He sees agency as 'attributable to those persons and things who/which are seen as initiating causal sequences of a particular type, that is, events caused by acts of mind or will or intention, rather than the mere concatenation of physical events. An agent is one who causes events to happen in their vicinity' (Gell 1998:16).

Weber's and Shils' concept of charisma, on the other hand, has the power to control the perception of reality. This implies the superiority of some objects above others, not only to one person but to a whole group of people. This also implies that a common concept of cosmological ideas must be present to 'make the charisma work'.

The common idea that all things in the world are animated by a holy power can be found in texts from antiquity as well as from the late middle ages. Albertus Magnus was a professor at the University of Paris and Bishop of Regensburg in the early 13th century. The idea of the animated cosmos is most clearly expressed in his idea of *form*. In our modern Western worldview, we are accustomed to regarding man-made and natural objects as dead, in contrast to living things like plants. In the medieval worldview, these were not necessarily considered different things. All things, animals, plants, men, and stones were perceived as having an animated *form* with special properties and powers. A form can exist independent of a material thing, but the matter is in turn dependent on a mental form to hold together the matter. Every physical combination of matter will therefore be raw material for a form. A form in this worldview, is thus a combination of heavenly forces and of the matter that binds it together (Magnus 1967:64–65).

Still, this does not mean that all things were thought to have a soul, a much-debated issue in the 13th and 14th century.

Albertus Magnus was strongly influenced by Aristotle and his theory of causes. To him *form* was the identity of a man, an animal, or a stone (Wyckoff 1967:xxxiv). There are several examples of Greco-Roman authors who write about objects as actors. Mineralogical studies were for example concerned with the influence and properties of stones, and their ability to affect events (Plinius, Historia Naturalis 37). Some items even appear to be charismatic, as they were considered to have particularly powerful individual properties. Features occurring in some individual objects, and not in others, are by Aristotle called accidental properties (Wyvkoff 1967:xxxiii).

We thus see a common understanding of objects as acting forces in both the Roman world and in medieval Europe. Through examples drawn from peripheral areas of Scandinavia in the period between the early and the late Middle Ages, the articles in this book show that the idea of animated objects probably also existed here, despite great differences in religion. However, this does not mean that the same objects had the ability to awaken awe throughout this long period.

The biography of the objects seems to be an essential part of why and how objects obtain charismatic power. Memories and legends attached to them, can offer an explanation or insight into a common perception of reality. In this sense, objects can attain power through layers of histories attached to them (Gosden & Marshall 1999). This requires a common framework of understanding.

LINEAGE CHARISMA: HOW CAN CHARISMATIC POWER IN OBJECTS BE TRANSFERRED THROUGH BLOODLINES?

One of the forms of depersonalized charisma mentioned by Weber is so called «lineage charisma», transferable through bloodlines (Weber 1968a:1136–1137). In contrast to personal charisma, it is not based in an individual person, but in 'the immortal household as property-holder' (Weber 1968a:1136). Weber sees this form of charisma as an historical form, based on the idea that a household and a lineage group are considered magically

Figure 1. A disc-on-bow brooch from Øyer, Oppland, Norway (C716) dating to the 5th century AD. Gilded copper alloy inset with garnets. Photo: © Mårten Teigen, Museum of Cultural History, UiO.

blessed. According to Weber, this form of power gives autonomous legitimacy to the lineage group. This kind of charismatic object should in principle be possible to recognize in archaeological material. In societies where burial gifts are common, one would suppose that objects holding lineage charisma will eventually end up in a high-status grave at the end of its time of usefulness in relation to the status of the lineage group.

In her paper 'The Immortal Brooch: The tradition of great ornamental bow brooches in Migration and Merovingian Period Norway', Ingunn M. Røstad argues that particular types of bow brooches were set apart and treated as charismatic objects and bearers of awe-inspiring powers in the period between AD 400 and 800. The great ornamental brooches are found in graves representing the upper levels of society. Some of the brooches were several hundred years old when they finally followed their bearer into the grave. The contexts of the finds, their decoration, traces of wear and combination of materials all suggest that they functioned as devices transferring family history and myths of origin. It has been suggested by several scholars that some of these brooches might not only have functioned

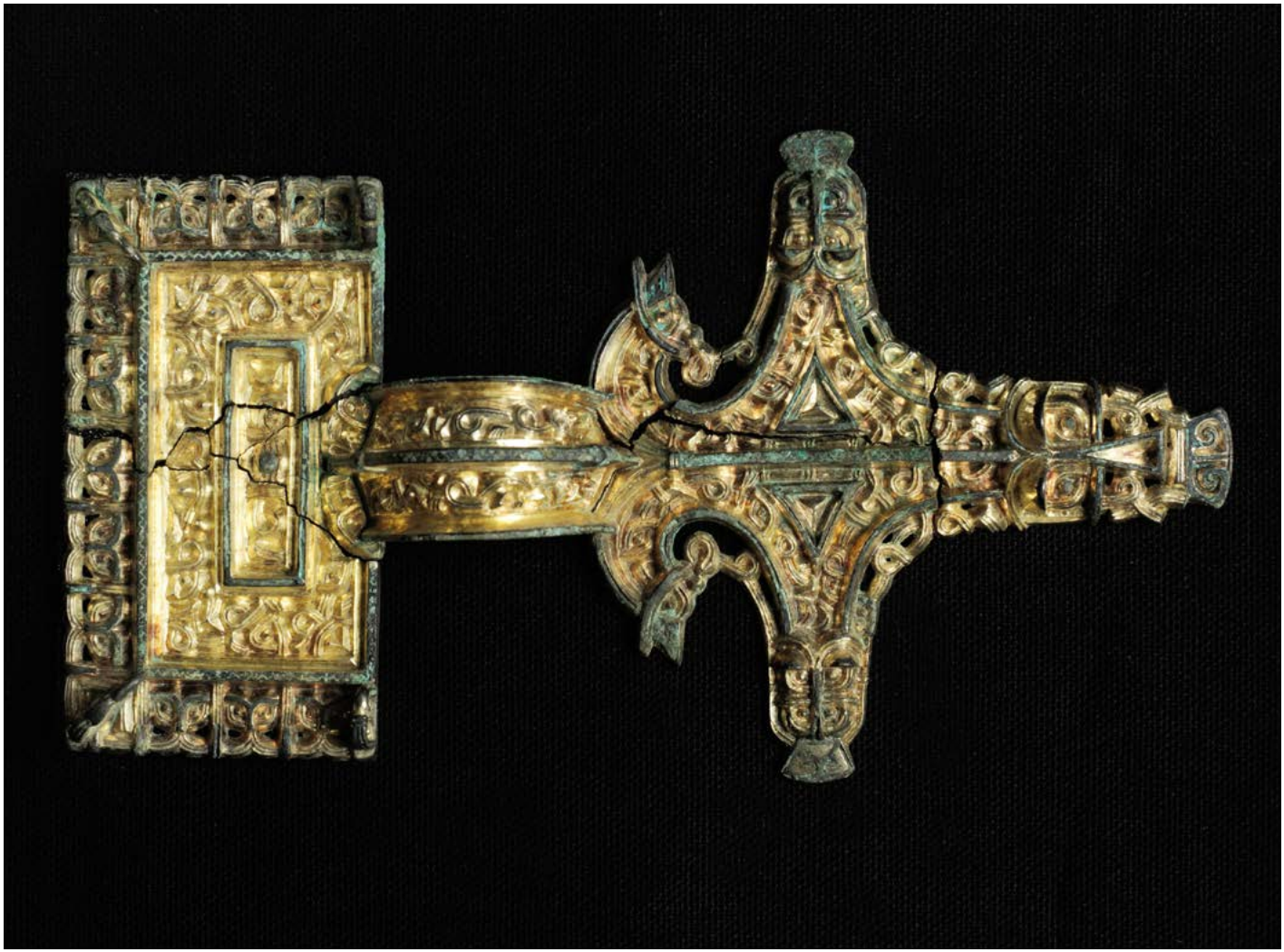


Figure 2. A large square-headed brooch from Sande, Vest-Agder in Norway (C55731/1), dating to the 6th century AD. The ornamentation, typical of the late Migration Period, shows twisted and dissolved animal bodies as well as masks. In the Museum of Cultural History Collections, UiO. Photo: © Ellen C. Holte, Museum of Cultural History, UiO.

as a symbol of the glooming jewel Brisingamen of the goddess Freyja, but that they were also worshipped as single objects (Arrhenius 1962:93,97, 2001:306; Glørstad & Røstad 2015:201). Røstad argues in this volume that their charisma was created through their history as heirlooms, as well as through their individual biographies connecting them to ancestors, heroes or Gods.

The large and costly brooches, some of them over 30 cm long, are clearly not made for daily use. According to Weber, the power of charisma grows in situations lifted out of daily life. The charismatic leader arises in times of distress, in extraordinary situations (Weber 1968b:18). When life falls back to normal, the best way for the charismatic leader to survive is by creating traditions, says Weber (1968a:1121–1122). Objects with lineage charisma offer a form of tradition that is transferable and suitable for worship. Through the creation of traditions of worship, the objects are lifted out of daily life. The function of tradition and the importance of preserving traditions involving heirlooms in Roman and Early Medieval Scandinavia have been highlighted by several scholars (Jones 2007).

THE CHARISMA OF ROLE: DRESSED IN POWER

The objectified charisma of a role or institution is well known (Weber 1968a:1136). A royal crown or the bishop's mitre have the ability to evoke awe. This depersonalized type of charisma is in its nature transferable. The objects are designed to bear the power of the group.

Examples of garments designed to evoke awe for roles and institutions are to be found in both written and archaeological sources throughout the Middle Ages. A particularly strongly regulated system of clothing of this kind was developed in Byzants in the 10th century. Through the Book of Ceremonies, we get to know in detail which shape, silk quality and patterns are to be used in ceremonies for different employees at the Great Office of the Emperor and in the Imperial Chamber (Piltz 1997:44; Vedeler 2014:97–101). Silk fabrics served as an important basis for power for Byzantine rulers, and one of the roles of ceremonial dress in 10th century Byzantium was to express a God-given order (Morris 2003:254). Through differentiation in the quality, color and pattern of silk, the Byzantine rulers controlled a hierarchy of awe-evoking objects. The tactile quality, all the materiality absorbable through human senses, is strictly regulated into objects that carry the charisma of a particular role. When the emperor dressed in his purple silk depicting a striding lion, an imitation of the

Divine Creator, the garment created a strong association to God's act of creation and to the written word:

> ***And I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand, and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah***
>
> ***Isaiah 22:21***

The unspoken signals of power dressing that are sensed, sometimes less consciously, have the potential of endowing such garments with great propagandistic value. In line with Terrence Turner and Jane Burns (Burns 2014), Ingrid Lunnan Nødseth argues that such unconsciously perceived sensory aspects of clothing should be seen as a 'social skin'. Through this concept, she reveals a more complex understanding of the relations between dress, power, and charisma in her paper 'The Linköping Mitre: Ecclesiastical textiles and episcopal identity'. She argues that this sensory or somatic aspect of clothing and how it communicates meaning, is particularly relevant for ecclesiastical vestments.

TRANSFERABLE POWER AND PHYSICAL TOUCH: FROM FLESH TO WRAPPING

When taking on a 'social skin', the bishop is given new power through meaningful clothing. The transaction of charisma however, can also go the other way, from the body of a charismatic leader onto an object, the charisma transferred from its human source to an objectified representative.

The belief that some body parts carry personal properties is widespread (Hallpike 1979:101). Hair, nails, and other parts of a dead body become potentially important because these things can give access to the dead person's qualities and skills (Douglas 1996). Parts of the charismatic leader's physical body can, in this view, maintain a personal charisma even after the person has died. This sentiment is expressed in the cult of relics worldwide and is the basis for the understanding of a relic as an object (Sharf 1999:78). Medieval relics must therefore be seen not just as representatives of the respective saints, they *are* the saints. Through the relics, the saints are present with their charisma.

Figure 3. The Holy robe of Trier on display at The Trier Dom Cathedral under an annuary ten-day religious feast in 2013. Photo: Stephani Schafer, PD Commons.

The charisma of the saint is not, however, only present in parts of the body. There are also examples of artefacts that are regarded as bearers of charisma only because they have had a physical relationship with a charismatic leader. Some of the relics of the Catholic Church are powerful examples of this. A robe, a shroud or a tunic that has been used by a saint can be elevated to a position of worship if the personal charisma has been strong. The charisma 'rubs off' on the object, which bears elements of the person's abilities. The Catholic Church traditionally speaks about three types of relics, ranked by importance. Relics of the first class are the saint's body or parts of the body, such as a leg or a finger. This first category also includes the tools of Christ's suffering, like the nails and cross. Relics of the second class are the clothes and objects that the saint carried or used in his or her lifetime. But there is also a last class of so-called *brandea* or relics of touch. The definition of these is as follows: 'Relics of the third class consist of everything that has touched a relic of the first class' (The Catholic Church in Norway: http://www.katolsk.no/tro/tema/helgener/artikler/relikvier_peo).

Some of the most famous relics of the first and second classes are attached to the story of the life of Christ. The Holy Robe of Trier is a relic that has been venerated from at least the 12th century up to present time. According to legend, Helena, mother of Constantine the

Figure 4. Visitors trying to get a glimpse of The Holy robe of Trier, locked up in a special room dedicated to the relic in August 2015.
Photo: © Marianne Vedeler, Museum of Cultural History, UiO.

Great, brought the seamless robe of Christ to Trier in the 4th century (Lauchert 1913; Nickell 2007). The Bible tells us that after they had crucified Jesus, four soldiers took his garments and divided them among themselves.

> ***Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also [his] coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, 'Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, "They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots"'.***
>
> ***John 19:23–24***

The Holy Robe of Trier is now kept in a reliquary inside a special room dedicated to the relic in the the High Cathedral of Saint Peter in Trier. An annual ten day religious feast is dedicated to celebrating the Holy Robe. The physical touch of the body of Christ at a critical moment has literally transferred some of his personal charisma to the robe.

Physical closeness between a charismatic leader and her followers is an important instrument for strengthening mental ties. Through physical touch, for example the leader's hand on a follower's head or shoulder, the charisma becomes palpable and the bond between the leader and the follower is strengthened (Immergut & Kosut 2014). The same mechanism of bonding through physical touch is active in the meeting between charismatic objects and their admirers and worshipers (Srinivas 2012; Wingfield 2010). When the mental bond strengthens through physical nearness, the importance of the object grows.

The physical contact of the charismatic leader, with the charismatic object and its followers is important. But it is equally important to control the physical distance. By lifting the charismatic object out of daily life through tradition, the object becomes elevated (Eisenstadt 1968:52). Restricted access to a charismatic object gives the object an aura of elevation and solemnity.

The Holy Robe of Trier is a good example. It is now kept in a closed reliquary inside a special room dedicated to the relic. There is no open entrance to the room, and it is not possible to see the robe when visiting the church except for one single occasion each year. During an annual religious festival, the Holy Robe is put on display and seen by thousands of pilgrims and tourists.

Relics of the third class in the Catholic concept of relics, consist of items that have been in contact with a more powerful relic of the first class. In her paper 'Tracing Charisma: An "Anglo-Saxon workbox" from an early Viking Age burial in Norway, its Scandinavian counterparts and European context', Zanette T. Glørstad presents a group of objects that might have been perceived according to this concept, yet outside the religious sphere of Catholicism. In this case, the cosmological concept of relics goes beyond religion, spreading from Christian Europe to heathen Scandinavia in the early Middle Ages through close cultural and economic contact.

These are objects 'borrowing' charismatic power from other, more powerful objects. The concept implies that relics of the first class are capable of transferring some of their charisma to another object through physical contact.

At some point, objects related to holy persons stop being relics and become simply tokens or souvenirs. But where is the boundary? Pilgrim badges are

an interesting group of objects on the outskirts of the charismatic sphere. Are they to be seen as merely 'tokens' or symbols of a past journey, or do they represent a group of objects carrying charismatic power? In her paper 'Medieval Pilgrim Badges: Souvenirs or valuable charismatic objects?', Margrete F. Simonsen looks deeper into the custom of pilgrim badges. She argues that these objects represent valuable amulets and icons that people care for throughout their lives.

BUT IS THE POWER OF CHARISMATIC OBJECTS ALWAYS TRANSFERABLE?

A special feature of all charismatic objects, according to Weber and Spencer, is that their power is transferable (Spencer 1973:341–432; Weber 1968a:1135). By controlling the object, you also control its power. Objects can be handed over from person to person, if the transaction follows given rules. This gives the charismatic objects an extra dimension and makes them especially attractive as tools of power and control. We argue that this is the case for objects like the bishop's mitre. The great ornamental bow brooches could also be a good example, their power being transferred through time according to strict rules relating to who had the right to use them. Røstad points out in her article that by transferring the same material object, tied to unchanged or only slightly changed legends, it is possible to create an illusion of permanence. Time changes but power remains. But is objectified charisma always transferable?

In his article 'The Death of Serpent-head Rings: Ritual destruction of elite insignia from the Roman Period' in this volume, Håkon Reiersen offers examples of objects that were most probably perceived as containing non-transferable personal charisma. He presents a small group of serpent-head rings from the 3rd century that have been deliberately destroyed before they were deposited. The destruction of serpent-head rings seems to have been a ritual practice shared within a regional network of elites in western Norway. It is reasonable to assume that the charismatic trait then would be considered destroyed together with the physical object. Reiersen argues that if the serpent rings were used as relation binders in person-dependent alliances, their power might have been related to that specific personal bond.

Relationship binders might also have existed between humans and animals in the Viking Period. Lotte Hedeager has emphasized the importance of animals in pre-Christian cosmology. In contrast to the Christian perception of man as superior to beasts, the border between humans and animals was fluid (Hedeager 2011:81). A group of objects that might have been used as relation binders in pre-Christian Scandinavia, is the varied group of horse equipment found in graves. In her paper 'Transformative Theft of Past and Present: The human-horse bond reflected in the biography of the Viking Period Gausel bridle', Kristin Armstrong Oma points to the important role horses played in everyday life, as well as in the sphere of mythology and religious practice. She proposes that horse equipment manifested and formed human-horse relationships, and that horses should ultimately be seen as a companion with the ability to act, emote and perform magic in human society.

In addition to the serpent-head rings from the Roman Period, there are also deliberately destroyed objects dating to the Viking Age. In her paper 'Charisma, Violence and Weapons: The broken swords of the Vikings' in this volume, Hanne L. Aannestad points out that a significant number of swords dating to the Viking Age have been deliberately destroyed before they were deposited in graves. She argues that the bending, twisting and destruction of a great number of swords in Viking Age Scandinavia should be seen not only as the destruction of individual charismatic power, but as an expression of a more general idea of charismatic swords. The destruction of charismatic objects could then have served as a way of preparing them for use in the afterlife, a form of *rites des passage*, so that the rightful owner could continue to use their power in the world of the dead, thus ensuring a continued alliance.

Objects that seem to act as relationship binders between man and man, horse and man, as well as objects attached to a single person, are all to be found in graves dating to the pre-Christian period. The variety in the ways the objects are treated, shows that not all of these had charismatic power that was perceived as transferable. However, they also demonstrate the complexity of objects as charismatic actors.

Figure 5. Crucifix from Røldal Church in Norway, dating to the mid-13th century. The crucifix is believed to preform healing miracles through mysterious sweat at Midsummer's Eve. Photo: © Iver Schonhovd, Riksantikvaren.

MUST THE CHARISMA BE DEPERSONALIZED TO EXIST IN AN OBJECT?

One of Weber's arguments for the existence of objectified charisma, is that the charismatic power becomes *depersonalized* (Weber 1968a:1136). Said in another way, the objects do not have personal charisma. It is however tempting to see this argument as an outcome of a cosmological concept separating 'dead' things from 'living' humans. There are several examples of objects that were considered to have a personality of their own in the medieval period, in line with Aristotle's and Magnus' ideas of *accidental properties of form* (Wyvkoff 1967:xxxiii).

Some of the most prominent examples of objects able to change reality through their personal charisma are to be found in the religious sphere. Miraculous crucifixes from the Middle Ages are among the most prominent. Such objects were widespread in medieval Europe and are in some cases preserved to this day even outside the Catholic core area; 500 years after the Protestant Reformation should have swept them all away. We have a striking example of this from the small medieval church of Røldal, situated in a mountain pass between eastern and western Norway. The church hosts a crucifix from the mid-13th century (Blindheim 2004:120). The cross of Røldal was believed to perform healing miracles, and the remote location is one of Norway's most important pilgrimages (Blindheim 2004:120; Kielland 1921:21). The story of the divine power of the

cross of Røldal is powerful, concrete, and personal: mysterious sweat with the power to heal sick limbs. Every Midsummer's Eve (June 23) during Mass, sweat appeared on Christ's forehead. The liquid was wiped off with a linen cloth, and then spread solemnly onto the limbs of sick pilgrims who flocked to the crucifix to be healed. (Iversen 2007). The cross of Røldal clearly had the power to change the reality of believing individuals in the Middle Ages. The story of the crucifix from Røldal shows that objects can possess personal charisma. Its personal charisma was not transferable. The object itself holds the power.

This is one of a great many known examples of charismatic objects carrying a collective, religious tale. On one hand, the crucifix is a representative and bearer of the 'larger' collective story of Christ on the cross. On the other hand, the crucifix also embodies a story in which the object itself is the protagonist. The object is, as Chris Wingfield puts it, 'the subject of a myth formation obtaining a form of personal charisma' (Wingfield 2010). The 'small tale' makes this specific crucifix a charismatic object arousing awe, having the ability to change people's lives here and now. The object is personified, and worship is directed towards this object as well as to the cross as a symbol of communication between God and the individual.

EXTENDED BIOGRAPHIES

The biographies or life histories of objects require a transfer of knowledge to remain attached to the object. Pilgrimages to Røldal continued in hiding even after the Reformation in Norway in 1537 but were finally stopped in 1835. Today, the pilgrimage route to Røldal is again active. Several scholars have argued that objects can accumulate an 'extended biography' by existing and moving through time, space and different systems of understanding (Gillings & Pollard 1999:179–180; Joy 2009:541; MacGregor 1999:258). The Røldal crucifix is an example of an object with personal charisma that was given an 'extended biography' by moving through time. The visual appearance, or language of form of these objects, plays an essential role in adding meaning to the object. This does not, however, mean that the original significance remains intact. Elna Siv Kristoffersen's paper in this

volume, 'The Charisma of Extended Biographies and Aesthetics: Migration Period cases', explores how legends and stories attached to prehistoric objects affect our senses. She argues that new layers of meaning, given to objects through time, have the ability to add new charismatic power to the object. Her case study, a Migration Period gold ring, is an example of how an extended biography added in the 19th century gave new meaning and emotional power to a prehistoric object: a significance that was relevant as part of a common cosmology of the time.

MYTHS OF ORIGIN AND ENCHANTMENT

A charismatic object is adored through the relationships, memories and legends attached to it. But there can also exist physical traits and characteristics of the object that evoke admiration and awe. These might include extraordinary handicraft or artistic execution, something we do not fully understand. Then the genesis of the object becomes almost magical.

The fact that valuable objects present themselves shrouded in incomprehensibility and inaccessibility, is precisely the source of their value, argues Alfred Gell (1992:48). This is what he calls the technology of enchantment. For the desire for some special objects is not just a result of the restriction of access to them, he claims. This mechanism works on two levels. It is related to money and availability, but it is also linked to the difficulty we have in understanding the genesis of the objects. These objects were created through a technical process that we do not fully understand and which we therefore are forced to see as almost magical. The perception of the object as magical is a by-product of uncertainty (Gell 1992:49). The attitude of the viewer is thus entirely dependent on her understanding – or rather lack of understanding – of the technical process that created the object.

In a medieval perspective, it would be crucial to know what properties were given the animal, object or human being at the time of creation, to be able to control their power. The myths and histories of their origin explain their magical properties. In the book *Physica*, Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179) explains the medical properties of gemstones by using myths of origin. This is what she has to say about the emerald:

The Emerald (smaragdus) grows in the wee hours of morning at sunrise, when the sun is powerfully placed in its orbit, traversing its route. Then the natural vigour of the earth and grasses is especially lively, the air still cold, the sun hot. The herbs vigorously imbibe vitality, as a lamb sucking milk. The heat of the day is scarcely sufficient to dry that day's vital energy, and it gives nourishment, so the plants become fertile and produce fruit. Therefore, the emerald is powerful against all human weakness and sickness, since the sun readies it, and since all its matter is of the vitality of the air

Throop 1998:138

Figure 6. Finger ring from Oslo (C2274) dating to the 14th century. Copper alloy with emeralds, lapis lazuli and a ruby in the centre. Collection of the Museum of Cultural History, UiO. Photo: © Museum of Cultural History, UIO.

Objects made by nature, carry in this worldview a power given them by God through nature (Vedeler & Kutzke 2015). Objects made by magical creatures were given the same type of power through their magical abilities. There seemed to be no difference between what we now perceive as man-made objects and natural stones. Their charisma or special properties are explained through veiled myths of origin in the same way. It is through these myths that the objects acquire their special ability to awaken awe.

The Norse sagas are filled with myths of origin related to objects created by magic. Some of them are related to swords. In medieval Norse society the sword was an object indicating high male status. It was both expensive and difficult to produce. Making high quality swords demanded special knowledge and training. In the Old Norse legends, it was often dwarves who mastered the art of making swords. In this process, they could also place curses upon the object and literally forge magical properties into the object. A well-known example is to be found in the history of Tyrfing (Aannestad 2015a:54–55).

In the Saga of King Heidrek the Wise, we hear about the creation of a magical sword. The dwarves Dvalin and Durin are forced by King Sigrlami to forge a magical sword decorated with gold. The sword must have the sharpest blade ever made, and it must never rust. And most importantly, it must bring victory to every man carrying it in battle. The king got his sword, with all its powerful magic forged into it by the dwarves. But when it was handed over to the king, Dvalin cursed it, and said: 'May your sword, Svafrlami, be the death of a man every time it is drawn, and with it may three of the most hateful deeds be done; may it also bring you your death' (Tolkien 1960:68).[1]

The magical properties of the sword Tyrfing occur at the moment of creation, and the curse is then laid upon it by its creators. The secret and silent knowledge of the forging dwarves is crucial. But the attitude of the viewer is entirely dependent on her understanding of how the sword was created in the myth, and how it got its power. It could be argued that the enchantment may lie in knowledge of the myth, as well as in a lack of technological insight.

1 sverð Þitt, Svarfrlami, verði manns bani hvárt sinn er brugðit er, ok með Því sé unnin Þrjú niðingsverk in mestu; Þat verði ok Þinn bani (Tolkien 1960, 67).

SUMMARIZED: THE NARRATIVE OF CHARISMA

The term charismatic objects could be a useful tool to describe and differentiate objects that have the ability to arouse awe within a given cosmological frame. By looking at various forms of objects, we argue that objectified charisma has occurred not only as a power transferred from the classical charismatic leader to objects, but also as a power believed to arise from within the objects themselves. According to Weber, the objectified form of charisma occurs in periods or cultures when the attitude towards awe is conceptualized within a system of fate (Spencer 1973:341). The papers in this book show a variety of charismatic objects from Roman times to the Middle Ages, examples of objects produced within a cosmology where objects are considered to have properties animated by a holy or magical power. Despite the religious transformation from paganism to Christianity, the belief in an animated cosmos remained. There are many examples of objects with a perceived charismatic energy that exert a hushed but strong control over emotions. These objects are carriers of collective narratives that help to stabilize, maintain and create community and relationships of power.

According to Weber, an important characteristic of charismatic objects is that their power is transferable from one person or group to another, and this therefore makes it possible to control and strengthen feelings for a long time, even through generations. There are several examples of this from the Medieval Period. But in a cosmos where objects are considered to be animated, there might also be cases where the force is not transferable but remains only within the object.

The collective stories that are associated with charismatic objects are important, and myths about their origins often help to reinforce their power. These narrative characteristics are closely intertwined with the object's materiality. Handicraft, design and the language of form, as well as the materials used are essential elements in the object's charisma and in the stories that are told about them. In the end, these things affect their power as individual actors in an animated cosmos.

Figure 7. A Sword with silver and gold inlay from Langeid in Norway, dating to the 10th century. The sword is decorated with an unreadable inscription as well as a small hand holding a cross, a symbol of God's blessing. The sword (C58882) was found during an archaeological excavation of a heathen grave mound in 2011. Photo: © Ellen C. Holte, Museum of Cultural History, UiO.

CHAPTER 2

THE DEATH OF SERPENT-HEAD RINGS

RITUAL DESTRUCTION OF ELITE INSIGNIA FROM THE ROMAN PERIOD

Håkon Reiersen

Gold arm and finger rings with serpent-head terminals were among the most charismatic objects of the Roman Period in Scandinavia. Through their characteristic and symbol-laden design, they acted as the insignia of the uppermost elites, and as visual markers of elite alliances. The rings were objects intimately related to their powerful carriers and had to follow them in their shared graves. During burial rituals, the rings were treated in the same manner as the dead body; they were either burnt or remained unburnt. Typically, Danish and Swedish graves containing serpent-head rings were neatly arranged inhumation graves with unharmed rings. On the other hand, three western Norwegian graves with such rings instead reflect chaotic cremation rituals where the rings were cut and burnt. In order to understand better how and why these rings were damaged, the graves with fragmented serpent-head rings have been examined. In western Norway, the destruction of serpent-head rings seems to have been a ritual practice shared within a regional network of elites.

INTRODUCTION

When dealing with objects produced and used in Scandinavia in the 3rd century AD, rings of gold with serpent-head terminals clearly stand out as some of the most spectacular and impressive. In these rings, the massive gold material has been skillfully forced into complex and highly expressive designs. The rings are very aesthetic and symbol-laden objects that must have provoked awe among contemporary viewers. Serpent-head arm rings occur in some of the most richly furnished graves in Scandinavia, Finland and Germany, confirming their intimate relation to the uppermost elites (Figure 8).

Most of the graves containing serpent-head rings are neatly arranged inhumation graves with unharmed rings, with several well-known graves from Himlingøje in Zealand, Denmark (Figure 9).

However, some of the graves contain serpent-head rings that had been brutally destroyed before their deposition. This was the case with the two serpent-head arm rings from Innbjoa and Hove in Rogaland county, southwestern Norway. Both rings had been damaged by cutting and burning and they were found in unordered cremation graves. As both graves were unearthed

Figure 9. The neatly arranged inhumation grave Himlingøje 1949-2, Zealand, Denmark, with two arm rings and two finger rings of serpent-head type around the deceased woman's wrists and fingers. Photo: Roberto Fortuna / Kira Ursem © The National Museum, Denmark. Licence: CC BY-SA 2.0.

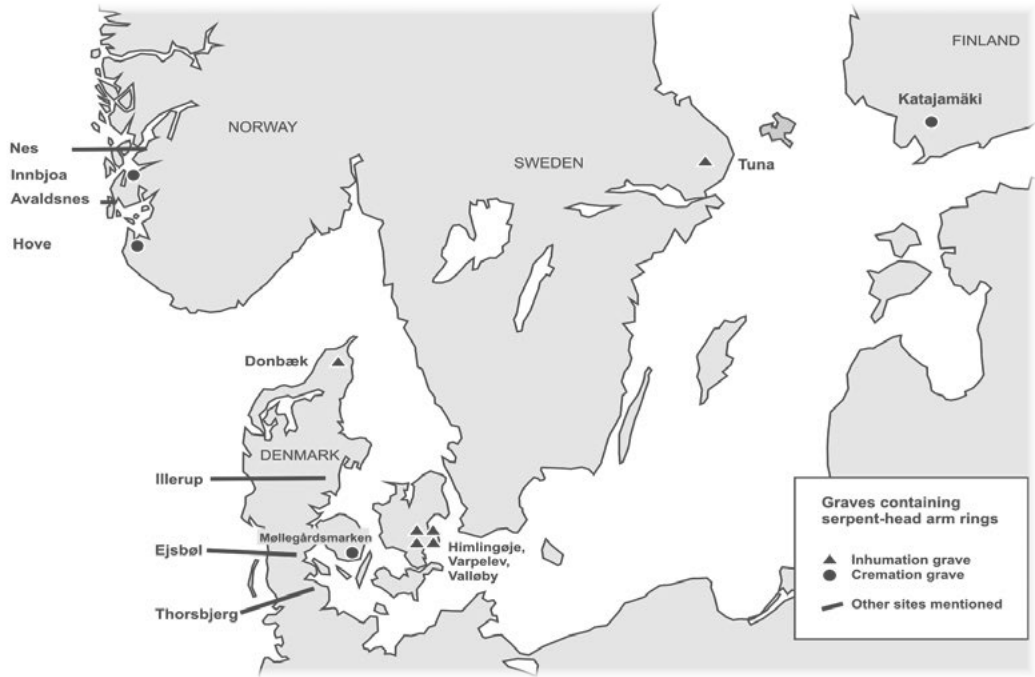


Figure 8. Location of inhumation and cremation graves in Scandinavia containing serpent-head arm rings, as well as other sites mentioned. Two inhumation graves from Emmersleben and Flurstedt, central Germany are unmapped (cf. Schmidt and Bemmann 2008, pl. 12 no. 25, pl. 206 no. 148). Illustration: H. Reiersen.

by amateurs in the 19th century, the burials have previously been considered as uncertain finds and have been given little attention in discussions concerning this ring type (e.g. Hagberg 1967:17; Hansen 2004:150–151). In previous work, I have argued that the contexts of the Innbjoa and Hove graves are less problematic than previously assumed (Reiersen 2012, 2013). Rather than being uninteresting finds, these graves have a special research value through their association with ritually damaged serpent-head rings. At first, the destruction of these status-laden and charismatic objects seems highly irrational, and indeed troublesome for museum curators wanting to display whole objects. Through an examination of the find contexts of these graves and a few other parallels from graves and war booty sacrifices, this article seeks to understand why the serpent-head rings were destroyed.

SERPENT-HEAD RINGS AS ELITE INSIGNIA

Among the arm and finger rings characterized as rings with serpent-head terminals, there is great individual variation. The arm rings are normally categorized in Hildebrand (1874) types A–C, ranging from naturalistic to more stylized terminals. Finger rings with naturalistic terminals are categorized as Beckmann (1969) type 39 a–c. Most of the rings have plates with terminals in the form of animal heads, pear-shaped and sometimes with eyes, resembling the heads of serpents or ravens. Although both the serpent and raven interpretations could offer interesting symbolic meanings, the spiral shape of the rings and the plate decoration often with serpent-skin patterns support the traditional interpretation as serpents (Fernstål 2004:183–184). Similar heads also occur on high-status weapon gear, reflecting a special design associated with the uppermost elites (Petersen 2003:figures 5–8). It is possible that the serpent motif alluded to the role of the serpent as a liminal shape shifter (Fernstål 2004:197–200; cf. Hedeager 2011:85–86; Jensen 2013:213–214). These rather standardized zoomorphic designs might be viewed as early predecessors to the Scandinavian animal style.

In the Stevns region, southeastern Zealand, Hansen *et al.* (1995) identified a network of centers in the late Roman Period. Based on material from richly furnished graves, certain gold rings have been interpreted as the

insignia of elites located at allied centers of various ranks in phases C1–C2 (mid-2nd–3rd centuries AD). The richest burials were characterized by Kolben type rings, and arm and finger rings of serpent-head types (Ethelberg *et al.* 2000:148; Hansen *et al.* 1995). Himlingøje was the dominant center and controlled and distributed at least some of these special elite insignia to its dependent allies in and outside the region (Figures 8–9). The large rings were carried on the body, visible to all who saw its carrier, thereby acting as well-known markers of elite alliances.

It has been argued that a similar hierarchy of centers inspired by the Himlingøje model existed in southwestern Norway (Reiersen 2011, 2017). This is the only region in Norway with Kolben type rings and serpent-head arm rings occurring together with large finger rings of Beckmann type 18. Despite the lack of serpent-head terminals, Bøe (1926:74) and Hansen *et al.* (1995) considered this type of finger ring to be closely related to the serpent-head type. This somewhat distinct ring type seems to have played a special role in a southwestern Norwegian alliance network.

RITUAL DESTRUCTION THROUGH CUTTING AND BURNING

To understand why some of the serpent-head rings were cut and burnt, we might first consider other relevant instances of ritual destruction related to cutting and melting. Deliberate object fragmentation, often through acts of ritual destruction, is a well-known phenomenon in prehistory (Chapman 2000, 2012, Chapman & Gaydarska 2007; Grinsell 1961, 1973). In Norwegian Iron Age graves, the ritual burning and bending of weapons was a common practice in male cremation graves from the Roman Period to the Viking Period (Shetelig 1912:107, 1925:135; Solberg 2000:76, cf. Aannestad this volume). Similarly, weapons were bent or cut in Roman Period war booty sacrifices in Denmark (Ilkjær 2002). Although perhaps somewhat simplistic, Grinsell (1961:477) gives a general explanation for the ritual destruction: 'Swords and other symbols of authority and valor may have been bent or broken because of their close association with the deceased, and from an idea that it would be improper to use them again.' Deliberate destruction of rings is also documented in the late Medieval Period in Scandinavia,

namely the cutting of signet rings after the death of their carrier (Troels-Lund 1914:306). A more prominent example of this practice is the ceremonial destruction of the signet ring of each pope (Ring of the Fisherman), documented from 1521 (Grinsell 1973:114).

Although gold objects occur relatively often in Norwegian graves from the Roman and Migration Periods (1–550 AD), melted gold is rare (Reiersen 2017:98). While personal belongings were usually burnt on the funeral pyre, this was seldom done with gold (Bøe 1926:80–81). According to Bøe, this indicates that gold was perceived as something more than personal belongings. Melted gold occurs in a few Roman Period graves, with no certain Migration Period instances (Table 1). The only graves with melted gold clearly from the 3rd century are three graves with fragmented serpent-head rings, including one finger ring from Nes. This illustrates the special meaning attributed to these rings. To gain new knowledge of why these rings were destroyed, I will discuss the find context of the serpent-head rings from Nes, Innbjoa and Hove. In addition, I will consider parallels from graves in Katajamäki, Møllegårdsmarken and in the Thorsbjerg war booty sacrifice.

Nes: Cut and burnt and pinned to the ground

We will begin our study of find contexts not with the arm rings but rather with a serpent-head finger ring from Løehaugen at Nes, Kvinnherad in Hordaland county (Reiersen 2017:238–239). This is the only fragmented serpent-head ring in Norway that has been archaeologically excavated. The finger ring is of Beckmann type 39b with three plates. Only one complete plate and part of a second plate are preserved (Figures 10–11).

The ring fragment of 4 grams seems first to have been cut and then melted. A gold drop found in the cairn suggests that the melting happened nearby (Bøe 1926:51, 81 note 1).

Based on the unpublished excavation report and the published account in *Vestnorske graver fra jernalderen*, some reinterpretations have been made of the find context (Figure 12). The excavator H. Shetelig (1912:44–45), noted that an inner cairn was separated from the outer mound by an undisturbed layer of clay. He first thought that this indicated a secondary addition to an original cairn. As all artefacts found were of a late Roman date, he instead concluded that this was solely one burial with objects scattered in the cairn. However, there are

Figure 11. The serpent-head finger ring from Nes (B 5931 a). Only one of three plates is preserved. Photo: Svein Skare © University Museum of Bergen.

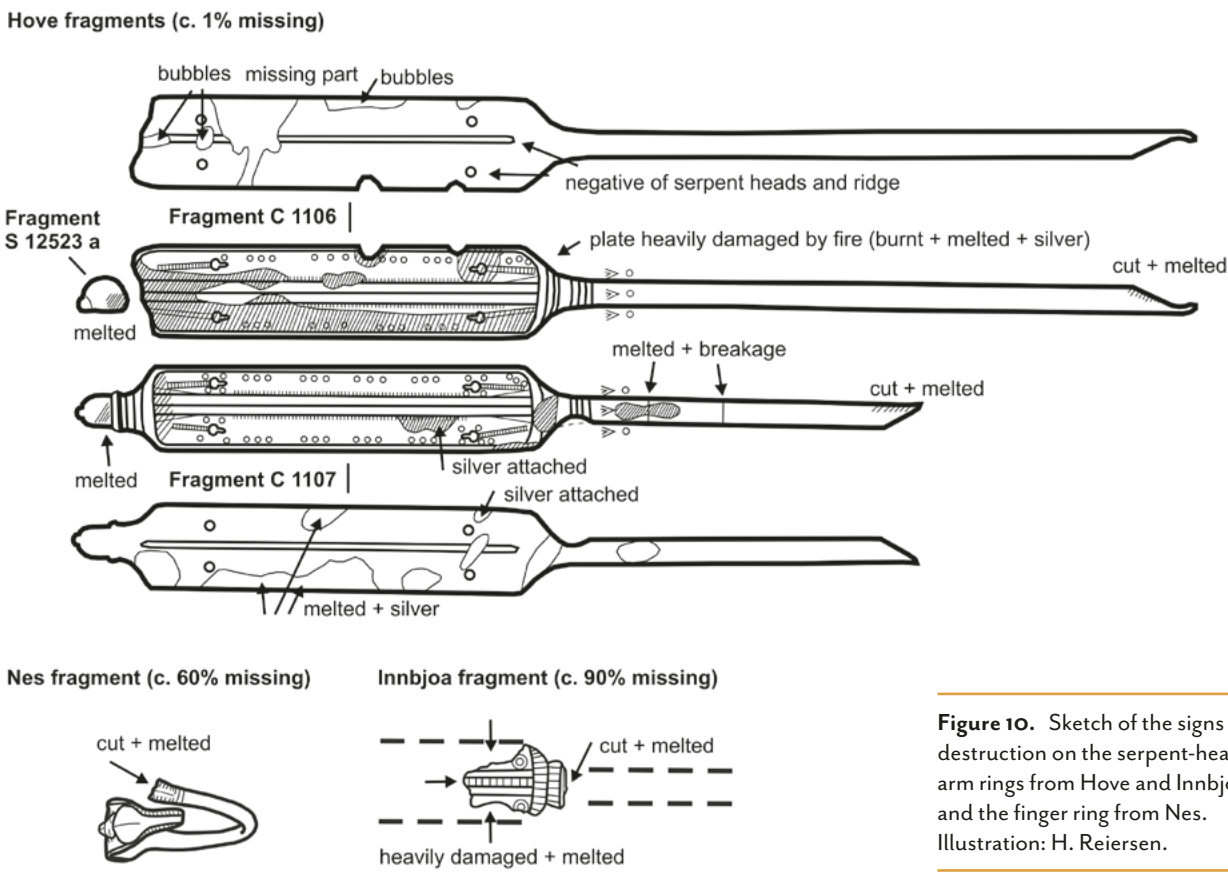


Figure 10. Sketch of the signs of destruction on the serpent-head arm rings from Hove and Innbjoa and the finger ring from Nes. Illustration: H. Reiersen.

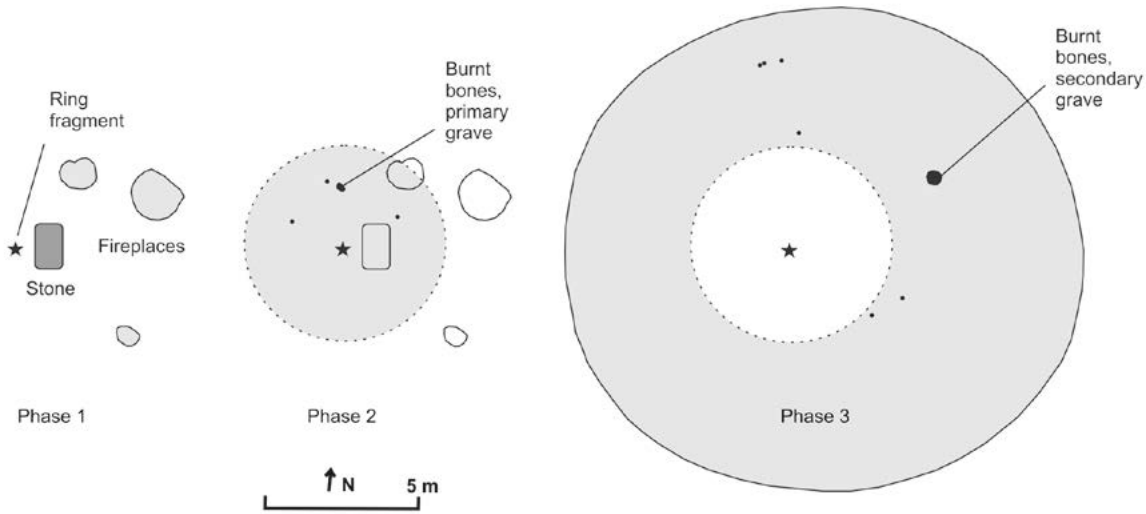


Figure 12. A reinterpretation of three phases in Løehaugen, Nes. Phase 1. Fireplaces and stone associated the burial ritual (C1b). Phase 2. Primary burial (C1b) in a small cairn of stones, sealed off by a clay layer. Phase 3. Secondary burial (C3) in an outer mound of soil and stones. After Reiersen 2017, fig. 7.10 modified after Shetelig 1912, fig. 100.

chronological issues that indicate that Shetelig's first assumption was correct. The presence of both a finger ring dated to phase C1b (Andersson 1993) and sherds (now lost) of a younger bucket-shaped pot (listed in Engevik 2008; Kristoffersen & Magnus 2010) might suggest a primary grave in C1b and a secondary grave from C3. The treatment of the burnt bones varied in the two graves. In the inner cairn, lumps of charcoal with burnt bones were found, whereas the burnt bones from the top of the outer mound were cleansed.

The building of the cairn might be separated into three phases, with phases 1–2 related to the primary grave and phase 3 to the secondary grave (Figure 12).

The unpublished report mentions that a large stone (1.4 x 1 m) was situated near the center of the cairn. Around this stone, there were three fireplaces. Shetelig assumed that the fireplaces were used in rituals on the site prior to the cairn construction. The gold ring fragment was found on the spot which later became the cairn centre. Shetelig (1912:figure 100, h) noted the peculiar *in situ* context of the ring. It was deliberately pinned vertically into the 'sterile' ground. This context makes it plausible that both the fragmentation and the special deposition of the ring at the cairn center were done intentionally. Shetelig did not record the dimensions of the inner cairn. However, from the plan drawing (Shetelig 1912:figure 100), the following objects might also be associated with the primary grave: a simple spindle whorl, a rod of iron, and a curved knife of iron (Shetelig 1912:figure 103), all consistent with a female

grave from the transition between the early and late Roman Period, phase C1b (cf. Andersson 1993).

Hove: Fragments from rituals in an elite settlement

The Hove arm ring was found at Hove in Sandnes in 1843. Although B. Myhre in his Magister thesis from 1964 problematized the find context of the ring (summarized in Myhre 1972), most uncertainties were rejected through an analysis of the original archive material available from 1843 (Reiersen 2013). The arm ring from Hove is of type C. Regarding its design, it might be noted that the 'eyes' of the plate terminal ends are pear-shaped with long bodies behind, resembling four small serpents slithering towards the center of each plate (Figure 10). From a visual analysis of the arm ring fragments, it has been possible to reconstruct the sequence of destruction (Reiersen 2017:97). As the cut marks in the smooth end of the two large ring fragments have a similar angle and size, it is assumed that the arm ring was first cut in two (Figure 10). Both cut marks were melted, indicating that the ring fragments were afterwards burnt. Due to the presence of melted silver on the ring, it seems likely that the ring fragments were on the funeral pyre together with other objects. The silver might stem from a fibula, indicating that the ring fragments were situated on the corpse. There were cracks on burnt areas of the ring, stemming from stress in the metal after bending. This secondary bending done after the burning might have happened during the burial rituals. However, it is just as likely that it was done after the ring was found in 1843 to make the fragments more sellable as two separate rings. During a metal detector survey in 2009, a melted gold fragment was uncovered in the area where the grave was found (Figure 14). By comparison with the arm ring fragments, it is likely that this is the melted-off terminal end of the largest ring half. The three fragments weigh 153.65 grams.

The large cairn excavated at Hove in 1843 included a primary burial from the late Roman Period and a secondary burial from the Viking Period. An initial newspaper report states that on 1 November 1843, a small burial chamber was found, containing an imported Roman vessel of brass (Hemmoor bucket, Eggers (1951) type 58) (Reiersen 2013). In the vessel were burnt bones and two gold rings. The first was a large, undamaged

Figure 13. The two large fragments of the serpent-head arm ring from Hove (C 1106–07), together with a small burnt spiral ring (C 1102) and a large unburnt finger ring Beckmann type 18 (C 1101). Compare also Reiersen 2017, fig. 7.27. Photo: Terje Tveit © Museum of Archaeology, University of Stavanger.

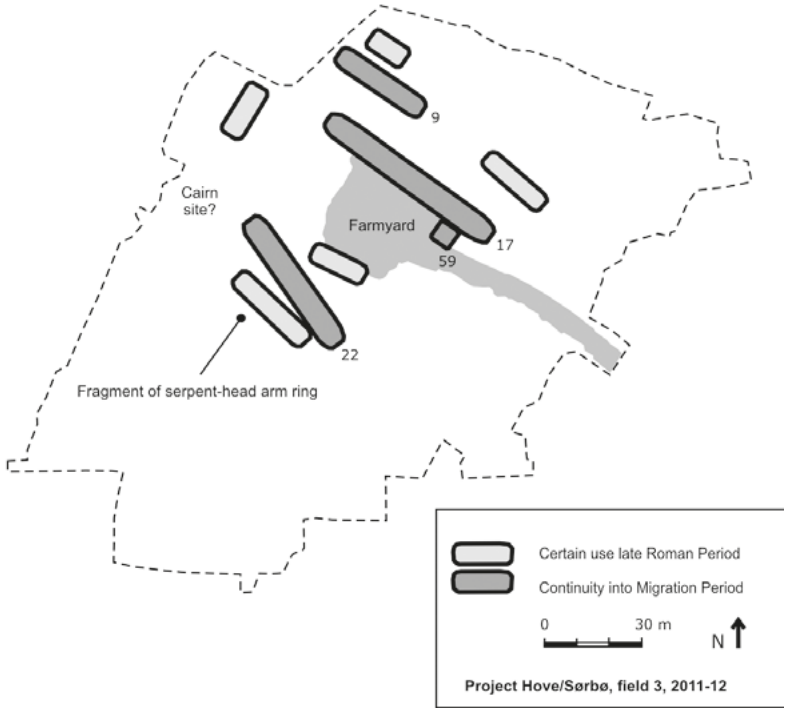


Figure 14. The approximate position of the small ring fragment (S 12523 a) in relation to the late Roman period settlement excavated at Hove/Sørbø, field 3. House 17 was over 60 metres long. Modified after Reiersen 2017, fig. 7.25 based on Bjørdal 2014, figs. 6–7.

finger ring, Beckmann type 18 (Figure 13). The second was a small ring ending in a spiral, burnt and cut on one end. A clay pot (Bøe 1931:figure 247) was standing about 0.5m from the brass vessel and presumably outside the chamber. The letter accompanying one of the arm ring fragments was dated 5 November 1843. At this time, the remaining objects from the cairn had probably been unearthed, including the two arm ring fragments, two spindle whorls, as well as two additional objects from the Viking Period grave. With the Nes burial as a parallel, it seems likely that the arm ring fragments and the spindle whorls were located at another spot in the cairn than the human remains in the brass vessel. The ring fragments might well have been found at the bottom of the cairn. The arm ring, finger ring and brass vessel indicate that the burial happened in phases C1b–C2, and the spindle whorls point towards a female grave.

In 2011–12, excavations were carried out on the farmsteads Hove and Sørbø, revealing traces of an extensive settlement (Figure 14).

This is the area from which the cairn was removed, and its location might be indicated by the negative print of a large cairn, just west of the settlement (Bjørdal 2014:17). Cooking pits encircled the cairn, alongside many flat graves. The small arm ring fragment from 2009 was found south of the assumed cairn location, close to the settlement. The female grave thus seems intimately linked to the settlement. Inside house 17, which was over 60 meters long, a rare, berlock-shaped amber bead was found, contemporary with the grave

Figure 15. The natural mound Hagahaugen at Innbjoa, on which the grave with the serpent-head arm ring was situated. Photo: H. Reiersen.

and belonging to a woman from the same social milieu (Reiersen 2017:figure 7.26). Finally, one important oddity from the female grave should be noted. In contrast to the small, fragmented spiral ring and the arm ring, the large finger ring was undamaged. The finger ring had a broad diameter, presumably fitting a male hand. As we shall see, a similar undamaged ring was found in the Innbjoa grave. Rather than explaining these as double-burials, the pattern could indicate the deposition of funerary gifts.

Innbjoa: Confirming the pattern from Hove

The Innbjoa arm ring is preserved only as a tiny fragment, 2.025g (Reiersen 2017:258–259). Its fragmented state makes certain typology difficult. The preserved part probably stems from one of the ends of the plate, either towards the smooth ring part or an actual terminal (Figure 10). Shetelig (1912:60) considered it to stem from an arm ring of type A or B, and Bøe (1926:52 no. 243) considered it as most likely type B. While the burial cairns covering the Nes and Hove grave have been removed, the natural mound Hagahaugen, where the chamber and cairn enclosing the Innbjoa ring were found, can still be seen in the landscape (Figure 15).

Traces of fireplaces have been reported near the mound, and the ritual destruction might have happened there. A local farmer conducted the initial digging in 1882, and a subsequent excavation was carried out by antiquarian I. Ross in 1883 (Reiersen 2012).

Apart from the arm ring fragment, the grave included a large gold finger ring Beckmann type 18, a Rygh (1885) type 166 bronze whorl, a unique Rygh type 171 silver whorl with decorated gold string, an Almgren (1897) type VII 205 silver fibula, melted bronze fragments, and sherds of two handled pots (Reiersen 2017:figure 7.22). The handled pots reflect an early clay pot type, which might have been imported. Similar pots are known from the north Rogaland district, present also in graves at Gard in Haugesund together with a Rygh type 171 bronze spindle whorl, and at Våråå in Karmøy in combination with a rosette fibula of Zealandish type (Bøe 1931:52–53, figures 54–55, Reiersen 2017:123–124). It has been claimed that sherds of a younger bucket-shaped pot were found in the chamber (see Reiersen 2012). Although the sherds in question are now lost, Shetelig,

in his unpublished notes, described these as stemming from a bucket-shaped pot made of ordinary ceramic. The description indicates that this was not a proper bucket-shaped pot, as these, unlike other ceramic pots, have either asbestos or steatite tempering. The silver fibula, finger ring and spindle whorls point towards a female grave from phase C1b. Like the Hove grave, the finger ring might have been a male ring.

The grave testifies to several ritual practices characteristic of elites in the region. The stone chamber at Innbjoa (3.7 x 1.6 m) has a contemporary parallel in the rich Flaghaug grave at Avaldsnes in Karmøy with very similar dimensions (3.6 x 1.2 m). At Innbjoa, the chamber bottom was covered by a burnt layer, perhaps indicating that the burial was a secondary cremation in an existing chamber. Similarly, the chamber in the Flaghaug mound was also used for secondary burials (Stylegar & Reiersen 2017:564, figure 22.3, burials 2–3). The graves at Avaldsnes and Innbjoa both have finger rings of Beckmann type 18, although the large, unburnt ring at Innbjoa might be interpreted as a male object deposited in a female grave. The arm ring from Innbjoa is preserved only as a tiny fragment; it is the remains of a ring treated in the same manner as the serpent-head rings from Nes and Hove. The combination at Innbjoa and Hove of destroyed serpent-head arm rings and similar large, unburnt finger rings hardly seems coincidental. The man buried at Avaldsnes with a Kolben type neck ring and a Beckmann type 18 finger ring probably had strong ties to the elites at Innbjoa and Hove (Figure 18).

Parallels from Katajamäki and Møllegårdsmarken

Although the three graves from southwestern Norway with ritually destroyed serpent-head rings make up a distinct regional group, the practice was not restricted to this region. The known parallels from graves include a fragmented serpent-head arm ring from a grave in Katajamäki in Salo, Finland and arm ring fragments from the large cremation cemetery at Møllegårdsmarken in Funen, Denmark.

The Katajamäki arm ring (NM 6459:4,13,15,18) had been deliberately broken, with the broadest end of fragment 13 showing traces of melting (Figure 16).

While the fragments number 4, 13 and 15 fit together, fragment 18 does not (pers. comm. L. Söyrinki-Harmo 08.05.12, cf. Europaeus 1914:27–28). The fragments weigh 67 grams and the ring is of type C. The site Katajamäki is situated in the Isokylä region near Salo (Schauman-Lönnqvist 1989, site 19). After initial digging by a farmer, the grave was excavated by A. Europaeus (1914) and the find context is well documented. There were several graves situated close to each other, and the grave in question was the primary grave in burial area 1 (note that NM 6459, listed in Schauman-Lönnqvist 1989: 33–36 includes objects from several graves). The grave site was a low, oval collection of stones (Figure 17). The main concentration of objects and 80 per cent of the burnt bones were found in the southern part of this area, with a fireplace situated just north of this. Partly on and partly around the fireplace, the excavator uncovered fragments of a silver neck ring of eastern Baltic type and fragments of a serpent-head arm ring. Both ring types reflect non-local forms and were probably destroyed at the site. Fragments of the silver ring were situated on the fireplace itself, and while the fireplace was still warm, one large stone was put on top of the fragments, flanked by one similar stone on each side. Among the main concentration of grave furnishings were fibulas, a bronze chain, objects of bronze and iron, a knife, clay pot fragments, and two unharmed bronze arm rings of local type (see Europaeus 1914). Although there were no unequivocal material indicators of gender, the absence of weapons might indicate a female grave. Like the graves from Nes and Hove, the ring fragments were deposited at a spot separate from that of the human remains, indicating the need for a separate 'grave' for the ritually destroyed rings.

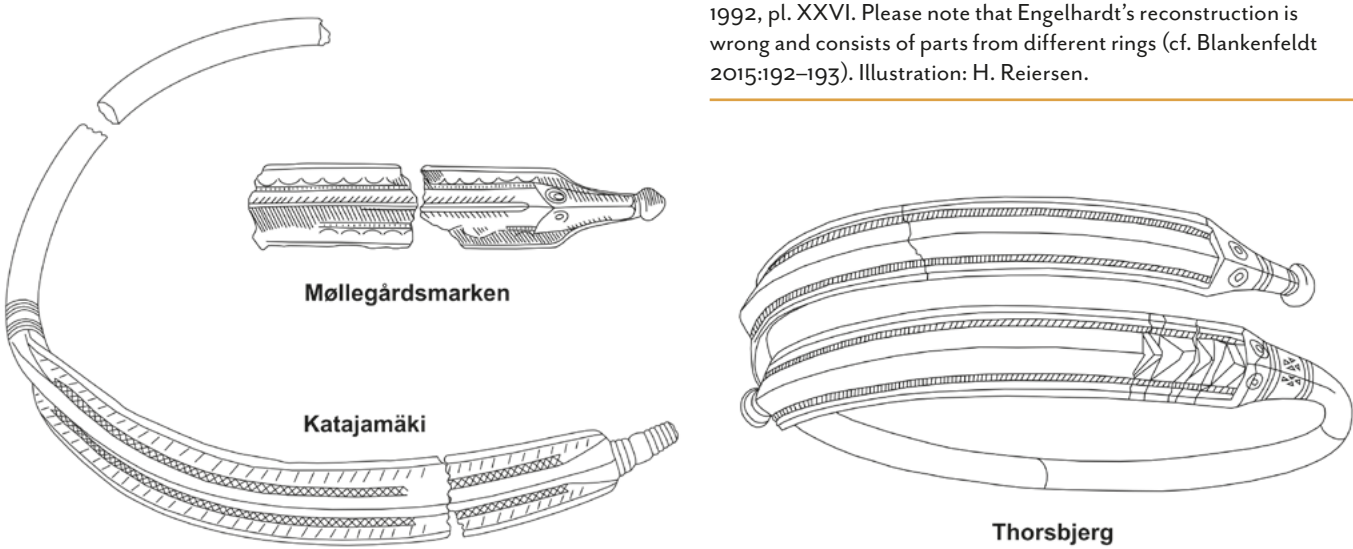


Figure 16. Fragments of serpent-head arm rings from Katajamäki, Finland, Møllegårsmarken, Denmark and Thorsbjerg, Germany. Redrawn after Engelhardt 1869:37, Europeaus 1914, fig. 4, Thrane 1992, pl. XXVI. Please note that Engelhardt's reconstruction is wrong and consists of parts from different rings (cf. Blankenfeldt 2015:192–193). Illustration: H. Reiersen.

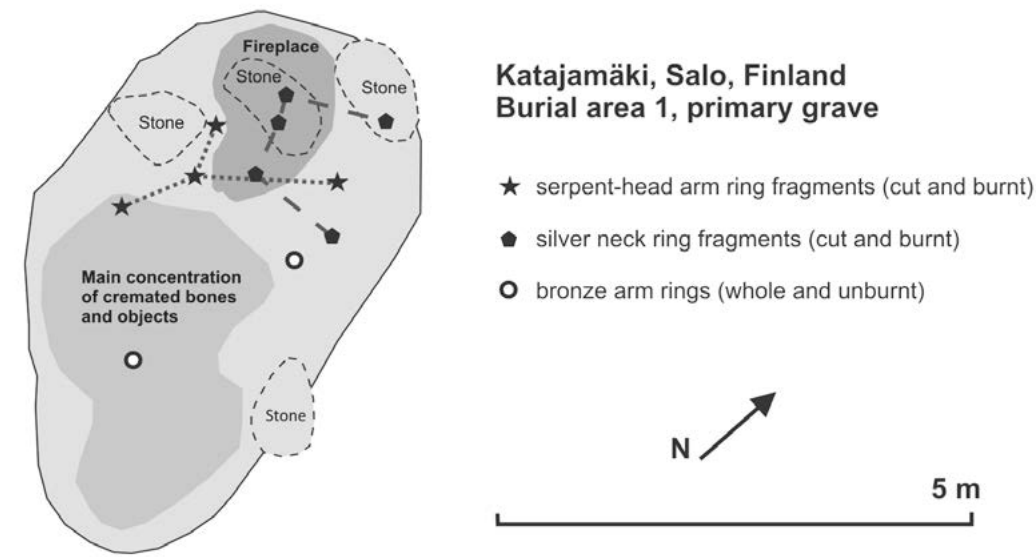


Figure 17. The grave from Katajamäki in Salo, Finland among other things included one fragmented serpent-head arm ring, one fragmented silver neck ring and two undamaged bronze arm rings. Illustration: H. Reiersen simplified after Europaeus 1914:25–26, fig. 1.

The cemetery at Møllegårdsmarken is situated between Gudme and Lundeborg in southeastern Funen. It is the largest early Iron Age cemetery in Scandinavia with some 2500 graves. About 1500 cremation graves stem from the late Roman Period, including 70 graves with Roman imports (Albrechtsen 1971; Jensen 2003:425). The Gudme-Lundeborg area has been interpreted as the most important center in Scandinavia in the Migration Period, taking over the position of the wealth center in Himlingøje from the last part of the Roman Period. The two arm ring fragments from Møllegårdsmarken were found in a metal detector survey of the cemetery area and probably stem from a cremation grave (Figure 16, cf. Thrane 1992, pl. XXVI). Thrane (1992:315) notes that the fragments were violently broken and then exposed to fire, reflecting an extraordinary treatment compared to other metal objects in the cemetery. Together, the Katajamäki and Møllegårdsmarken graves confirm that the destruction of serpent-head rings in graves was linked to destructive cremation rituals and that this special practice was known outside southwestern Norway.

Destruction in the War Booty Sacrifices

In late Roman Period war booty sacrifices, weapon gear was the main target for ritual destruction through cutting or bending. In the war booty sacrifices, the weapons were cut and sunk in water, presumably in a similar manner as their defeated human owners. However, in addition to weapons, status rings were also destroyed. From the Thorsbjerg war booty sacrifice, there are fragments of at least three serpent-head arm rings (Figure 16; Blankenfeldt 2015:192–200, 412–416, pl. 43–45). Blankenfeldt suggests that the Thorsbjerg rings were first straightened out, then placed over a chisel and struck from above (Blankenfeldt 2013:59, 2015: 200, note 366). An interesting parallel to the ring fragments from Thorsbjerg is the two Kolben type arm rings from the Illerup A sacrifice. These had been damaged by deep cut-marks but remained whole (Carnap-Bornheim & Ilkjær 1996:182–184). In the Ejsbøl bog, the special deposition event Ejsbølgård C included several fragments of gold neck rings, occurring together with the weapon gear of a military leader (Anderssen 2003:250–251).

Blankenfeldt (2013:59, 2015:200) writes that traces of destruction occur more frequently and intensely on high-status objects, hereby confirming special mentalities towards these objects. From the Illerup A material, the material on shield bosses has been interpreted as reflecting an army hierarchy, with a few silver shield bosses from army leaders, bronze bosses from officers and many iron bosses from warriors (e.g. Ilkjær 2000). Analyses of the destroyed shield bosses show that the level of destruction is low on the iron bosses, more intensive on the bronze bosses and most intensive on the silver bosses (Nielsen 2013:65–66). Several of the bosses had traces of being hit by the necks of axes.

Finally, it might be noted that human remains from the slain warriors are mostly lacking in war booty sacrifices like Illerup A (cf. Ilkjær 2002:203). The recent excavation of the early Roman Period ritual deposition of human remains in Alken Enge near Illerup (Mollerup *et al.* 2016, Søe *et al.* 2016) could indicate that humans and their equipment were deposited at separate sites. Just like the Thorsbjerg rings, the human bones from the Alken Enge bog were cut up, smashed and thrown into the lake.

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF SERPENT-HEAD RINGS

Throughout this article, fragmented serpent-head rings, their find contexts and some relevant parallels have been considered. Summing up the evidence in search of the cause of their destruction, we might then try to reconstruct the life and death of the examined serpent-head rings. To understand why some of the serpent-head rings were ritually destroyed, we must examine several interconnected variables. Above all, the authority and alliance network the rings were connected to might provide the most important backdrop for the mentalities towards the rings. Since the ring carriers buried in the graves from Nes, Innbjoa, Hove and perhaps also Katajamäki were female elites, the gender of the deceased might have been an important element in the shared life of the carrier and the ring. The acts of ritual destruction of the rings have their parallels in the ritual destruction of weapons and status rings in contemporary war booty sacrifices and graves. In the burial ritual, the association with the cremation ritual seems important, although the cremation ritual did not *per se* make a destruction of gold rings necessary.

Finally, the unburnt male finger rings at Innbjoa and Hove and the inhumation graves from Avaldsnes and in Zealand provide an interesting contrast to graves with fragmented rings. Traces of the practice of destroying serpent-head rings in the funerary rite cluster in south-western Norway binding together the elites in this area in a shared ritual tradition.

ELITE ALLIANCES THROUGH INTERMARRIAGES

The serpent-head rings were not ordinary objects, they were meant to make a clear statement and distinguish their owner. Through a technology of enchantment (Gell 1992), the serpent-head rings were given a symbol-laden design by skilled artisans using Roman gold as the raw material. The Hove arm ring fragments have a total weight of 153.65 grams. The sheer weight of gold invested in such objects provided them with an elevated position in the object hierarchy. At a time when few figurative motifs are known from metal objects in Scandinavia, their special and easily recognizable serpent-head design filled them with charisma. The serpent-head ring was worn on the body, clearly visible to all who saw its carrier. Worn around the arm, they were probably looked upon with special respect and awe, as a powerful object possessing the narratives of interaction between Scandinavian elites. The charisma of the ring and that of the elite person wearing the ring were closely connected. It has even been suggested that the serpent design of the rings signified their transformative power and ability to help the carrier reach an altered state of consciousness (Fernstål 2004:203). The rings might have been perceived as magic and dangerous. It seems hardly coincidental that these rings received a similar treatment as weapons in graves and bog sacrifices.

As mentioned, different researchers have established the interpretation that serpent-head rings were elite insignia and markers of alliance networks. In a seminal work, J. Werner (1980) interpreted Kolben type arm rings and the largest serpent-head arm rings as male military insignia. In later research focussing especially on the ring distribution in Zealand, Holten (1989), Hansen *et al.* (1995), Andersson (1995), Ethelberg *et al.* (2000) and others have pointed out that all serpent-head arm and finger rings acted as symbols of elite alliances in Scandinavia

(Ethelberg *et al.* 2000:194). Due to their vital importance for an upper stratum of Scandinavian elites, socio-politically, the rings were potentially dangerous objects that had to be controlled so that their authority did not fall into the wrong hands. Therefore, the rings were probably person-dependant and non-transferrable objects.

The Innbjoa, Hove and Nes graves all included spindle whorls and were presumably female graves. In Roman Period Scandinavia, the distribution of certain types of female elite insignia probably reflects women engaged in long-distance intermarriages (Przybyła 2011). If the serpent-head arm rings are the result of long-distance alliances, it is possible that both the rings and their female carrier mirror intermarriages with allied elite families in regions outside southwestern Norway. The Innbjoa and Hove graves both contain several objects related to high social status. Without doubt, the unique silver spindle whorl with gold string from Innbjoa belonged to a woman of special importance. Several of the serpent-head ring types have distributional cores indicating their region of origin. According to Ethelberg *et al.* (2000:195), arm rings of type B were especially associated with Zealand. Type C rings have instead been associated mainly with eastern Sweden, where this arm ring type occurs in many hoards and in the Tuna inhumation grave (cf. Fernstål 2004; Hagberg 1967). It is thus possible that the Innbjoa arm ring, probably of type B, originated in Zealand. The type C ring from Hove might perhaps be associated with eastern Sweden. However, the presence of type C rings in Zealand indicates that the Zealand and eastern Sweden regions belonged to the same network.

When the alliance pact was agreed upon, the personification of the alliance was a woman wearing a serpent-head ring. As physical signs of the alliance network, a 'lineage charisma' followed the ring (Vedeler this volume). Although some objects with 'lineage charisma' related to a family or an institution could be handed down and used for generations, this seems not to have been the case with the serpent-head rings related to person-dependant alliances. Both unburnt and burnt rings were placed in the graves presumably of their carriers. The authority of the rings could not be inherited, the alliance they represented only lasted the lifetime of its carrier and had to be renegotiated. When the personification of the alliance pact died, the alliance was broken, and the ring had to die.

THE DEATH AND BURIAL OF THE RINGS

Thus the burial rituals not only reflected the burial of the deceased; it was also necessary to incorporate the ritual death and subsequent burial of the serpent-head ring. It is possible that the cutting of the rings reflected a ritual 'killing' of the rings, whereas the burning was related more to its funeral. In this manner, the ring first had to die before it could join its dead carrier on the pyre. Consequently, the destiny, life and death of the carrier and the ring were parallel and closely intertwined.

The destruction ritual seems to have happened close to the burial site. At Katajamäki, the fireplace was sealed with large stones. The central stone was fire-cracked, as it was put down when the fire was hot and the ring fragments had just been deposited. In Nes, a small melted fragment, three fireplaces and a large stone might be traces of the destruction process at the site where the cairn was built. From the Hove ring fragments, it might be inferred that the ring was first cut before being melted. The silver melted onto the ring could indicate that the cut ring fragments were situated on the body on the funerary pyre, hereby melting together presumably with a silver fibula. As was mentioned, the ring fragments were thereafter probably placed on a separate spot in the cairn. The small ring fragment found in 2009 could either have been overlooked in the 1843 dig or it could originate from the site of the funeral pyre, which must not have been far away from the cairn.

From the association between unharmed arm rings and inhumations, and fragmented arm rings and cremations, the burning of the rings has a direct association with the cremation ritual. This seems to have been the dominant burial type in the late Roman Period in southwestern Norway, in the Salo area around Katajamäki, as well as in the Møllegårdsmarken cemetery. However, in general there seems not to have been a direct link between the cremation ritual and the melting of gold items in contemporary graves, at least not in Norway. Here, the cremation rite only seldom included damage to gold. In the case of the cremation graves with serpent-head arm rings, this was instead the rule. This is seen in the Innbjoa and Hove burials, in the Katajamäki cremation and in the fragments from the Møllegårdsmarken cremation cemetery. The tradition of destroying status rings in this manner is documented also in the serpent-head finger ring from Nes, and in the

Katajamäki grave, the same practice is documented on a destroyed silver neck ring of eastern Baltic type.

The rings were put to rest together with the carrier but at some distance from the skeletal remains. In Nes, the ring fragment was pinned to the ground and formed the core of the cairn, with the burnt bones found some distance to the north. In Hove, the arm ring fragments were not found in the chamber with the cremation vessel but were found elsewhere in the cairn and had thus probably been deposited separately at another place. In Katajamäki, the damaged ring fragments were found around a fireplace just north of the main concentration of cremated bones and the rest of the burial furnishings. Similarly, the Alken Enge deposit of human remains and the lack of human remains in the nearby Illerup A weapons deposition, indicate that objects and carriers were separated in death.

THE REBIRTH OF A REGIONAL ALLIANCE

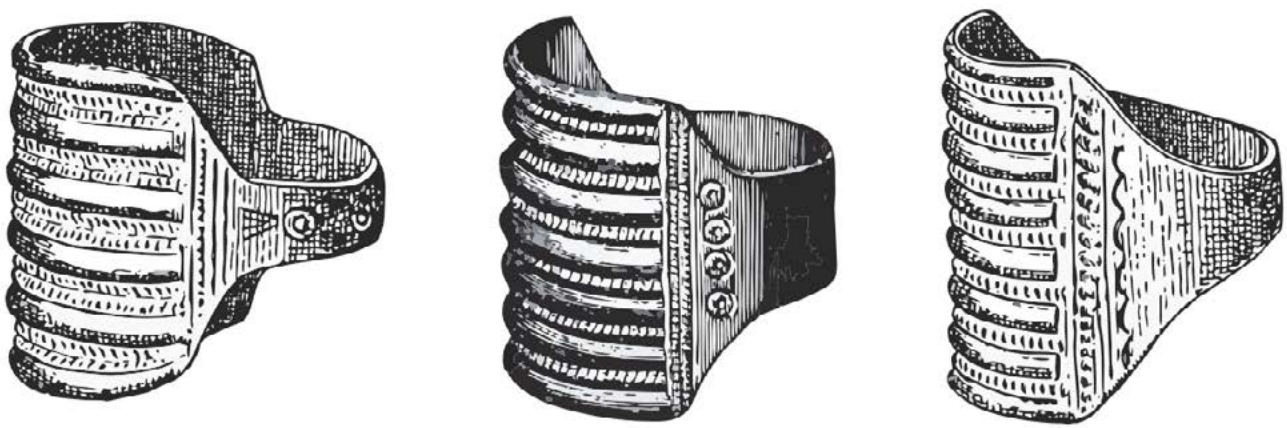
Although the destruction of serpent-head arm rings also occurred at Møllegårdsmarken and Katajamäki, as well as in Thorsbjerg, the concentration of two fragmented arm rings and one fragmented finger ring in southwestern Norway suggests that this ritual tradition was especially important in this region. Unusual details of the burial rituals at Avaldsnes, Hove, Innbjoa and Nes indicate that the people in this network met and had some shared practices. The Avaldsnes and Innbjoa grave chambers had similar, large dimensions. The female graves with serpent-head rings at Hove, Innbjoa and Nes are the only certain phase C1b–C2 graves in Norway where gold items have been melted. At Hove and Innbjoa, the only graves in Norway with serpent-head arm rings, the burnt and cut arm rings were supplemented with unburnt Beckmann type 18 rings. Together, these odd similarities seem hardly coincidental, but are rather a product of close relationships among those controlling these rings. The shared traditions of elite milieus with similar ring types indicate that the alliance networks we sketch from the distribution of ring types reflect actual relationships.

If the destruction of the rings during the funerary rituals reflected a liminal situation where alliances had to be renegotiated, there might have been an instant need for stabilization. This could be the reason why the

undamaged, male finger rings Beckmann type 18 were deposited in the female graves at Innbjoa and Hove. It is possible that these rings indicate that a renegotiation of regional alliances took place among those gathered at the funerary ritual. Similarities with the ring from the rich male grave in Flaghaug at Avaldsnes indicate that these rings were regional alliance rings (Reiersen 2011). The similarity among the Beckmann type 18 rings in the three graves seems to reflect a related origin of production (Figure 18), and they might well have been alliance gifts from the Avaldsnes milieu to their closest subordinates (Reiersen 2017).

As a symbolic funeral gift, they probably showed the witnesses present at the funerary ritual that regional alliances with the Avaldsnes center continued despite the death of a woman related to the overseas alliance.

In contrast to the arm rings from Innbjoa and Hove, the large Kolben type neck ring from Flaghaug at Avaldsnes was not destroyed. This was probably an inhumation grave, as the weapon set present was undamaged (Stylegar & Reiersen 2017). However, the reason why this large status ring was not destroyed might also reflect a greater stability at this time in the powerful center at Avaldsnes. From several subsequent richly furnished graves in this mound, perhaps reflecting a 'dynastic' cemetery (Reiersen 2010), it might be inferred that power dwelled at Avaldsnes also after this grave indicating a permanent power base. The undamaged/damaged rings might thus have signalled a continuation or discontinuation of power and alliances. In this manner, undamaged rings occurring in inhumation graves in Himlingøje, might have mirrored a greater stability of power among elites in the most important centers. Although the rings were deposited in graves and put out of circulation, in contrast to the graves with broken rings, they could reflect a more straightforward continuity of power.



Avaldsnes Hove Innbjoa

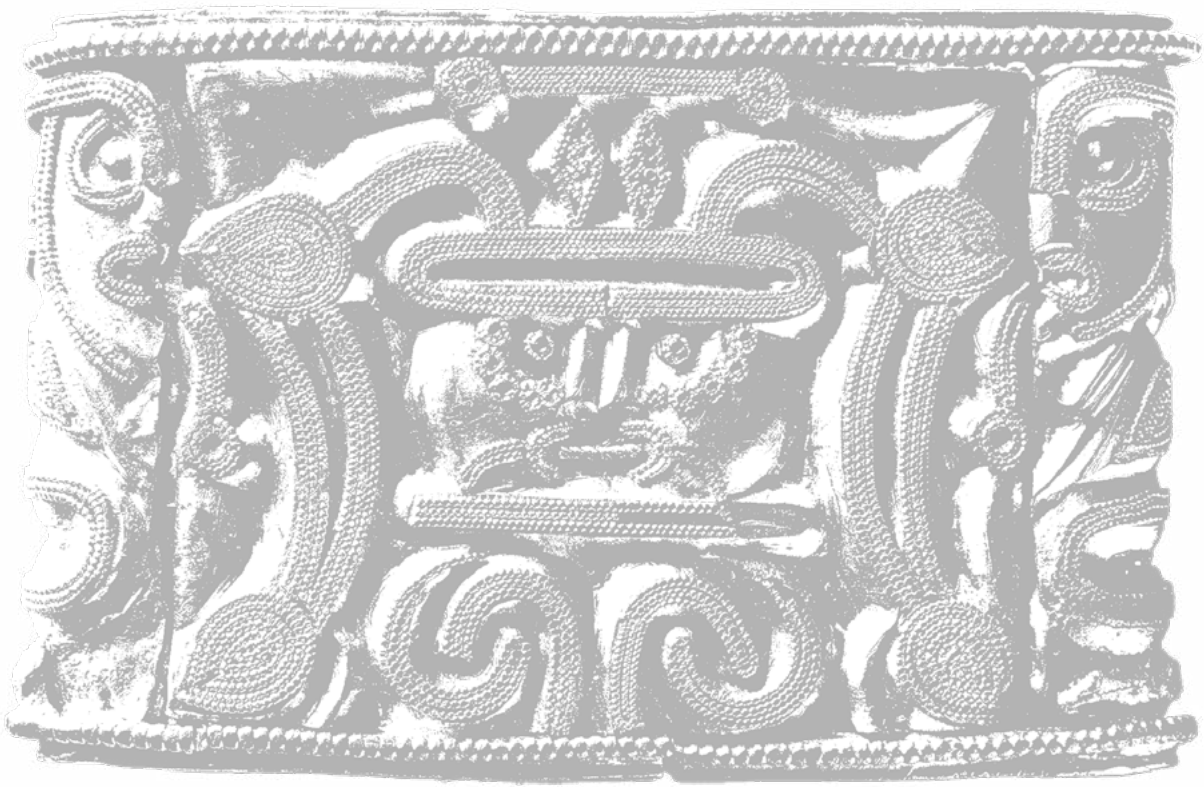
Figure 18. The three finger rings of Beckmann type 18 from Avaldsnes, Hove and Innbjoa. After Rygh 1885, fig. 306, Shetelig 1912, figs. 126, 137.

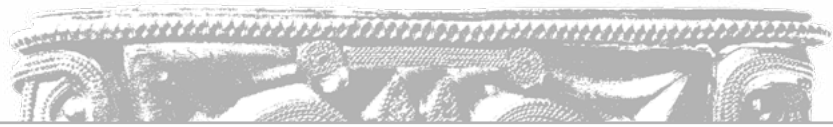
EPILOGUE

The serpent-head arm rings were among the most powerful and charismatic objects of Roman Period Scandinavia. The charisma embedded in these rings was so powerful and dangerous that, upon the death of their carriers, the rings had to be taken out of circulation, and in some cases, the rings were destroyed. For museum curators today, it would seem highly regrettable that these rings were intentionally destroyed and are preserved as mere shadows of their past glory. From the written correspondence regarding the Hove arm ring in 1843, it seems that the fragmentation of this arm ring was also a problem for professor R. Keyser at the University of Oslo (Reiersen 2013:62–64). Due to the damage to the ring, Keyser did not want to pay the price he originally had settled on with the vendor, warning him that he could not promise that the university could buy these fragments at all. Luckily, in the end, the rings and the rest of the grave find were salvaged together with at least some information about the find context. Through a consideration of the find contexts for intentionally destroyed serpent-head rings in southwestern Norway and abroad, I attempt to emphasize the significance of these special elite insignia and their carriers. Looking beyond the sad remains of these once so spectacular rings, new insights have been made regarding the significance of these rings and the mentalities surrounding them throughout Scandinavia. This article suggests that the death of these powerful and charismatic serpent-head rings, which were dangerous and non-transferrable objects, was a direct consequence of person-dependant alliances.

Table 1. List of melted gold in Roman and Migration period graves in Norway. Based on Bøe (1926), with a few later supplements. Dates mainly after Andersson (1993). The frame indicates the discussed serpent-head rings, which are the only melted gold objects dated to phases C1b or C2. After Reiersen 2017, table 5.2.

MUSEUM NO.	FIND SPOT	OBJECT TYPE MELTED	PHASE
C 18011	Lund, Larvik, Vestfold	Gold berlock	B2
C 9260	Bruland, Sandnes, Rogaland	Gold berlock	B2
B 5931	Nes, Kvinnherad, Hordaland	Serpent-head finger ring; Drop of gold	C1b
B 4045	Innbjoa, Vindafjord, Rogaland	Serpent-head arm ring	C1b
C 1106–07, S 12523, C 1102	Hove, Sandnes, Rogaland	Serpent-head arm ring, including small fragment; Small spiral gold ring	C1b–C2
B 11546	Godøy, Giske, Møre og Romsdal	Medallion	C3
B 7634	Grindheim, Etne, Hordaland	Finger ring Beckmann type 11	C3
C 6300	Stadheim, Vik, Sogn og Fjordane	Finger ring Beckmann type 13	C3
C 11562	Reme, Lindesnes, Vest-Agder	Finger ring Beckmann type 12	C
C 3816	Seim, Vik, Sogn og Fjordane	Finger ring Beckmann type 12	C
B 10790	Jangarden, Giske, Møre og Romsdal	Drops of gold	C3
B 6103	Haugland, Kvinnherad, Hordaland	Drop of gold	C
C 52083	Ås, Sande, Vestfold	Drops of gold	C
S 10455	Nordbø, Rennesøy, Rogaland	Gold fragment	C3–D





CHAPTER 3

THE CHARISMA OF EXTENDED BIOGRAPHIES AND AESTHETICS

MIGRATION PERIOD CASES

Elna Siv Kristoffersen

How do legends and stories attached to prehistoric objects affect our senses? And how does this work in combination with aesthetic qualities? Based on a notion that new layers of meaning, through involvement in various contexts, also recent ones, will add charismatic force to an object, my paper explores the regeneration of objects and extended or lengthy biographies. I revisit the Trygsland grave find where a Migration Period gold ring entered into a new life in the early 19th century, a life that continued at least through three generations. The ring was reinterpreted, and accumulated new meanings in the society of a Vest-Agder valley of that time. My discussion then moves on to the gold bracteate from Teig and explores how the aesthetics of visual appearance affects

charismatic force, in combination with its extended biography. The quality and technology of the bracteate then lead to the aesthetics and mystery of 6th century golden scabbard mounts.

Inherent in the biographical approach is the relationship between people and objects, and my intention is to illustrate the idea that it is through such relationships the discussed objects accumulate their biography – and, in consequence, their charismatic force.

CHARISMATIC FORCE

According to Marianne Vedelers' introductory paper, charismatic objects are objects infused with force, a charismatic power with the ability to arouse awe (Vedeler in this volume with references). This power is capable of affecting our senses and is vitally important for the kind of value we attribute to an object. The following text will explore how charismatic force might enter an object through the relations, memories and legends attached to it. I intend to focus upon the biographies of chosen objects and the relationships they are involved in through accumulated layers of history. I will move on to aesthetic qualities inherent in objects connected to ideas of magic and enchantment, which I think increase the effect of the charismatic force by making us susceptible to the narratives embedded in their biographies (Gell 1992; Morphy 2006:302, cf. below and discussions in Kristoffersen e.g. 2000a, 2017).

A prehistoric object has participated in human practices through time. It has been used and observed in various contexts, past and present. When found again, excavated or otherwise, it enters history anew and re-engages in the social relations of other ages. Through reincarnation and recontextualization the object accumulates an extended biography – 'beyond different systems of understanding' (Joy 2009:541 with reference to Gillings & Pollard 1999; MacGregor 1999; Moreland 1999). While monuments accumulate biographies from the

changes in the world around them, portable objects can carry lengthy biographies generated through passing through hands and changing according to variations in spatial contexts (Gillings & Pollard 1999:179–180). Gavin MacGregor states that prehistoric artefacts 'may include a number of resurrections relating to their movement between different ages or different systems of understanding' and stresses the importance of a sensory approach to the study of extended biographies (MacGregor 1999:258).

I have chosen my particular case studies in order to explore how factors of various kinds and degrees, both extended biographies and aesthetics, add charismatic force to an object. As a point of departure, I will revisit the Migration Period grave from Trygsland, Bjelland in the county of Vest-Agder (Kristoffersen 2003) and consider the charismatic effect of the stories and legends attached to the discovery, emphasizing the gold ring and its new life and relationships in the 19th century. To bring the aesthetic effect of visual appearance into the discussion, the text will move on to the large 6th century gold bracteate from Teig, Sauda in the county of Rogaland, where, in addition, the relationship between finder and find adds layers of meaning and charismatic force to the object. The quality and technology of the Teig bracteate lead the discussion into our experience of the aesthetics of 6th century golden scabbard mounts and the mystery of their past context. Finally, although exceeding the scope of the book, a written letter about a stone axe will highlight the issue of the spatial context of one's own farmland.

THE TRYGSLAND CASE

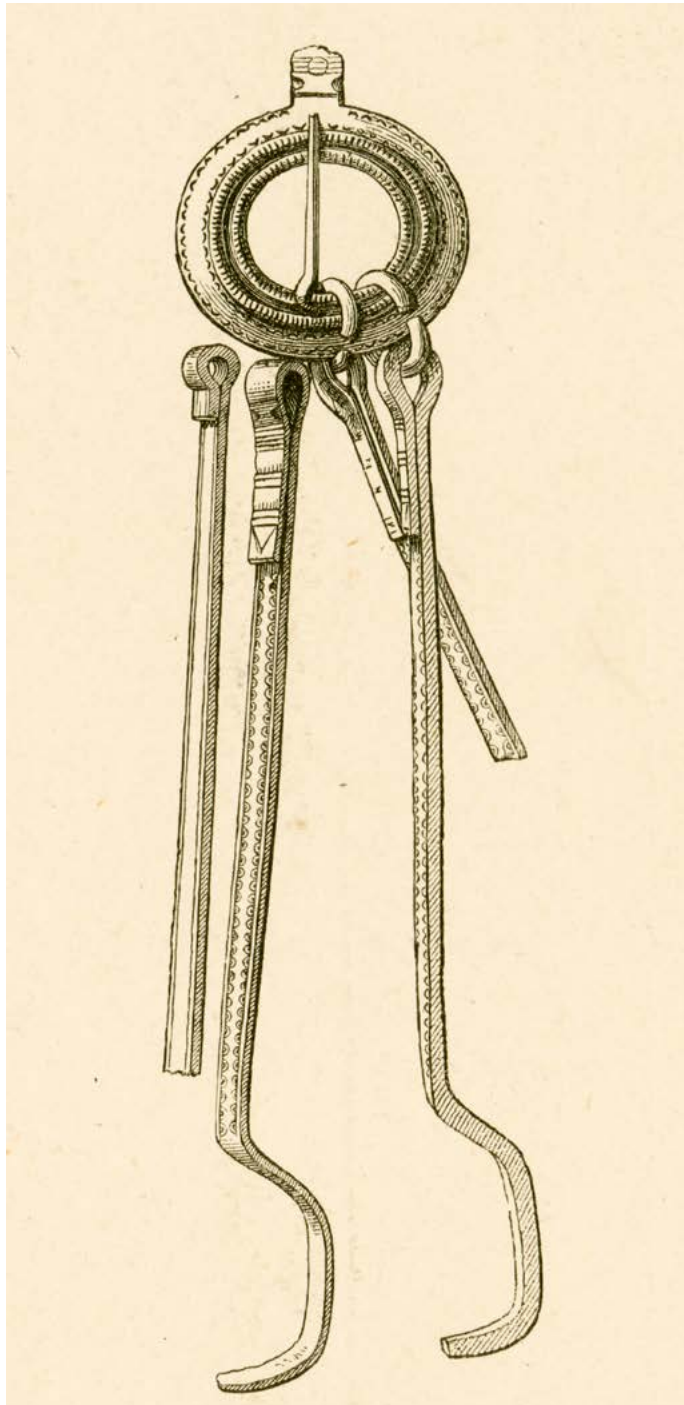
The biography of the Trygsland grave find comprises several pasts. Some of them are closer to our own age and therefore more easily accessible. Through their movement between different ages, the objects from the grave have accumulated qualities that can arouse our senses, not least through the relationships they were involved in during the 19th century. There are three somewhat different accounts of how the grave came to light: one given by the representatives of the church; one preserved in local tradition – as 'the old ones have told it' (Breilid 1965:280, my translation); and one from the National Museum in Copenhagen where the objects ended up and still remain (Undset 1878).

Figure 19. The relief brooch K DCCCXXXII from Trygsland. After Rygh 1885:R257.

I have discussed the grave from Trygsland and the circumstances surrounding it on several occasions (e.g. Kristoffersen 2003), described the objects and analyzed in detail the written sources and the local tradition concerning the 19th century events. Here, I will give a short summary and then reflect upon the charismatic potential embedded in the extended biography of the gold ring from the grave.

The farm Trygsland is located far up in a valley in Vest-Agder, the southernmost county in Norway. One day in June 1821 the farmer Ole Olsen (Ole Peerson is also mentioned as the finder) was digging for sand, when he came upon a large stone grave chamber. The chamber contained a well-equipped Migration Period burial from a past probably no one in this valley knew existed. One can only imagine the impression this encounter must have made on Ole Olsen who thought he knew every inch of the farmland. This is also indicated by the drama expressed in the oral and written stories about the discovery (Undset 1878:12–13). The account from the church, passed on by the finder, reports that the stench was so strong that the farmer was forced to leave and come back to continue the next day. In the accession

Figure 20. Keyring with keys from Trygsland. After Rygh 1885:R163.



list from the museum in Copenhagen, where Christian Jürgen Thomsen himself catalogued the find, we find the following account: The described artefacts 'were found on two fully dressed skeletons that were seated in wooden chairs within the mound. The skeletons and the wooden objects collapsed as a result of the grave opening' (Accession list from the National museum, Annaler 1845, my translation).[2] The brooches, in fact three relief brooches of the larger type (R257–262)[3] (Figure 19), a copper alloy key ring with four keys[4] (Figure 20), two cruciform brooches, two copper alloy dress pins, a clasp with gilded silver buttons, two spindle whorls, ceramic pots and a 'sword' were sent via Kristiansand to Copenhagen (Undset 1878:12).

The gold ring, a payment ring with three windings found on the chest of one of the skeletons, was, however, kept in the valley where it entered into a new lifecycle.

The accounts of the discovery and the whereabouts of the objects from the grave at different stages are

2 Also referred to by Sigvald Undset who saw the find in Copenhagen (Undset 1878, 12-13).

3 The originals of R257 and R261 are from the find.

4 R163 is also from the find.

intricate, not always quite clear, and many people are involved. According to the written sources, a man called Ole Trygsland claimed the ring because the mound was situated on his land (Breilid 1965:302; Kristoffersen 2003:141; Undset 1878:11–13). Ole Trygsland was present at the grave opening, and he was the one who hurried to the priest in Bjelland, a Mr. Fleisher, with information about the find and the circumstances surrounding the discovery. The priest sent the account to the *stiftprost* in Kristiansand, Hans Engelhard, who sent it on to the National Museum in Copenhagen, possibly via the bishop there, Fried(e)rich Christian Carl Hinrich Münter. Somewhat later, on different occasions, the objects from the grave followed the account, and at least one of the objects, a pot, via the mentioned bishop.

The son of Ole Trygsland, with the same name, seems to have inherited the ring. He became district sheriff and a man of importance in the valley. Archaeologist and antiquarian Nicolay Nicolaysen reports in 1882 that he saw the ring, and that it was kept by the district sheriff Ole Trygsland (Nicolaysen 1883:206). Nicolaysen also writes that the ring was bent a little to fit the finger of the district sheriff, and that he wore the ring on his wedding day. Ole Trygsland married Gundvor Torjusdotter from Haugland on Christmas day 1842, and thereafter she wore the ring to church (Breilid 1965:302, 280). The significance of the ring and the new meaning it adopted in the valley might have been affected by a legend about an old king, King Trygve, a relative of Olav Trygvason, who was buried at Trygsland. The grave, when it became known, was believed to be King Trygves grave. Because of the jewelry from the grave, a queen also entered the legend. The relation to this ancient royal pair was preserved in the ring, and probably contributed to its regenerated social significance.

The fact that the ring was kept in its original form and never melted down, gives weight to the importance of the connection between ring, grave and legend. As a payment ring, it was not suitable as a finger ring, and it would have been easy to change it since travelling silver smiths from Setesdalen often visited Bjelland (Breilid 1974:291).

The ring eventually came into the ownership of the daughter of the district sheriff, Anna Trygsland, married Refsnes (Breilid 1965:302). That is the last we hear about the ring in the written sources. However, we know that

in 1998 it actually still existed in the memory of a 94 year old woman, Anna Heggland, who as a child saw the ring at her grandmother's – Anna Refsnes.[5] Therefore, we know that the ring was handed down through three generations during the course of the 19th century, and we know that the grandmother Anna Refsnes had the ring early in the 20th century. After that, there is no information on the whereabouts of the ring.

I have outlined how the objects from the Trygsland grave were brought back to life and entered into various relationships in the 19th century – with local farmers and officials, with men of the church and famous archaeologists, such as Christian Jürgen Thomsen in Copenhagen, Sigvald Undset and Nicolay Nicolaysen here in Norway. Included in the find were stunning objects, such as three gilded relief brooches and a set of bronze keys, both probably the first of their kind ever found. Three of these objects are even among the masterly drawn types in Oluf Ryghs basic book *Norske Oldsager* (Rygh 1885). Nevertheless, it is the lost ring that makes the strongest impression. It is thus, I will argue, not the object itself, which we have never seen, but the stories about its regeneration and its changing relationships with people in the 19th century that infuse this object with charismatic force, aided by the mystery of its disappearance.

So, the Trygsland grave find can be argued to be a clear illustration of the topic of this paper, but also other finds, documented in the files of the museum archives, carry extended biographies generated by their participation in relationships in more recent times. This is the case with the bracteate from Teig.

THE CASE OF THE LARGE BRACTEATE FROM TEIG

The large Teig bracteate was made and deposited in the 6th century, and was found again in 1944 on the Teig farm in Sauda, the county of Rogaland. In the Sauda area, Migration Period objects are scarce, and the bracteate is actually one of the finest ever found. The farmer Paul Austarheim made the discovery as he was working on his land. In a letter dated 13 March 1946, he gave an account

5 Letter dated 20 November 1998 from Astri Skuland, Head of Culture, municipality of Marnardal, who revealed the information.

Figure 21. a–b. The large Teig bracteate, adverse and reverse. Photo: T. Tveit, Museum of Archaeology, University of Stavanger.

of the event. The letter is addressed to the director of the Museum of Archaeology at that time, Jan Petersen.

The Teig bracteate is an object with aesthetic qualities (Figure 21), at least judged from our modern, western eyes, often preoccupied with the visual.

Aesthetics is in the widest sense perceived as the way in which we see (cf. discussion in Coote 2006:282–283). Although stating that 'aesthetic' is a problematic term, it is, according to Howard Morphy (2006:302), 'concerned with how something appeals to the senses' and draws someone's attention. Jeremy Coote prefers the concept 'valued perceptual experience' and argues that all human activity has an aesthetic aspect: 'We are always, though at varying levels of awareness, concerned with the aesthetic qualities of our aural, haptic, kinetic, and visual sensations' (Coote 2006:282). Our 'visual valued experience' will notice the golden shine of the Teig bracteate – it is made of pure gold. We will notice the shimmering effect when changing light brings the relief to life. When up close, we will appreciate the intricate animal style. The strangeness/otherness of the abstract and mysterious language of form will intrigue us. We will admire the well-executed ornaments, their firmness and their exotic beauty. We have seen other

Figure 22. a–b. The small Teig bracteate, adverse and reverse. Photo: T. Tveit, Museum of Archaeology, University of Stavanger.

bracteates, but this one stands out. Filigree on most bracteates is limited to the triangular field beneath the suspension loop. On the Teig bracteate, filigree, of three of four kinds, also doubled and twisted, give form to the elements that constitute the zoomorphic bodies, divide the various panels and encircle the edge. The Teig bracteate is also larger than most: 6.5 cm across with a weight of 19.01g. Our mind will then wander beyond the observable object and seek the skilled craftspeople who made it. We will reflect on the one who wore it, because we do know that someone in the past did wear it. If we are allowed to touch it, we will turn it around and look for wear marks on the reverse. Such wear marks are found on the suspension loop and along the edge – probably from rubbing against a woollen cloth. On closer observation, we also see wear marks on the adverse – on the protruding twisted filigree wires that divide the surface into panels. Then we will seek the one who deposited it in the ground, and we will wonder why.

The Teig bracteate (S7130) is a type D bracteate (Axboe 2007; Carlsen 2001:78; Carlsen & Kristoffersen 2003; Hauck *et al.* 1985–1989:IK 536; Kristoffersen 2010; Pesch 2007:314 –317). One other bracteate (S11049, Figure 22) is almost identical and was found on the same farm and

within the same field, but differs in size and in number of panels; the larger has three and the smaller two.

The suspension loop of the smaller one has a simpler kind of ornamentation, and the wear marks are even more distinct. The ornaments in the two inner panels are identical. In the circular central panel on both bracteates, a bird figure is easily recognizable by an elegant and precisely executed wing. The bird has a head with a beak, a gold bead encircled by filigree as an eye, as well as a bodyline and a leg with a claw. In the second panel, two antithetical heads meet just beneath the triangular field of the suspension loop. Within a single profile with one eye, also marked by a golden bead, a human nose and a curved beak are combined. Their profile is associated with a zoomorphic body with two thighs in addition to a tail. They have one leg each, a hind leg, elegantly executed and meeting in the middle section at the lowest point in the panel, one foot above the other. The third, narrow panel, more like a border, of the larger bracteate contains two zoomorphic figures with outstretched bodies and elegantly executed forelegs. The hind legs are missing, or they are hidden in the interlaced motifs in the lowest part of the panel.

The Teig bracteate was brought back to life in 1944. Although less dramatic and intricate than the regeneration of the objects from the Trygsland grave, it does enter into a turbulent age and into a new relationship. The event is accounted for in the aforementioned letter (Figure 21). Austarheim writes that in the spring of 1944 he discovered an archaeological artefact on Teig farm, where he lives. It is made of gold, and he identifies it as a Migration Period bracteate. He is aware that one is supposed to immediately hand in such objects to the museum. However, as this was during the war – '*på grunn av de herskende usikre tilstander under okkupasjonstiden*' – he decided to keep the bracteate until normal circumstances in the country were reestablished. In the meantime, during the war, he kept it in a safe place, safe from all eventualities – '*på en så forsvarlig måte at det her har vært sikret mot tenkelige eventualiteter*'. Austarheim does not reveal in his letter where he had hidden the bracteate. He now asks whether the museum is willing to receive it – '*Jeg tør nå anmode Dem om å overta funnet for museet*'. What I think touches me in this letter is the profound respect for an archaeological artefact expressed in the text, and the responsibility the finder assumes, so

that no harm shall come to this wonderful gold object through the dangers of war.

Jan Petersen answers him the following day, with a suggestion that Austrheim should send the bracteate by the post – 'in a little box, perhaps a matchbox' (my translation). What Petersen does not know is that the bracteate is far too big for a matchbox. He realizes what an important find this is when it reaches the museum and publishes an article about the bracteate in the yearbook (Petersen 1946). Here he gives a precise description of it and relates it to other bracteates from the area.[6] Petersen refers to the bracteate as '*et usedvanlig vakkert og sjeldent stykke*' (Petersen 1946:46–48). He observes the rare execution of the animal ornaments – as more organic and naturalistic than usual on a D type bracteate. He notices the triangular panel beneath the suspension loop as a rare element, indicating the Teig bracteate is an early specimen of this type. Underscoring the impression of the quality of this bracteate, Alexandra Pesch connects its type of beaded luxury suspension loop with filigree ornaments to the Ålleberg gold collar (Pesch 2015:301–309).

From his letter, we get the impression that Paul Austerheim was not unaffected by his discovery, and that he was struck by the 'valued perceptual experience' similar to the one described above. He might have felt an attachment to the bracteate, found on his land, leading to the responsibility we can infer from his letter. He might also have wondered about the connection of this exotic and beautiful object to his farmland.

Based on the filigree and the way this technique has been used in the ornamentation, Jan Petersen sees a connection between the Teig bracteate and the so-called golden scabbard mounts (Petersen 1946:46). With 15 specimens in Scandinavia, and only found here, they are quite rare. Seven specimens were found within the modern borders of Norway. These mounts are objects that meet all our expectations for an aesthetic object, made of gold by craftspeople who fully mastered the ideals of Migration Period art forms, ideals that, as I have previously argued, find their expression in animal art

6 His conclusions concerning a local craft tradition were strengthened in 1989, when the second Teig bracteate was found. This one was found by Leif Lykke. Together with Paul Austarheim he was able to show that the two bracteates were found quite close to each other and probably belonged to the same deposition.

Figure 23. a–b. The golden scabbard mount from Åmdal.
Photo: K. J. Helgeland, Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo.

objects of high quality (Kristoffersen 2010). We might well conceive the mounts as examples of aesthetic qualities able to bridge time, an argument strengthened by their context, which reveals that they were also valued in the past. They are found only in depositions, alone or together with other gold objects such as payment rings and gold bracteates, and are never found in graves (Bøe 1923:18; Kristoffersen 2000b:181). The mount from Åmdal in Lista in the county of Vest-Agder (C25077) (Figure 23) is found in combination with two payment rings in an area 'not larger than a hand' – '*ikke større enn en hånd*' – just underneath the turf.

There were no signs of any kind of structure, but there were grave mounds in the vicinity. Åmdal is situated on the outskirts of an area rich in Migration Period finds and monuments.

Although defined as scabbard mounts, they have never been found in combination with a sword, and Johs Bøe argues that they are symbolic representations of such mounts (Bøe 1923:18). However, as some of them clearly show wear marks, they must have been used. The upper beaded bar on the back of the Åmdal mount is heavily worn, the beads being almost invisible. It might well have been worn against cloth, and it is likely that it

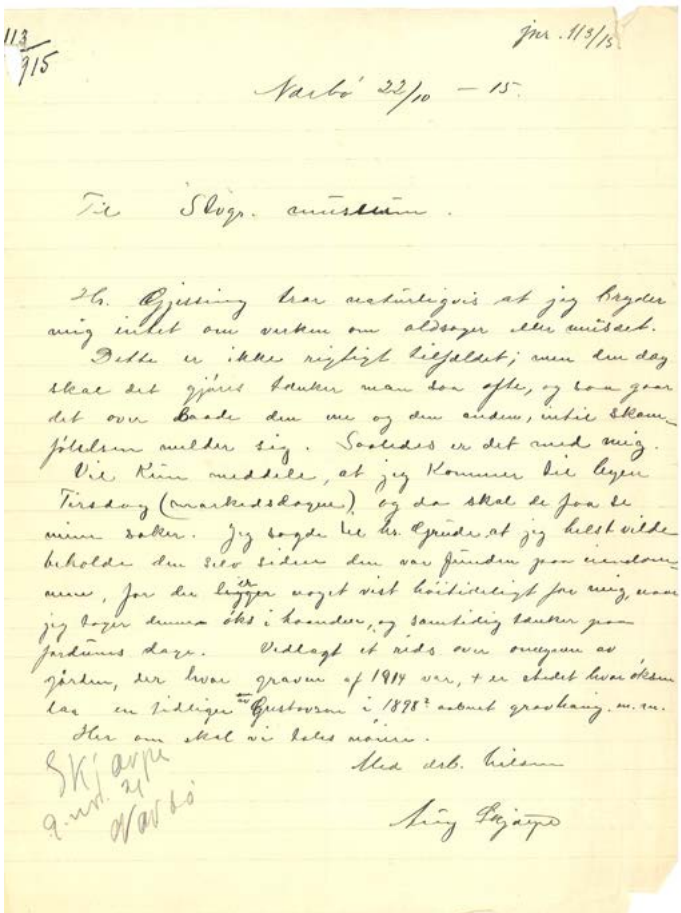


Figure 24. The letter from August Skjærpe. The archive, Museum of Archaeology, University of Stavanger.

has been mounted on a scabbard. The mount seems to be too narrow for a sword scabbard. Perhaps it would rather fit a kind of knife of which we, at least so far, have no knowledge. The function of these mounts is therefore still a mystery. Along with their aesthetic qualities and intriguing find contexts, the mystery increases their charismatic force.

ON HIS OWN FARMLAND

Obviously, in both the Trygsland and the Teig cases, it is important for establishing a relationship between object and finder that the object was found on the finder's own farmland. This is a connection clearly expressed in a letter dated 22 October 1915, addressed to Helge Gjessing and signed August Skjærpe (Figure 24), a man living on Skjærpe farm, Hå in Rogaland. August Skjærpe had been in contact with the museum on earlier occasions. The previous year he handed in a high quality *Buckelurne*, which led to the excavation of a late Migration Period grave containing, in addition to the pot, three small copper alloy brooches, a relief brooch of the smaller type R256, a copper alloy belt ring

with a knife and a bucket shaped pot (Kristoffersen 2000b:302–303, 378).

August Skjærpe expresses deep concern in his letter – Gjessing must think that he does not care at all about archaeological artefacts nor about the museum. He assures Gjessing that this is not the case. He then reflects upon how one can be troubled by heavy thoughts, yet not do anything about it. Finally, he writes, one is overcome with a sense of shame, and this is now what has happened to him: '*Saaledes er det med mig*'. He just wants to inform Gjessing that he is coming to town on Tuesday, which is market day, and then he will hand in a stone axe. He had wanted to keep it, because he found it on his own land, and because a sense of solemness comes over him when he holds the axe in his hand and lets his mind reflect upon the past: '*At jeg helst vilde beholde den selv siden den var funden paa eiendommen min, for der er noget vist høitideligt for mig, naar jeg tager denne øks i haanden, og samtidig tænker paa fordums dage*'.

The axe from Skjærpe is a perfectly sculpted stone battle-axe, and it certainly is a sensational feeling to have it in one's hand. It follows from August Skjærpe's account that this object, literally, had passed through hands. It thus entered into a relationship in a new age. This relationship was not to last, or at least it had to change. Nevertheless, through these events the axe accumulated its extended biography.

WINDING UP

An important aim of this paper was to outline how charismatic force can be accumulated in objects through the stories connected to their regeneration and extended biography. I have revisited the Trygsland grave and the dramatic tales of its discovery. Particularly the gold ring and the relationships it entered into during the nineteenth century, with local people and clergy as well as famous archaeologists, illustrate how its accumulated biography and its mysterious disappearance create an intriguing and charismatic effect. The reinterpretation of the ring and its new social life are largely due to its mythical relation to an ancient king, a relationship that infused it with agency, agency that contributed to the continuing life history of the ring. It was inherited through three generations and ended, at least up to now, its life in the childhood memories of an old woman. We

have never seen this ring, and aesthetics, or valued perceptual experience, was not a major contribution to its charisma.

Valued perceptual experience, the experience of its golden, shimmering surface and strange ornaments, was essential in the evaluation of the Teig bracteate. Jan Petersen appreciated it as '*et usedvanlig vakkert og sjeldent stykke*' and still most people who come to see it do as well. The bracteate is exhibited together with the smaller Teig bracteate in the Museum of Archaeology. In addition, its extended biography adds another level of meaning to the accumulation of charismatic force. The bracteate regenerated during a turbulent time, and we are touched by the relationship between object and finder, by his care and consideration, bringing it safely through the war. In the Trygsland case as in the Teig case, I have argued that it was significant that the objects were found in a spatial context to which the finders felt an attachment. The letter from August Skjærpe expressing the sensational feeling of the axe in his hand illustrates this perspective.

First of all the importance of a sensory approach to the study of extended biographies was emphasized. The sensational feeling of the axe in August Skjærpe's hand is also in included in Jeremy Coot's concept of aesthetics – as 'the haptic sensation' (cf. above). 'Visual sensations' are present in the golden, shimmering effect and the intriguing ornaments of the Teig bracteate as well as the Åmdal scabbard mount. The legends and stories connected to the gold ring from Trygsland, its dramatic discovery, the relationships it entered into, the memories in which it existed and the mystery of its disappearance, have evoked yet another kind of sensory reaction, which attracts attention and infuses the ring with charismatic force.

ABBREVIATIONS

R = Rygh, O. (1885)

S = Accession number, Museum of Archaeology, University of Stavanger

All mentioned objects are described in the museum database: http://www.unimus.no/arkeologi/forskning/sok.php

CHAPTER 4

THE IMMORTAL BROOCH

THE TRADITION OF GREAT ORNAMENTAL BOW BROOCHES IN MIGRATION AND MEROVINGIAN PERIOD NORWAY

Ingunn Marit Røstad

Although the transition between the Migration Period (ca. AD 400–550) and the following Merovingian Period (ca. AD 550–800) in Norway is characterized by a fundamental shift in material culture, one particular jewelry type survives the radical breach between the two periods: great ornamental bow brooches. These brooches belonged to the upper level of society, the Early Medieval aristocracy. The use of great ornamental brooches can be traced back to around AD 200, and it constituted a tradition that was kept alive until the Viking Age. Why this tradition survived for such a long time, and how it evolved during a period of several hundred years are themes addressed in this paper. The paper focuses mainly on the meaning and significance of the brooch tradition during the transition between the Migration and the Merovingian Periods in Norway, through the use of relief and disc-on-bow brooches.

In the middle of the 6th century several changes took place in society within the borders of present day Norway. There was a restructuring of settlements (Gjerpe 2017:194; Iversen 2013; Myhre 2002:186–191) and a decline in the number of graves, as well as in the inclusion of imported objects like glass and bronze vessels, and gold and silver objects among grave goods (Magnus & Myhre 1976:398–399; Røstad 2016:287, 292; Slomann 1969:42; Solberg 2000:186–188). Moreover, the pottery tradition ended abruptly (Fredriksen *et al.* 2014:1–2; Kristoffersen & Magnus 2010:82), iron technology underwent important changes (Larsen 2013; Stenvik 1997:253–259, 2015:90; Tveiten & Loftsgarden 2017:113), and the use of large scale trapping systems in the mountain and outfield areas came to an end (Bergstøl 2007:185–186, 195–200; Stene 2014:67). Weapons were radically modified and big boathouses and hillforts were abandoned, all changes which may reflect alterations in the practice of war (Ystgaard 2014:262–264). New art styles emerged and old art styles went out of use (Hedeager 2011:61–62; Solberg 2000:183), and jewelry also went through important changes (Røstad 2016:381–384). Seen together, all these changes constitute a fundamental shift in the material culture representing the transition between the Migration Period (ca. AD 400–550) and the following Merovingian Period (ca. AD 550–800) in Norway.

However, a particular tradition surrounding the use of great ornamental bow brooches seems to have survived this radical shift between

Figure 25. Relief brooch from Tveitane in Vestfold (C11221). Photo: Eirik I. Johnsen. © Kulturhistorisk museum, Universitetet i Oslo.

these two archeological periods. The emergence of this brooch tradition can be traced back to the Roman Period around AD 200, and it constitutes a tradition that was kept alive until the Viking Age. In this paper I will discuss why this tradition did survive for such a long time, and explore how it evolved during a period of several hundred years. Embedded in this discussion is the question concerning the function of traditions (Hobsbawm 1983; Jones 2007), and what the cultural implications of the preservation of this particular tradition meant in the Roman Period and Early Medieval Scandinavia between ca. AD 200–1000. Part of the discussion also concerns the importance of heirlooms, and what characterizes the objects that are chosen as heirlooms in this tradition.

Various types of brooches belong to the category of great ornamental bow brooches, for instance disc-on-bow, relief and silversheet brooches, as well as so called 'ornate' (Danish 'pryd') and rosette fibulas. In the following I will however focus mainly on the meaning and significance of this tradition during the transition between the Migration and the Merovingian Periods in Norway, through the use of square-headed relief brooches (Figure 25) and disc-on-bow brooches (Figure 26).

CHANGES IN JEWELRY AND DRESS/COSTUME

One of the changes that took place during the transition between the Migration and the Merovingian Periods was a general replacement of jewelry types (Hines 1993:95; Røstad 2016:384) with the introduction of new types of glass beads and brooches (Figure 27) (Røstad 2016; Vinsrygg 1979:50–51).

Also connected to this change was the abandonment of decorations with animal ornamentation in Salin's (1904) Style I, and the appearance of Style II ornamentation, a simpler form of surface-covering stamp designs as well as cloisonné decorations with garnets (Røstad 2016:49–50, 52–92; Solberg 2000:183). With the exception of small equal armed and disc-on-bow brooches, bow brooches were discarded in favor of simpler and often smaller brooches of other shapes: especially small round, so called conical brooches, but also s-formed and bird of prey brooches (Røstad 2016).

This change in feminine jewelry also represented a shift away from regional variation to the use of the same brooch types throughout Norway (Røstad 2016:273–296, 381). A related change that probably also

Figure 26. Disc-on-bow brooch from Haukenes in Nordland (Ts6362a). Photo: Adnan Icagic, © Tromsø museum.

happened around the middle of the 6th century, was an alteration from a peplos type gown to either a sleeved tunic or a gown with shoulder straps (Blindheim 1947:78–89; Hines 1993:95; Røstad 2016:27, 348–349, 381–384; however cf. Kristoffersen 2006:20 who argues that gowns with shoulder straps were in use in Norway continuously from the Migration Period to the Viking Age). This change in dress is however harder to prove, since only very little textile evidence has survived (Vedeler *et al.* 2018). Nevertheless, it has been claimed that 'innovation in dress often expresses more fundamental changes in society, and usually goes along with the actual or intended social advancement of new groups.' (Schubert 1993:19–20). Seen in connection with the more general changes in society at this time, the radical changes in jewelry and costume may be interpreted as a result of a social transformation within society (Røstad 2016:348–349, 381–385).

a)

Figure 27. a–e: Brooches and beads from the early Merovingian period:
a) conical brooch with animal decoration (C22744),
b) bird-of-prey brooch (C58228/2),
c) s-formed brooch (C10695),
d) small equal-armed brooch (C52325) and
e) glass beads (T7351).

Photo a), b), c) and d) Kirsten Helgeland, © Kulturhistorisk museum, Universitetet i Oslo; e) Ole Bjørn Pedersen. © NTNU Vitenskapsmuseet.

b)

c)

d)

e)

PRESERVATION OF A BROOCH TRADITION

There are thus few signs of continuity in the use of jewelry and dress during the transition between the Migration and Merovingian Periods. However, the impression of a rather severe breach of tradition is modified by the fact that relief brooches from the Migration Period and disc-on-bow brooches from the Merovingian Period have some common characteristics that indicate a connection and continuation of the practice surrounding these particular kinds of great ornamental brooches. Both types of brooches were usually quite large and richly ornamented (Figure 28), they were made of bronze or silver, but gilded so they looked like they were made of gold (Magnus 2001).

Both types were decorated in art styles associated with an elite or the aristocracy in the period they were manufactured: the relief style with animal ornamentation in so called Style I in the Migration Period, and Style II and III as well as cloisonné ornamentation with garnets in the Merovingian Period (Arrhenius 1985:197–198; Glørstad & Røstad 2015:182, 195; Hedeager 2005:233, 2011:61; Kristoffersen 2000b; Nielsen 1991:139). Moreover, square headed relief brooches and disc-on-bow brooches have approximately the same shape.

Graves containing relief and disc-on-bow brooches represented the upper levels of society, the aristocracy, in Early Medieval society (Glørstad & Røstad 2015:195; Hines 1997a:295–301; Kristoffersen 2000b: 99–101, 105, 2015:398; Meyer 1935:87; Nylén & Schönbäck 1994:36–38). This is indicated by the grave contexts, the art styles applied on the brooches, and the way the brooches were manufactured using precious metals and advanced techniques like gilding, niello and cloisonné. This production required advanced technical knowledge and skills, and it is likely that these kinds of brooches were made by specialists working for local elites (Hjärthner-Holdar *et al.* 2002:168; Kristoffersen & Magnus 2015:132–134; Slomann 1969:33–34).

Both relief and disc-on-bow brooches are usually found in richly furnished women's graves. The women who owned and wore the brooches were buried in large, often monumental burial mounds (Glørstad & Røstad 2015:195; Kristoffersen 2015:398), and their graves usually represented the primary graves in the mounds. This indicates that the mounds were built as monuments for these

Figure 28. Relief brooch from Dalum in Nord-Trøndelag (C4816).
Photo: Ellen C. Holte, © Kulturhistorisk museum, Universitetet i Oslo.

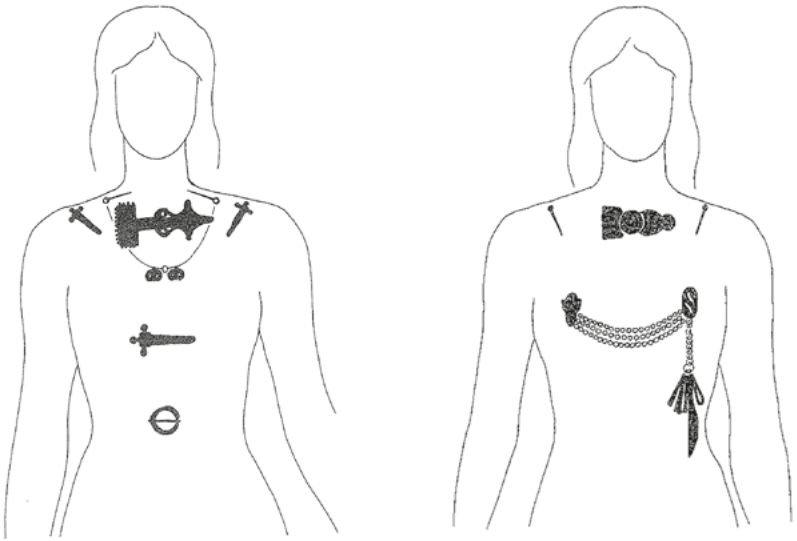


Figure 29. Position of relief brooch (L) and disc-on-bow brooch (R). Illustration after Jørgensen & Jørgensen 1997:fig.46g and a.

particular women, and that they held a certain position in society. In both periods the graves with great ornamental bow brooches often contained implements or tools used in textile production, like weaving-battens and spindle whorls as well as keys and containers like chests and caskets (Kristoffersen 2000b:105, 130–137, 2004, 2015:398; Glørstad & Røstad 2015:195). Imported glass and bronze vessels were part of the burial goods in many of the Migration Period graves that contained relief brooches (Kristoffersen 2000b). One grave with a disc-on-bow brooch from Åker in Hedmark contained a glass beaker of probable Anglo-Saxon import (Martens 1969:80; Røstad in prep). However, imported prestige goods of this sort were no longer common in the Merovingian Period, but many of the graves with disc-on-bow brooches contained chests or caskets of wood or other kinds of organic materials (Glørstad & Røstad 2015:195). Moreover, some of the disc-on-bow brooches from the Merovingian Period have been found in Viking Age graves, and several of these late graves contained imported insular objects (Glørstad & Røstad 2015:206). Siv Kristoffersen (2000b:136–137, 2004, 2015:399–400) has argued that the particular combination of keys, weaving-battens and great ornamental brooches was role defining and symbolized a social role as 'lady of the house' (Norwegian 'husfrue').

Another common characteristic of square-headed relief brooches and disc-on-bow brooches was the way that they were worn. Both types were usually worn the same way: fastened across, horizontally high up on the chest in front of the neck (Figure 29).

Figure 30. Gold foil figure from Hov in Oppland. Photo: Kirsten Helgeland. © Kulturhistorisk museum, Universitetet i Oslo.

This also applies to silversheet fibulas/brooches from the late Roman and early Migration Periods, which are usually perceived as the direct predecessors of relief brooches (Kristoffersen 2015; Meyer 1935; Røstad 2016:147). The position of the brooches can be inferred by how the brooches were found in the graves (for instance Glørstad & Røstad 2015:figure 9 and Kristoffersen 2000b:appendiks F83–F86). Moreover, this manner of wearing disc-on-bow brooches and possibly also square-headed relief brooches was depicted on some contemporary gold foil figures (Figure 30).

Both types of brooches often show signs of wear and some of the brooches had been repaired before they ended up in the grave with their last owner (Arrhenius 1962:94; Gjessing 1934:139–140; Glørstad & Røstad 2015:181–182; Hougen 1937:56; Kristoffersen 2015:393; Petersen 1928:172; Røstad 2016:333–335). Again, this also applies to silversheet fibulas from the late Roman and early Migration Periods (Carlsen 2001:116). It has been argued that these brooches were *heirlooms* and had been inherited through several generations, probably within the same family. Furthermore, the heirloom interpretation is supported by the fact that the brooches are usually found with other types of jewelry, which are at least one generation younger than the brooches (Glørstad & Røstad 2015:191–192; Kristoffersen 2015:393; Røstad 2016:164, 334–335). The disc-on-bow brooches in particular seem to have been kept in circulation for a long period of time (Arrhenius 1962:94); in some cases there is a span of over 100 years among the jewelry in the

same grave (Glørstad & Røstad 2015:191–192). Several disc-on-bow brooches produced in the Merovingian Period have been found in Viking Age graves, and in some cases these brooches actually remained in use until the very end of the 10th century (Gjessing 1934:139–140; Glørstad & Røstad 2015:181–182, 191–192; Petersen 1928:172). The fact that one kept these brooches for such a long time implies that they had a very special meaning, and were regarded as having particular value in Early Medieval society.

RUNIC INSCRIPTIONS

Some of the great ornamental brooches also had runic inscriptions, and this is a feature that can be traced back to the Roman Period around AD 200 when runes are found on, among other things, rosette fibulas. There is continuity in the inscription practices from the Roman Period to throughout the Migration Period (Straume 2005:172–173). Like the relief and disc-on-bow brooches, the brooches with runic inscriptions from the Roman Period were found in richly furnished women's graves; graves that are seen as representing the elite (Przybyła 2015:358–359). The brooches with inscriptions from the Roman Period are mainly composite brooches richly decorated with stamped gilded sheets, whose manufacture is associated with an upper tier of society (Przybyła 2015:355–360). In Scandinavia runic inscriptions have been found on quite a restricted number of bow brooches: seven brooches from the Roman Period including five rosette fibulas (phases C1–C2/C3), five relief brooches from the Migration Period, and on only one disc-on-bow brooch from the Merovingian Period (Kristoffersen 2015:394; Przybyła 2015; Zimmermann 2015:405). In addition, a relief brooch from Børtnes in Norway[7] has an imitation of Latin or Greek looking letters (Shetelig 1914:61; Straume 2005:172). There emerges a certain regional pattern in that the brooches from the Roman Period come from Denmark (five) and Scania in southwestern Sweden (one), while the brooches from the Migration Period come from Norway (four) and Gotland (one). The Merovingian disc-on-bow brooch also comes from Norway[8].

7 C1416 and C3249.
8 T1010: Strand, Åfjord, Sør-Trøndelag.

Linguistically the brooch inscriptions from the Roman and the Migration Periods belong to the same tradition (Zimmermann 2015:405), while the inscription on the Merovingian brooch belongs to a somewhat later stage of Primitive Germanic and possibly from the transition between the Primitive Germanic and Old Norse languages (Olsen 1960:1–10, see also Zimmermann 2015:footnote 3). The inscriptions from the Roman Period usually contain male names, often in combination with 'made by' (Przybyła 2015:360). The Migration Period inscriptions are more varied, but usually also contain the verb 'wrítan' or 'talgijan', i.e. 'write' or 'form'/'block' (Imer 2015:88), a personal name, a title/common noun, and the pronoun 'ek', i.e. 'I' (Straume 2005:174 with reference to Düwel 1998:491; Zimmermann 2015:413). It has been suggested that the male names represent the maker/craftsman of the brooch or the giver and commissioner of the brooch, in the last case with the implication that the brooch had been worn by the wife or daughter of the giver (Przybyła 2015:360–361). Lisbeth Imer (2015:87–89) argues that the inscriptions from the Roman Period are 'master-inscriptions', i.e. inscriptions made by the maker of the brooch. This is a well-known Roman tradition, in which inscriptions on brooches by the craftsman as well as specific workshop stamps are common.

While the inscriptions on the Roman Period brooches thus possibly constitute production marks/brands made by the craftsman, only one of the Migration Period inscriptions has been interpreted in a similar way. This is a fragmentary and illegible inscription made in connection with repairs on the brooch from Tu in Rogaland (Imer 2015:117). The Migration Period brooch inscriptions are, as stated above, more varied than the earlier inscriptions, and have been interpreted in different ways. The inscription on the brooch from Eikeland in Rogaland[9] has been explained as naming the giver, while another interpretation of the same inscription pays more attention to genealogies, and may as such be connected to the theme of heritage and perhaps inheritance that the brooches represented as heirlooms: 'I, Wir, of the descendants of Wir, inscribe runes asni [?]' (Knirk 2015:421). Moreover, it has been suggested that the inscriptions on three relief brooches

9 S9181g.

may have played a part in religious rites conducted by the women who wore them (Imer 2015:117–118; Magnus 2001:118). The inscription 'ek erilar' (Olsen 1937) on one of these brooches, the relief brooch from Bratsberg in Telemark[10] (Figure 31), has been interpreted as an upper class title, transcribed: 'I, the eril/earl' (Knirk 2015:431) or a social position connected with the (warrior) elite (Imer 2015:63).

The inscription on the Merovingian disc-on-bow brooch differs from the rest not only in language, but also in 'formula'. This inscription reads 'siklisnAhli', which has been transcribed as the three words 'sigkli/sigli', 'nA' and 'hli/hlé'. The interpretation of the inscription is disputed, but there is a general agreement that the first word means 'jewel' (Norwegian: 'smykke', Old Norse and Old English: 'sigle') and that the last can be translated as 'protection' (Olsen 1960:1–10). Suggestions for the meaning of the word in the middle include 'needs' (in plural), 'the dead' or 'dead person' and 'near'. Even if the exact meaning of the rune 'nA' remains uncertain, the meaning of the inscription seems clear in that it implies that the jewel functioned as a protection (Imer 2015:123). Magnus Olsen (1960:10) describes the content of the inscription as 'isolated'. It not only differs from those found on earlier brooches, it also diverges from inscriptions on other types of Merovingian Period brooches (Imer 2007:table 4.12), as well as on Viking Age jewelry (Aannestad 2015b:122; Imer 2007:table 4.14 and 4.16; Liestøl 1982:44–47).

The inscriptions from the Roman Period are usually on the catch plates of the pins/needles, while on the Migration Period brooches the inscriptions are on the back of the head or foot plates and in one case in connection with the pin construction. On the disc-on-bow brooch from the Merovingian Period, the runes are on the back of the foot plate. Since most of the brooches from the Roman Period have high catch plates, the inscriptions may have been visible even when the brooches were worn or fastened to the clothing. Moreover, different types of ornamentation are frequently placed similarly on the catch plates of rosette fibulas (Przybyła 2015:figure 9; Straume 1988:167, figure 1–4h), which may also imply that the runes were perceived as a kind of ornament and/or something that added extra

10 C26566.

Figure 31. Relief brooch with runic inscription on backside from Bratsberg in Telemark (C26566). Photo: Eirik I. Johnsen. © Kulturhistorisk museum, Universitetet i Oslo.

value to the brooch (Imer 2015:89). The positioning of the inscriptions on the brooches from the Migration and Merovingian Periods on the other hand implies that they were not meant to be seen when the brooches were in use since they were then turned towards the wearer (Kristoffersen 2015:394; Magnus 1992:136; Straume 2005:176). However on these brooches also, ornamentation has been found in the same place as the runes, i.e. placed on the back of the plates or on the catch plate (Hougen 1937:56; Kristoffersen 2000b: 315–316, 2015:397–398; Straume 2005).

The social context of the runic inscriptions from the 3rd to the 8th centuries is associated with an upper tier of society, and runes in this period are usually understood as an elite phenomenon (Imer 2015:55–66; Knirk 2015: 431). In general, runes are rare during these centuries, and their restrictedness may have been the source not only of adding special value to the objects on which they were inscribed, but also of bestowing on the owner another kind of status than just material wealth (Imer 2015:62). Runic inscriptions probably had a magical significance in the Early Medieval Period (Andrén 1991:249–250; Axboe 1991:191; Hedeager 1999a:230; Magnus 1992:140–142), which added special value to the brooches in much the same way that the personal biography of each brooch and the direct connection with previous owners the brooch represented must have made them especially significant (Kristoffersen 2015:398). Seen in this light even the more prosaic master and/or giver/commissioner inscriptions may have been perceived as magical. The runes on the disc-on-bow brooch imply that the brooch functioned as an amulet, and this may actually mean that the brooch and the inscription worked together, and as such made the impact/effect even more powerful. If this was the case, the position of the runes turned towards the bearer may be explained as a wish for physical contact with the runes. Touching or direct contact with the body may have been seen as a means of imparting protection or perhaps strength to the bearer (Gilchrist 2008:151–152, 2013:179).

ANIMATED DECORATION

Both relief and disc-on-bow brooches were decorated with animal art styles. Animals played a central role in pre-Christian ideology, and according to Lotte Hedeager

(1999a, 2005, 2011:61–66) animal art represented coded cultural knowledge based in a pre-Christian cosmology. Kristoffersen (1995) has argued that objects adorned with animal decoration were perceived as animated with the animal's power and strength. By taking on the animal's powers the object, for instance a brooch, functioned as a means of protection for the wearer. The relief decoration applied on, among others, relief and disc-on-bow brooches might have added to this belief through the effect created by light and shadow reflecting on the shining surface of the brooches causing the animals to move with shifting light (Kristoffersen 2015:398). Moreover, the shape of several of the brooches resembles animals (Burström 2015:40; Magnus 1999a:figure 2), like flying dragons (Figure 32) or crawling lizards or snakes (Figure 33).

On disc-on-bow brooches the effect created by the glowing red garnets also contributed to bringing the brooches to life, as the garnets shone with an 'eternal light' (Arrhenius 1962:88–89). This innate light may have been a reason why garnets were regarded as containing protective and transferable powers, a belief that is documented in antique written sources (Arrhenius 1962:90–91).

GREAT ORNATE BROOCHES: THE CULT OF FREYJA AND ARISTOCRATIC MEMORIES

A connection between relief and disc-on-bow brooches and the pre-Christian Norse cult of the goddess Freyja has been established in earlier research (Arrhenius 1962; Kristoffersen 2000b:137–139). It has been argued that these types of brooches represent *Brísingamen*, Freyja's necklace which held a special position and is mentioned in several stories in Norse mythology, and that the women who wore and/or handled the brooches were priestesses worshipping Freyja and/or female ritual specialists (Arrhenius 1962:93–97; Hedeager 2015:143–144; Magnus 1995:39, 1999a:167, 170–171; 2001:292). *Brísingamen* means a glowing or flaming ornament worn at the neck, and this corresponds well to the relief and disc-on-bow brooches decorated with gleaming gold or 'burning' red garnets, and which were worn or fastened in front of the neck (Arrhenius 1962:92–93). Moreover, the runic inscription found on the above mentioned disc-on-bow brooch from Strand in Trøndelag, contains the rune 'hli'/'hlé', which not only translates as 'protection' as stated above, but as a protection that lends warmth

Figure 32. Relief brooch from Isesjøen in Østfold (C15668). Photo: Kirsten Helgeland. © Kulturhistorisk museum, Universitetet i Oslo.

Figure 33. Relief brooch from Dalum in Nord-Trøndelag (C4816). Photo: Kirsten Helgeland. © Kulturhistorisk museum, Universitetet i Oslo.

(Olsen 1960:6, however cf. Hines forthcoming). This agrees with the word 'brísing' that can be translated as 'ember' or 'glowing fire' (a word still in use in modern Norwegian 'nynorsk'). Furthermore, it is also interesting that one of the goddess Freyja's nicknames means 'protector' (Steinsland 2005:162).

Freyja was the most important goddess in Scandinavia before Christianization, and the cult and worship of this goddess was associated with the uppermost strata of Norse society (Steinsland 2005:156–163). This agrees with the contexts of the relief and disc-on-bow brooches, which have been found in aristocratic graves. Moreover, Freyja means 'mistress' or 'lady of the house': a name that links her to the role implied through weaving-battens and keys found in combination with the great ornate brooches, mentioned above. Another of Freyja's nicknames can be translated 'linen' (Steinsland 2005:158), which implies a connection with weaving equipment like spindle whorls and weaving-battens. Furthermore, keys are also associated with this goddess (Kristoffersen 2000b:137–139). Freyja was the goddess of love and fertility, but she also had an important function on the uppermost level of society through being involved in the initiation rites of the rulers/governing powers (Steinsland 2005:156–163). However, Freyja possessed another important quality/aspect in that she played a central part in rituals relating to the knowledge of the origin and lineages of the royal dynasties (Näsström 1995). On this basis it has been argued that Freyja functioned as an administrator or manager of collective memory for the ruling families, and that the women who inherited brooches such as disc-on-bow brooches, not only inherited the brooches, but that the brooches functioned as a mnemonic device transferring the family histories about heroes and heroines of the past, and the myths of the family origins from generation to generation (Glørstad & Røstad 2015).

To be able to prove that the family descended from the gods, i.e. was of divine origin was paramount in Norse society in order to legitimize the position and power of the family, since divine ancestry was part of the justification for the ruling families' power and position (Steinsland 2012:82, 85). Because of this the Early Medieval aristocracy claimed to descend from the gods. In *Håleygjatal* two of the most important lineages in Norway, the *Ynglingas* and *Ladejarlsætten* (the lineage/

family of the earl of Lade) are traced to the god Frey and the giantess/jotunn Gerd and to Odin and the giantess/jotunn Skadi respectively. Gold foil figures are said to depict (such) divine ancestors of important/central leading families. To add honor and glory to the family name, it was also vital to have heroes and heroines as ancestors (Steinsland 2005:155, 2012:82–87). The renowned family lineages and myths of origin were therefore the kinds of knowledge it was of the utmost importance to keep alive and pass on to the next generation in order to maintain and support the leading position of the family within Early Medieval society.

CHARISMATIC BROOCHES

Both in Norse written sources and in the Anglo-Saxon poem *Beowulf*, it appears that objects regarded to be of divine origin, or which had belonged to a special person, for instance one of the heroes or heroines of the past, and were inherited, were not only ascribed particular value in Early Medieval society, but were also believed to have special properties and abilities (Burström 2015:28). Some objects of this kind carried personal names and seem to have been perceived as individuals, like *Brísingamen*. Objects with personal names usually played a significant role in the connection between humans and gods, and they often functioned as personal attributes like *Brísingamen* and Thor's hammer *Mjolne*. These objects were not only perceived to possess certain qualities, they were attributed human agency and capabilities, in that they could make things or events change (Burström 2015:41). All these ascribed properties rendered such objects not only useful, but also awe inspiring and desirable.

Thus great ornamental brooches probably had a *charismatic* quality: the capacity to arouse awe and reverence (Immergut & Kosut 2014:273 with reference to Miyahara 1983:373). Their charisma was created by their individual biography and history as heirlooms (Gosden & Marshall 1999; Hedeager 2011:138; Kristoffersen 2015:398), by their association with heroic ancestors, and also by the stories or myths surrounding them as symbols or tokens of the goddess Freyja and her legendary jewel *Brísingamen*. Also the restrictedness and exclusiveness of these brooches both in their use and in their aristocratic context added value to them as charismatic

Figure 34. Relief brooch from Fonnås in Rendalen (C8154). Photo: Eirik I. Johnsen.
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objects. One obvious distinguishing characteristic of many of the brooches in question is their size: some of the relief brooches measure more than 20 cm and some of the disc-on-bow brooches are over 30 cm in length. Their size indicates that they were not used as everyday objects, but worn only on special occasions (Glørstad & Røstad 2015; Imer 2015:118; Magnus 1999a:164, 2001:292; Stenberg 2008:27). In accordance with this, it has been argued that disc-on-bow brooches were used in rituals concerning the divine origin and the lineages of the aristocratic families to which they belonged (Glørstad & Røstad 2015).

Above all the brooches' personal charisma may have been created by their innate quality as objects that were animated and *alive*: the effect created by shadow and light reflected on the gilded, shining surface of the brooches, causing the animals in the ornamentation to come alive (Kristoffersen 2015:398); the shape of the brooches, resembling flying eagles, beasts or dragons (Burström 2015:40; Magnus 1999a:figure 2); the flaming gold and the red garnets glowing like embers or coal (Arrhenius 1962); and last but not least the fact that many of the brooches outlived their owners as heirlooms (Burström 2015:32; Glørstad & Røstad 2015). Thus through their materiality, decoration and contextual meaning, these brooches were perceived to be animated, and all these factors contributed to the overall charismatic effect and impact that these brooches had on their contemporaries (Garrow & Gosden 2012:42). Moreover, some brooches might have been perceived as individuals with a voice of their own, expressed in runic inscriptions like 'ek erilar' (above) or 'Merila made me' (relief brooch from Ethelhem, Gotland) (Burström 2015:41).

Even though relief and disc-on-bow brooches have been found mainly in graves, both types belong to a group of brooches that also were systematically disposed of in ways other than through burials, i.e. in hoards or so-called 'middle brooch depositions' (Burström 2015:36–40; cf. also Fallgren & Ljungkvist 2016; Hedeager 1991; Hines 1989; Kristoffersen 2015:392; Magnus 2001:282–283; Røstad 2016:391–392). The brooches may occur alone in these depositions, but are also associated with other types of jewelry or objects (Figure 34).

Several of the brooches found in hoards are, however, like their counterparts from burials, characterized by wear (Carlsen 2001:116; Fallgren & Ljungkvist 2016:697;

Røstad 2016:96; Vennersdorf *et al.* 2006:177). Nevertheless there are exceptions since at least one relief brooch was deposited in mint condition (Kristoffersen 2015:392). This suggests that their function previous to disposal was the same as the brooches that were found in graves, i.e. heirlooms and family treasures. The middle brooch depositions have been interpreted as sacrificial offerings (Hedeager 1991:205), but also as compensational burials or metaphorical graves (Burström 2015:37; Hines 1989:198–199, 1993:91). Furthermore, it has been suggested that as special kinds of 'graves', these depositions represented a social role connected to specific objects, such as the brooches. The middle brooch depositions have also been interpreted as the burial of particular objects with special inherent qualities: a way of disposing of potentially dangerous or uncontrollable items (Burström 2015:37). Exceptional situations may also have led to exceptional forms of offerings – offerings of otherwise inalienable objects (Hedeager 2011:170, 173; Weiner 1992). One such situation might have been the solar eclipse in 536–537 and the following disastrous events, which are documented in written and archaeological sources (Axboe 1999; Gräslund & Price 2012).

Thus to conclude, through depositional treatment and context, quality, ornamentation and genealogy these great ornamental brooches were distinguished and set apart from other types of jewelry and artefacts (Burström 2015:32–33), and treated as bearers of exceptional powers.

CHANGING TIMES – EVOLVING TRADITIONS

So far I have stressed the signs of permanence and continuation in the traditions surrounding the great ornamental brooches throughout the Migration and Merovingian Periods. However, some significant *changes* also took place during this several hundred year long tradition. Subtle alterations can be discerned over time in both the context and use, as well as in the production of the brooches. One example is the gradual change from smaller to larger brooches in the course of both the Migration and the following Merovingian Period. At the beginning of both of these periods the brooches started out as quite small, but increased in size towards the end of each period. The relief brooches reached their

greatest size in the latest phase of the Migration Period, *phase D2b* (Kristoffersen 2015:391; Meyer 1935:101–102), while the disc-on-bow brooches were at their absolute largest in the late 8th century or around AD 800, around the beginning of the Viking Age (Gjessing 1934:140–142; Glørstad & Røstad 2015:181, 186; Stenberg 2008:5).

Deposition patterns also varied during the two periods, moreover chronological and regional variations existed in relation to which deposition practices dominated, i.e. burials or hoards. Hoarding of relief brooches was for example more frequent in southern and eastern Scandinavia than in Norway in the first two phases of the Migration Period, while some brooches from the latest phase were deposited in hoards in Norway as well (Kristoffersen 2015:392; Røstad 2016:215–216). On the islands of Öland, Gotland and Bornholm in southeast Scandinavia, relief brooches were deposited systematically in houses centrally placed within forts, in a way that indicates an intentional ritual practice (Fallgren & Ljungkvist 2016:693–697). The disc-on-bow brooches seem to be restricted mainly to graves in Norway and mainland Sweden, although quite a few finds lack documentation of the find context. Two mainland Swedish finds probably represented hoards: one find that contained both relief and disc-on-bow brooches from Hade in Gästrikland (Magnus 1999b), and a find of a disc-on-bow brooch in association with a snake figure from Ösby in Uppland (Lamm 1986). On the other hand, on Gotland disc-on-bow brooches were more occasionally deposited in hoards (Burstöm 2015:38; Stenberg 2008:5, 11), and a disc-on-bow brooch was also found in what appears to be a ritual deposition at Smørenge on Bornholm, although this deposition probably took place as late as the 10th century (Jørgensen 2009:347–349; Vennersdorf *et al.* 2006:180).

There are also noticeable fluctuations in the number of finds containing brooches throughout the period of use. While there is a steady increase in finds throughout the 5th and first half of the 6th centuries culminating in the last phase of the Migration Period (Røstad 2016:209, 220), a sharp decline in finds is evident from the beginning of the Merovingian Period. Moreover, during the transition between the two periods disc-on-bow brooches of so called 'prototypes' reveal an experimentation with form, shape and decorative style which seems to reflect a more open attitude towards how such

brooches should look, and perhaps also some uncertainty in relation to the direction in which great ornate brooches should evolve (Figure 35, see also Vedeler this volume, figure 1). Although it was short lived, this experimental phase might indeed represent an actual break in continuity in the brooch tradition.

Another evolving aspect of the brooch tradition is the use of only parts or fragments of brooches, for instance animal and human masks from terminal lobes or feet of relief brooches or parts of bows from disc-on-bow brooches. This is a phenomenon apparent both in the Migration and Merovingian Periods, but it is especially noticeable in certain Viking Age burials (Magnus 2009:236–237; Glørstad & Røstad 2015:192–193, 204–207) where it may be understood to be connected to the Viking Age praxis of reusing insular object parts as brooches (Glørstad & Røstad 2015:192–193, 204–207)[11].

Although the roots of the brooch tradition can be traced back to Roman Period brooches, such as rosette fibulas, the use/wear in Roman times differs from later periods. While in the Migration and Merovingian Periods brooches were worn at the throat, the rosette fibulas of the Roman Period were fastened at the shoulder (Przybyła 2015:figure 20). As stated above, the art styles applied as decoration on the brooches also evolved, although the persistence in the use of animal styles may be taken as a sign of continuity. In addition to the changes in meaning of the runic inscriptions found on the brooches from the Roman, Migration and Merovingian Periods, another alteration concerning these inscriptions also took place. In the Roman and Migration Periods runic inscriptions are found almost exclusively on rosette fibulas and relief brooches respectively, while in the Merovingian Period and Viking Age they are also found on other brooch types, in addition to the disc-on-bow brooch (Imer 2007:220, table 4.14, 2015:62, table 3.7, 85, 123).

The tradition surrounding the great ornamental brooches was thus continually changing, but the shift may have happened gradually, and was perhaps not discernible to the people living at the time. According to Andrew Jones (2007:87) a key aspect of tradition is precisely this '[…] process of changing while staying

11 Cf. Glørstad and Røstad 2015 for the meaning of the tradition and changes in meaning in the late Merovingian Period and early Viking Age.

Figure 35. 'Prototype' of disc-on-bow brooch from Gjukastein in Voss (B664). Photo: Svein Skare. © Universitetsmuseet i Bergen.

the same'. Although there might actually have been a temporary breach of tradition reflected in, among other things, the 'experimental' phase during the transition between the two periods, this may have been disguised through the reinvention of the tradition. The tradition surrounding the use of great ornamental brooches was connected to the uppermost tier of Early Medieval society, the aristocracy, and the maintenance and continual reinvention of the tradition (Arwill-Nordbladh 2013:416; Hobsbawm 1983; Jones 2007) show that this tier survived the otherwise turbulent transition between the Migration and Merovingian Periods. However, this does not necessarily imply that the aristocracy in the two periods shared the same lineages and genealogies. The presumably temporary break in tradition, reflected in the short lived 'experimental' phase during the transition between the two periods, indicates a need for 'novelty to dress up as antiquity' (Hobsbawm 1983:5), which may indeed imply the emergence and establishment of a new elite class. Nevertheless, the enduring tradition surrounding the use of these ornamental brooches must be seen in connection with the brooches' charismatic qualities, as well as the function that the women who owned them and the brooches themselves had in Early Medieval society – a function that was intrinsically linked to a religious and social institution relating to the goddess Freyja.

CONCLUSION: TRADITION AS 'THE ILLUSION OF PERMANENCE'

The tradition of the great ornamental brooches thus gives the illusion of continuation and permanence of a central institution in Early Medieval society, an institution that was directly related to the uppermost tier of society, the leading aristocratic families, and which functioned as a means for the elite to retain their position as rulers. During the transition between the Migration and Merovingian Periods, several changes occurred and society underwent major alterations. The great ornamental brooches represented an old time-authenticated tradition at this stage, and a possible appropriation of these particular kinds of brooches by a new elite class would therefore have represented an appropriation of the past (confer Martin 2015:189). Old as well as new ruling families may have used this as a means of (re)establishing themselves in leading positions, by obtaining brooches and keeping the tradition alive. New ruling families may thus have established themselves and old ones may have disappeared, but the changes and replacements were veiled behind a façade of continuity – through the maintenance of an ancient and seemingly immortal and imperishable institution reflected in the tradition surrounding the great ornamental bow brooches.

CHAPTER 5

TRACING CHARISMA

AN 'ANGLO-SAXON WORKBOX' FROM AN EARLY VIKING AGE BURIAL IN NORWAY, ITS SCANDINAVIAN COUNTERPARTS AND EUROPEAN CONTEXT

Zanette Tsigaridas Glørstad

This article presents a variant of a so-called 'Anglo-Saxon workbox' found in a woman's grave dating to the late 700s–early 800s in Setesdal, southern Norway. It is the only one known from Norway, but it is similar to a few boxes found in Denmark. The Setesdal box is however deposited in a later context than the Danish ones, and has undergone repairs and secondary decoration. There are similarities and differences between Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon workboxes, although they are all assumed to relate to the continental custom of wearing personal containers. These are often interpreted as being used for Christian relics, but they also occur in communities in transition between pagan and Christian practice. The inclusion of this unusual and antique box in the

burial of the woman in Setesdal, exemplifies the enmeshed and unpredictable side of how societies engage and influence each other. The boxes illustrate how the material culture and its associations are constantly changing and negotiated over time, where practical use as well as the ideological and cosmological connotations of objects are redefined and processed in local terms.

INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 1920, the farmer Åsmund Viken decided to take out sand from a ridge on his farm in Valle in Setesdal Valley, southern Norway in order to construct a road. As he dug in, several objects appeared: fragments of iron and bronze, and beads. The museum in Oslo was notified, and all the recovered objects were handed in. Mr. Viken received a finder's fee, and a letter from the Museum Conservator Jan Petersen, briefly notifying him that the objects belonged to a female burial from the 8th or 9th century. Later the same year, the objects were examined and entered into the museum catalogue, with full descriptions (Mus. no.: C22569). Among the finds were parts of a box of tinned bronze with a lid, containing the remains of small threads rusted into the metal. This was assumed to be the remains of a so-called 'Anglo-Saxon workbox' (cf. 1920 entry journal at the Museum of Cultural History in Oslo). The box is the only one of its kind found in Norway.

The box represents somewhat of an enigma. In spite of it diminutive size and only partial preservation it has the charismatic qualities of a unique museum object. It invites questions about its background, significance and how it has moved between different environments and frames of meaning. It also echoes a similar fascination for the object at the time it was deposited in the grave, as its context and modifications reveal that the box was cared for and preserved through several generations. This suggests that this particular box was deemed especially valuable, and that its biography and associations were important to the owner. In this paper, the box and its context are first presented and compared to the few

Figure 36. The workbox from Valle, Setesdal, South Norway. Diam: 5.5 cm, height: 2.6 cm. © Museum of Cultural History, Oslo / Kirsten Helgeland.

other similar finds in Scandinavia, before this group of boxes are discussed in light of their closest parallels, the Anglo-Saxon 'workboxes'. Both the Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon boxes are seen as variants of continental dress traditions that included small personal containers. The boxes are by some interpreted as containers for different types of Christian relics, while they also indicate varied use in communities in the transition between pagan and Christian practice. Collectively, the boxes from Scandinavia reflect contact and cultural interaction across the North Sea into the Baltic Sea in the 7th century, and also illustrate how associations towards selected meaningful objects are negotiated and embedded within new frames of reference.

THE 'ANGLO-SAXON' WORKBOX FROM SETESDAL

In spite of the somewhat random discovery of the box from Setesdal, it is possible to get an idea of the context based on the finder's information and later observations on the site. A note in the archives states that the objects were found next to the remains of an unburnt skeleton. In his letter to the museum Mr. Viken states that '... the one who lay there, seems to have been 3 alen' (ca 1.80 cm, auth. comm.[12]), indicating that the objects were recovered from a recognizable burial of one individual.

The box from the grave is 5.5 cm in diameter, and ca. 2.6 cm in height. Approximately one third of the box

12 A Norwegian 'alen' was by 1875 defined as 62.74 cm, building on the older Danish system adapted by the astronomer Ole Christansen Rømer, who defined the Danish 'alen' as 62.94 cm.

itself is preserved with about half of the lid, and with the hinge intact (Figure 36).

The box is made of tin-foiled copper alloy, with remnants of a corroded iron nail or similar item on the top of the lid. The hinge is attached with two iron rivets through the side of the box. A corroded protrusion on the hinge could suggest the remains of a loop or something similar, parallell to the loop of a chatelaine observed on other boxes from Scandinavia. The lid and sides are decorated with plain circumferential lines and lines of stamped triangles with punched dots, and the lid has an incised, cross-shaped ornament with concave lines, akin to a Greek cross with slightly expanded arms. The four arms of the cross terminate in incised, open hemispheres bordering the outer line of triangles. On the inside of the hemispheres there are uneven step-shaped patterns, and on each of the concave lines forming the arms of the cross, there are three small transverse lines towards the protruding centre of the lid.

A closer look at the box reveals that the hinge is secondary, and at some point replaced the original one. The perforation through the sides for fastening the original fitting can be clearly seen partly covered by the second one (Figure 37).

The décor also shows some noteworthy inconsistencies, suggesting that it was decorated at two different stages during its time of use (Figure 38).

Along the sides and the outer rim of the lid the décor is constrained and precise, with circumferential lines and tightly places stamped triangles in rows. The lines and triangles are all meticulously and symmetrically placed, and seem to be of consistent strength and depth, suggesting that they were executed by an experienced craftsman with the necessary tools and skills. The other distinct ornamental elements, including the cross on the lid, present a different approach. This décor consists of thin lines cut into the lid, likely by the use of a thin pointed needle or awl, with several lines being irregular and partly overlapping as if the creator had to try a few times before getting the lines exactly right. From an arms distance the cross appears clearly visible and symmetrical, but up close it seems haphazardly executed. It seems unlikely that the two décor elements and styles were fashioned by the same craftsman. In spite of the

Figure 37. The secondary hinge partly covering the perforation for fastening of the original hinge. © Museum of Cultural History, Oslo / Kirsten Helgeland.

Figure 38. Detail of the lid showing the different style of ornamentation © Museum of Cultural History, Oslo / Kirsten Helgeland.

overall symmetrical impression of the décor, a closer look hints at marked differences in quality and skill, suggesting that the lid was redecorated at a later stage by a different person. The person repairing the hinge might have wished to personalize the box by adding his/her own 'signature' to the lid. On the other hand, the relatively careful mending of the box would suggest a more prepared and planned out redecoration as well, and one cannot rule out that the repair and redecoration took place on two different occasions.

The remaining objects found in association with the buried individual fit well into the general image of a well-equipped female burial from the late 8th to the early 9th century (Figure 39).

The clearly identifiable objects apart from the box are two oval brooches, an arm ring and a bead necklace. The best preserved brooch is an early, thin shelled oval brooch of type R643 (cf. Rundqvist 2010:149, subdividing this type in his R643A, catalogue nos 264 and 265). The brooch is not complete, but its incised, meandering animal pattern is clearly visible. This variant is definitely most common in Norway, and could be placed within the period 770–840 AD (Rundqvist 2010:157, table 10). In addition, there are several small fragments of a similar type of decorated brooch, it cannot however be assigned to a specific type. Part of the rim is complete, showing that this brooch was considerably smaller than the first one (12.4 cm long vs 8.3 cm long). As they would have been of visibly different size, they did not form a consistent and symmetrical pair. They may have been used as such, but it might be more likely that they were used rather as two individual brooches, centered on the dress. Early types of oval brooches occur mainly in graves as singles and not in pairs, suggesting a shift in how the brooch was included in the dress during the transition to the Viking Period. The two different sized brooches could tentatively suggest an older type of dress fashion, with oval brooches worn centered on the chest or as singular fastening devices. There were also two fragments of a narrow copper alloy armring with ring stamps and punched dots (possibly close to Petersen 1928, figure 183), and 99 glass beads from a large necklace. The assemblage of mainly plain monochrome beads (green, white, and blue) and mosaic beads with polychrome cylinders and barrels have parallels in Ribe and Bornholm (see Nielsen type R3C;

Figure 39. A selection of the finds from the female burial at Setesdal. From the top left: The workbox, bead necklace, oval brooch R.643, fragments of iron chain, parts of a copper-alloy bracelet and of a weaving bat. © Museum of Cultural History, Oslo / Kirsten Helgeland.

Nielsen 1987, 1997), and can be dated to ca. 775–800 AD (cf. also Callmer 1977, no 35, who pushes the dating a decade or so later). Although most of the beads can be assumed to be of local/regional production, the metal foil beads were likely produced in the eastern Mediterranean or Middle East. A few may be older styles or heirlooms from early generations of this fashion, particularly a blue multifaceted bead and a green barrel bead (pers. information by M. Delvaux, cf. also Delvaux 2017a, 2017b).

In addition, the burial contained fragments of a sickle and a scythe, a presumably iron weaving bat, and a fire steel and flint. Remains of what seems to be a rim and part of a handle, indicate that a small wooden bucket was among the grave goods, and there were several fragments of an iron chain with rectangular end fittings perforated with small rivets, of unknown function. Preserved fragments of wood might belong to the assumed bucket or shafts for the sickle or scythe. Although organic remains are rare in burials in this part of Scandinavia, the collected objects also included several human teeth that await analysis.

THE SCANDINAVIAN 'WORK-BOXES'

To establish a broader context for the unusual box, a review of the others found in Scandinavia is necessary. Six other boxes of this type have been found in Scandinavia, all from certain or possible female burials dating to the 7th century or the first half of the 8th. The following sums up the main descriptions of the other recovered boxes, together with information on their context and dating.

Hägleips, Gotland, Sweden (RAÄ Hejde 149:1)

Damaged box of copper alloy, parts of the side, as well as both lid and base are preserved: diam.: ca. 6.4 cm, height: 3.2 cm. The lid is slightly concave, and along the its bottom runs a 5 mm rim, decorated with parallel lines. On one of the sides is placed a perforated banded ornament in Sahlins Style III, and it is presumed that an identical ornament was originally placed on the other side (Figure 40).

The box was found in 1930, together with 98 beads, by a farmer digging a drainage trench along a bog. Based mainly on the ornament on the side of the box, Birger Nerman (1962) claims a secure dating of the find to the first half of the 8th century.

Kyndby, Seeland, Denmark

An almost complete box of silvered copper alloy, diam.: 3.6 cm, height: 2.1 cm. (Ørsnes-Christensen 1955). The box was found in fragments: lid, base and side. Remnants of soldering were preserved and facilitated the reconstruction. The remains of a side fitting with a hinge is fastened with two iron nails. A slightly concave lid is attached to the hinge. The lid has a 0.4 cm wide rim underneath, fitting into the box, and strengthened at the point where it conjoins with the hinge. This presumably gave it a certain spring force, thus pressing it towards the outer side of the box (Ørsnes-Christensen 1955:78–79). At the center of the lid is a protrusion, originally holding a rivet, a corresponding rivet presumably also decorated the base. The lid and base are decorated with two circumferential lines creating a narrow band, which is filled with cross ornaments. The side is covered with an interlaced ribbon band with three vertical fields next to the hinge, whereof two consist of a crisscross ornamentation, and the third has a roughly indicated, two-banded ribbon. The contour of a possible animal head is seen on the upper part of the side, and the piece of bronze used to construct the side may originally stem from another object (Figure 42).

The box comes from a professionally excavated, female inhumation burial. The grave was found in an irregular, oval pit, covered with stones of various sizes. The woman had been buried with three copper alloy brooches: an S-shaped, a bird-shaped and an animal-shaped brooch, and at least 76 beads. A necklace consisting of at least 43 beads (largely red/yellow powdered glass, with white, blue and green variants as well as two bronze beads and 8 bronze spiral beads) was found, with 28 beads spread unevenly in the grave (the majority of red/yellow glass powder, and two large polished amethyst beads). Furthermore, the burial included a copper alloy spiral arm ring, an iron knife, a belt buckle, two copper alloy wire rings, a pin attached to a disintegrated organic band fastened to the box, and copper alloy fittings from an undefined object. In addition, the grave contained the osteological remains of two sheep, a pig, an ox, and two dogs. The box shows predominantly style B/C elements (Ørsnes-Christensen 1955:129–132), and the burial is assumed to be contemporary with N. Sandegård grave 426, 7th century (Becker 1990:106).

Figure 40. Reconstruction: Hägleips, Gotland, Sweden. Diam.: ca 6.4 cm, height: 3.2 cm. From Nerman 1962.

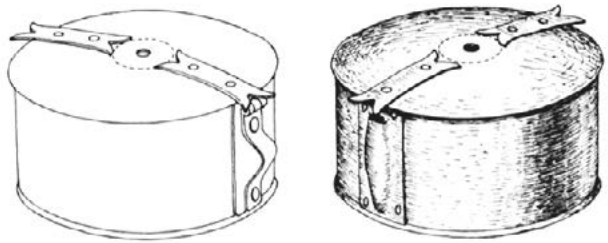


Figure 41. Reconstruction: Nørre Sandegård, Bornholm, Denmark, grave 426. Diam.: ca 6.2 cm, height: 3.7 cm. From Becker 1990, fig. 35. Reconstruction and drawing by B.Brorson Christensen.

Nørre Sandegård, Bornholm, Denmark (grave 426)

Complete box of copper alloy, diam.: ca. 6.2 cm, height: 3.7 cm (Becker 1953:145–152, 1990:102–109). The side is made out of one overlapping band, fastened together with rivets. The same rivets also hold a vertical band, forming a banded hook for a suspension chain. Remnants of a similar band/possible clasp are observed on the other side of the box, opposite the hook. Both lid and base are slightly concave, and both had some type of marking in the center, probably of a now vanished organic material. Two narrow fittings with split ends have been placed across the lid (Figure 41).

The lid, bottom and sides are covered with engraved motifs: the lid and bottom with depictions of four entwined snake-like animals in Sahlin style II/Style B. The side pattern, also Style II, is somewhat different and consists of two intertwined animals (Figure 43).

The box contained four small skeins of yarn, whereof three were wool and one was stinging nettle, and a small fragment of good twill.

The box was found in a professionally excavated burial: a rectangular, submerged grave for a female who was buried with 119 beads (almost all red or yellow/orange, of powdered glass), originally placed in four rows and held in place with bead hooks, a bird-shaped fibula, a knife, a toiletry set with tweezers and ear twigs. A thin iron chain and iron needle were found next to the box, and have most likely been used to fasten the box, suspended from the chain, to the dress. Based on the style of decoration and the composition and type of beads, Becker dates the burial to the 7th century (Becker 1953:144, 150, 1990:106).

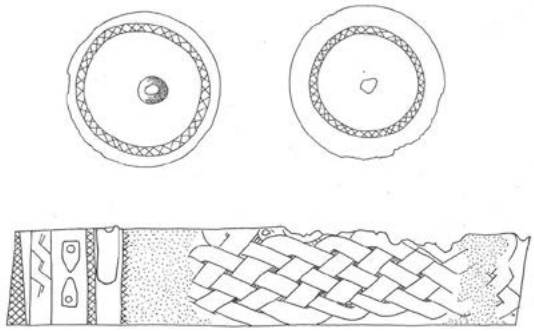


Figure 42. Reconstruction of decoration on the box from Kyndby, Seeland, Denmark. From Ørsnes-Christensen 1955, fig. 6.

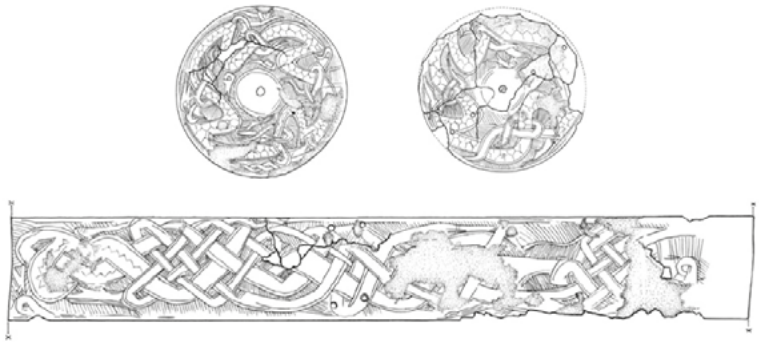


Figure 43. Reconstruction of decoration on the box from Nørre Sandegård, Bornholm, Denmark, grave 426. From Becker 1990, fig. 36.

Nørre Sandegård Vest, Bornholm, Denmark (grave 32)

An almost complete box of copper alloy, 4.5 cm in diam, and 2.7 cm in height. Similar to Nørre Sandegaard grave 426, the box has a banded hook on one side, in which the remains of a thin suspension chain can be seen. The hinged lid could be closed by inserting a small stick into a perforation on the other side of the box. In the center of the lid and the base is a hemispheric protrusion, akin to the box from grave 426, Nørre Sandegård. The excavators note that the box had signs of 'wear and tear', but the lid still had visible remnants of an incised animal pattern, and on the base a double ribbon pattern (Figure 44).

The box contained a small skein of thin, white spun woollen strands and several fragments of woollen thread as well as the outer shell of a wild onion, presumably the remains of an intact wild onion placed in the box before the burial. The onion is in this context interpreted as a symbol associated with pagan cosmology and rituals, and the excavators of the find point to mentions of onions in Norse sagas and written sources, e.g. a similar combination of onion and yarn in a passage in the Saga of Ragnar Lodbrok (Hald *et al.* 2015).

The woman was buried with a richly decorated rectangular brooch of gilded bronze, an animal-shaped plate brooch of bronze with remains of the chain used to affix the box, a bronze arm ring, a few beads, costume pins, a knife of iron, studs from a comb and a spindle whorl of sandstone. Some objects might have been removed during the initial disturbance, and one should expect that the burial would have contained another brooch and several beads (Hald *et al.* 2015). The burial is dated to the mid 7th century (Hald *et al.* 2015).

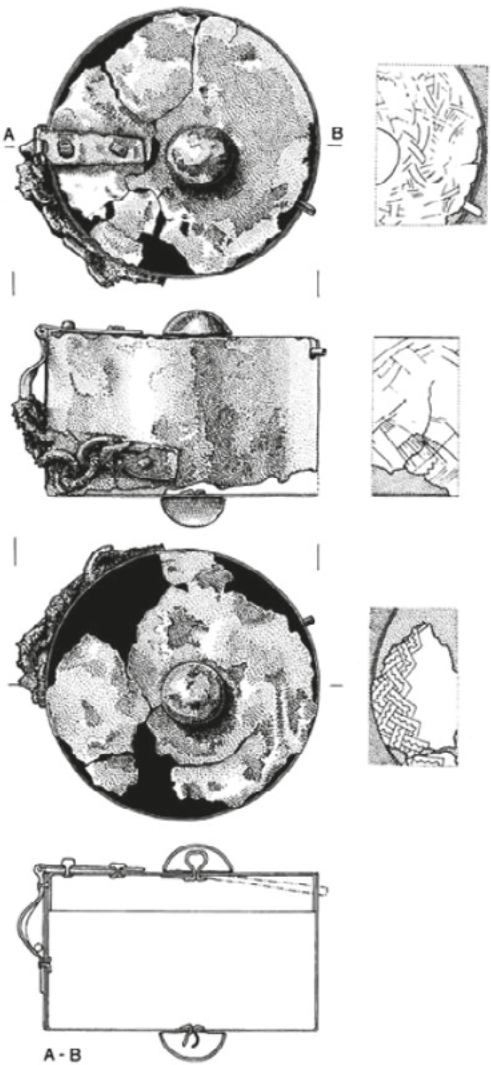


Figure 44. Reconstruction: Nørre Sandegård Vest, Bornholm, Denmark, grave 32. Diam.: 4.5 cm, height: 2.7 cm. From Hald *et al.* 2015, fig. 2. Drawing by P. Christensen 1997.

Nørre Sandegård, Bornholm, Denmark (K51)

Another workbox was found in a female burial in 2014, but the find has not yet been fully published. An x-ray shows it to be similar to the previous ones from Nørre Sandegård, with a seemingly intact chain connecting it to a brooch or fitting (Hald *et al.* 2015). The box has decorated sides, but its details are still unresolved (pers. information F.O.Sonne Nielsen). Indoor post-excavations showed the box to have contained the remains of probably a small skein of wool, and traces of a woven fabric were preserved in the bronze corrosion on top of and underneath the box (Skals 2016).

Nørre Sandegård, Bornholm, Denmark (K69)

A similar box is assumed to have been found in a burial close to K51. This is preserved in a plastered outtake from the burial and is visible on x-rays. The find has yet to be examined and published (pers. information F.O. Sonne Nielsen).

The recovered boxes from Scandinavia have distinctively common characteristics and display a largely uniform construction although with unique details. They are often ornamented with elements of animal décor, and have similar dimensions, ranging from 3.6–6.4 cm in diameter and 2.6–3.7 cm in height. Four boxes contained the remains of threads/textiles (including the initially observed fragment in the Setesdal-box).

All boxes recovered in Denmark were likely suspended on a chatelaine. They were also all recovered through professional excavation, and can be placed quite securely in the 7th century. The box from Gotland, Sweden and Setesdal, Norway were found earlier and accidentally, causing the loss of context details as well as most likely other, less noticeable items, as for instance box fragments or possible remains of thin chatelaines.

Due to this, the dating of the Swedish box and its context to the early 8th century must be considered somewhat unclear. For the Setesdal box, the noted observations of its context and the objects retrieved at the spot provide a somewhat fuller image of the burial in question. This box shares many similarities with the other boxes of comparable construction in Scandinavia, but it seems to have been kept in circulation for a considerably longer time. Dating the burial to the late 8th to early 9th century, suggests that the box was deposited around 100–150 years after the Danish burials containing similar boxes. It bears signs of being repaired and modified – a likely consequence of its prolonged use, but also possibly its added meaning over time by several owners.

RELIQUIES AND MAGIC: THE USE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF SMALL BOXES IN FEMALE BURIALS IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

In C. J. Becker's (1953) presentation of the first box from Nørre Sandegård, he states that this is a new form of object from the Scandinavian Merovingian Period. Becker points to similar boxes found on the continent and in England. The 'Anglo-Saxon workboxes' are highlighted as the closest parallels to the Danish finds (Becker 1953:149; Gibson 1993), just as the museum records for the box from Setesdal indicated. More than 50 such boxes have been found in England. There is a slight concentration in Kent, but otherwise they are widely distributed from the Thames up to Northumberland (Geake 1997; Gibson 1993; Hills 2011). A few Anglo-Saxon workboxes are also known from northern France and Switzerland (Becker 1953:148). They are made of copper alloy sheet, occasionally tinned/silvered or gilded, often equipped with suspension loops and/or chatelaines for suspension, similar to the boxes from Nørre Sandegård. They are found in female burials, occasionally in children's

graves, and are dated to ca. 675–750 AD (Geake 1997:34; Hills 2011). In some cases remains of the contents have been preserved, consisting mainly of small pieces of thread, scraps of textile or organic material (Hills 2011; Meaney 1981:189). The textile fragments are often of high quality, and include embroidery, tablet weave and silk (Crowfoot 1990:51).

The Anglo-Saxon boxes are different from the Scandinavian ones in some respects. Their diameters fall mainly within 5–6 cm, with heights between 4–7 cm. (Hills 2011). The majority of the boxes are thus taller and more cylindrical than their more compact, Scandinavian counterparts. They are also decorated differently. The majority have a simple decoration with punched dots in lines or bands of zig-zag, sometimes in the shape of a cross design on the lid. A rare variation of this is seen in the box from North Leigh, Oxfordshire (Figure 45). The sides of the box have a simple, repoussé décor similar to many Anglo-Saxon workboxes, but the lid has a clearly marked Greek cross where the spaces between the arms of the cross are covered with coarsely shaped ribbon bands (Geake 1997:87), similar to sections on the boxes from Kyndby and Nørre Søndegård 426.

An exceptional variant from Burwell, Cambridgeshire (Figure 46) shows an elaborate style of decoration similar to the Danish boxes. The Burwell box has a complex ornamentation with Style II animals in repoussé. The lid and base have identical patterns consisting of four scenes, of which two have been interpreted as scenes from the Sigurd legend, or even Beowulf (Geake 1997:87; Gibson 2015; Lethbridge 1931:56).

The Anglo-Saxon boxes have been the subject of much guesswork and fascination, and very different views have been presented concerning their function. Their apparently mundane appearance and simple décor coupled with finds of threads and textiles within them, have led to the term 'work-boxes', a box to carry things that might come in handy in the daily life of the women who owned them (e.g. Brown 1925). Others have argued that the small remains of textiles could not have had much practical use, proposing instead that the boxes were used for keeping amulets or objects for magic use, and that the textile fragments could have had a medicinal use based on references in Anglo-Saxon texts to cures using fabric or thread of specific type or color (Hills 2011; Meaney 1981:189). Others have

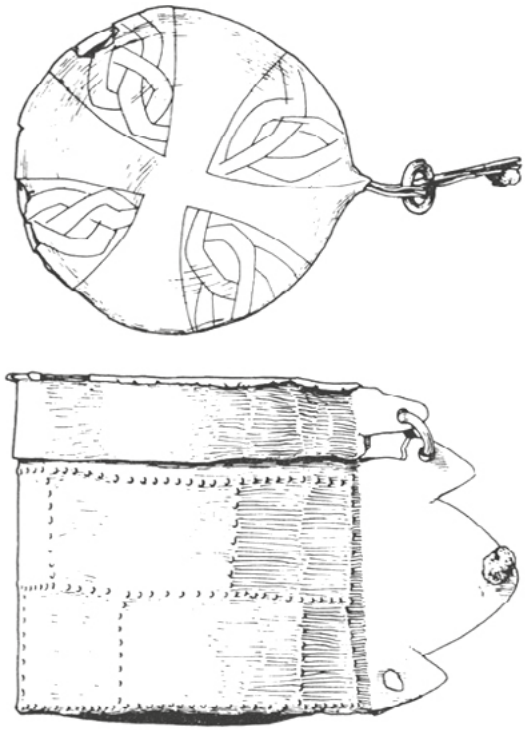


Figure 45. North-Leigh, Oxfordshire. From Vida 2009, Fig.5.6.

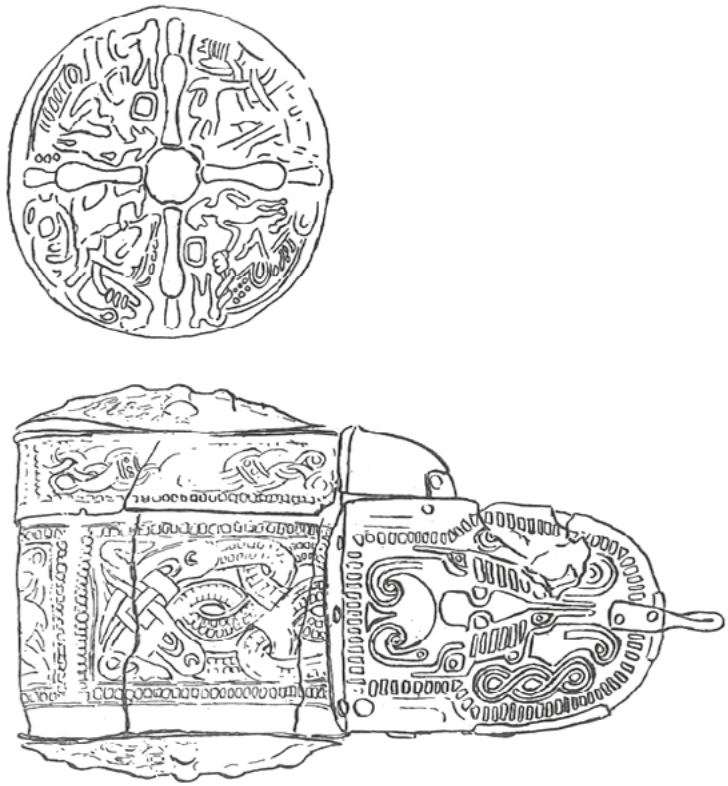


Figure 46. Burwell, Cambridgeshire. From Lethbridge 1931, plate III.

suggested that they were used mainly as reliquaries or for fragments of venerated objects, pointing to the practice of the preservation of scraps of cloth that had been in contact with the sacred bodies of saints, or cloth dipped in oil blessed in sacred places (Crowfoot 1990:51; Geake 1997:35; Hills 2011). The equal-arm cross design on some Anglo-Saxon boxes might indicate their Christian connotations and context. This cross motif was widespread in Anglo-Saxon England, often with unequivocal Christian significance. Specific Christian motifs on recent finds of boxes, i.e. three crosses symbolizing Calvary – Christ between the crucified thieves – seem to enforce their overall association with Christian belief (Hills 2011; contra: see Gibson 1993).

Catherine Hills (2011) explores this latter view of the boxes by pointing to the large number of finds of amulet capsules, possibly capsules for relics, in female burials in the Rhineland and along the North Sea coast. These continental 'Kapselreliquiaren' are largely made of copper alloy or bone, and are found predominantly in female burials, mostly dating to the 7th century (Wamers 1995). Throughout central and eastern Europe, they come in variants of spherical or cylindrical shapes, some with conical lids ('pyxis'). They are assumed to represent a similar type of usage and significance, derived from the Classical bullae or 'Amulettkapseln'. These narrow cylindrical containers date back to Late Antiquity and the early Byzantine period, and to the custom of wearing personal containers containing small objects with magical or ritual meaning. The introduction of relics in churches and monasteries as sources for public veneration and belief, generated belief in so-called secondary or tertiary relics, objects that had been in contact or in some way could be related to a holy body or a holy place and could include textile fragments, soil, stones or splinters of wood (see also M. F. Simonsen this volume). The continued use of small, personal containers could be seen in conjunction with a growing fascination for relics and consequently secondary/tertiary relics, for personal protection and use, from the 6th century (Hills 2011; Krueger 2015; Vida 2009; Wamers 1995). In this light, the Anglo-Saxon boxes represent a variant of continental amulet capsules, crafted within an Anglo-Saxon context. Hills (2011) argues that the idea of relic boxes would have spread through close cultural and economic contact across the Channel during this time, including the presence of Anglo-Saxon women in cloisters in northern France, and was then spread into Anglo-Saxon society during the conversion period from around 600 AD.

The Scandinavian boxes would then appear to be another late variant of Early Medieval amulet or relic boxes, based on or developed simultaneously with the Anglo-Saxon workboxes. Both types are likely to represent a continuation of the custom of personal containers for magic and/or religion related objects, originating from the Late Antique and Early Byzantine bullaes or ampullaes and copied and integrated into central and eastern European communities from the 5th century

onwards. While their form and décor vary quite significantly throughout the continent, the idea seems to have caught on in Anglo-Saxon England during the 7th century, developing into the typical 'Anglo-Saxon workbox': a distinctive dress accessory in the shape of tall carry-on cylinders often with simple repoussé décor (Geake 1997:114). During the same period, boxes were integrated into the dress repertoire of women in at least certain parts of Scandinavia, but then with distinctive regional traits. The seven known Scandinavian boxes seem to form a separate mode of production. This suggests a Scandinavian workshop (Becker 1953:149–150) most likely in Denmark, perhaps Bornholm. Their dating and content are however similar to the Anglo-Saxon boxes, as are their association with female burials and traces of how they were worn attached to a belt or similarly on a chatelaine. The Anglo-Saxon and Danish boxes are as such the extension of a continental tradition, although with a separate trajectory in which the boxes gained not only distinctive traits but possibly also a different purpose (Becker 1953:148–149).

THE SCANDINAVIAN BOXES: SIGNS OF PAGAN MAGIC OR SYNCRETISM?

A central question is whether the Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian boxes have been used with the same intent as their various and partly older continental counterparts. As stated above, Hills (2011) argues that they represent a continental Christian fascination for relics, and thus express the Christian faith of the wearer. The contexts, decór and content of both Anglo-Saxon and continental capsules and boxes indicate that this is not as straightforward as suggested. In England, many amulet capsules or boxes are found in burials with additional grave goods, suggesting an overall non-Christian religious practice, or at least burial practices anchored in older traditions. There might not be a simple 'either – or' answer to whether these capsules were associated with Christian practice and secondary reliquies, or used mainly as containers for objects meaningful within a pagan universe. In England, the Anglo-Saxon workboxes are largely dated to late 7th–early 8th century, also dubbed the conversion period. The variety of burial rites and furnished burials points to an experimental phase combining old customs and new trends, reshaping rituals and

belief systems. The diffuse overlap between pagan and Christian praxis and symbolism would link the variety of amulet capsules and boxes to communities in transition to Christianity, expressing degrees of syncretism and the perpetuation of tradition in a transitional phase (Vida 2009; see also Geake 1997:24, 63–65).

Through studies of a large number of amulets and boxes of various shapes, including material from central and eastern Europe, Tavidar Vida (2009) maintains that studies of amulet capsules and the use of secondary relics provide a lens through which to view aspects of cultural and ideological change in Europe during the Early Middle Ages. Vida presents a different, more complex description of how objects are transferred and assigned meaning in the transition from one cultural and ideological framework to another. In the Early Middle Ages, secondary relics would have been brought from the Mediterranean region by merchants, soldiers, mercenaries, pilgrims or diplomats and hence came into the possession of members of the elite. In one instance, analysis shows that the greasy content of a box from Hungary was originally a pink substance, most likely a form of cosmetic, while others seem to have contained medical remedies, like cloves (Vida 2009), or antler bone (Pöppelmann 2004). Remains of a sponge from the Mediterranean and remnants of vinegar in a box from Niederrein, Germany could refer to the suffering of Christ, but could also have had cosmetic use (Hald *et al.* 2015; Wamers 1995). All in all, the contents seem to point to a rather miscellaneous use of personal boxes.

Objects associated with Christianity were disseminated and integrated in a range of different communities, connected to Christianity in varying degrees. Communities on the outer rim of the Late Antique/Byzantine Empire would handle Christian influence in a variety of ways depending on the local situation and traditional practices. The inclusion and reworking of Christian objects would have differed, as would the process of Christianization have varied in different regions and within the many non-Christian belief systems that extended across central Europe in the 5th–7th centuries. The varieties of the resulting bricolages were crucial for the subsequent reshaping of identities and introduction of Christianity as a social practice (Vida 2009). The idea of personal amulet boxes or small containers for magic

objects could have been transmitted to populations subjected to Christian influence, but their inclusion and use might have differed markedly according to local and regional cultures. This includes burials combining local dress objects, pagan types of amulets and Christian symbols, hinting at the intermixing of profane and ritual functions of the objects (Vida 2009).

These perspectives applies equally to the distribution and design of boxes in England and Scandinavia, both areas being largely pagan or transitional Christian societies, living on the verge of the Frankish Empire and with knowledge of Christianity and Christian organizations. The substantial reorganization of economy and trade in the area form the apparent regional backdrop for their distribution. By the 7th century, both Anglo-Saxon England and Denmark were engaging in extensive trade relations and commodity exchange in the lively burgeoning commerce around the North Sea. Extensive examinations of burial sites and settlements reveal close and continuous contact between areas like Kent and the Frankish Empire (Tys & Loveluck 2006). The Uppland area in eastern Sweden became a hub for commerce and political power, with extensive contact with Anglo-Saxon areas (Ljungkvist & Frölund 2015). The island of Bornholm emerges as a strategically placed port on routes between insular and continental areas, up towards eastern Sweden (Becker 1953:151–154). Located between the North Sea and the Baltic Sea, it has produced a remarkable range of wealthy burial sites from the period, as well as four of the seven Scandinavian type workboxes. There is however little to suggest that the original Christian idea behind secondary reliquies was paramount to Danish society in the 7th century. The characteristic form and décor of the boxes from Scandinavia do, however, suggest that the suspended box – as a popular dress element – was adopted and integrated into a largely non-Christian context.

THE CHARISMA OF THE SETESDAL BOX: WHO, WHY AND WHEN?

As a unique object, the Setesdal box reflects the complexity of how not only singular objects, but material cultures and ideas in general, spread through regions and in time. The overall shape and ornaments of the box link it to the Danish parallels, but it represents the only

one known from Norway, and must have been considered highly unusual in the local dress repertoire during the transition to the Viking Age.

There are two main venues to explain how the box then ended up in Norway. It could conceivably have been kept as a precious family heirloom by a family in Denmark, perhaps as a memento of a beloved grandmother, and then brought to Norway in the possession of a woman settling in Setesdal, perhaps as a result of an exogamous marriage alliance. The repair of the hinge suggests a wish for care and continuous use. The similarities between the bead necklace found in the Setesdal burial and Danish burials would not rule that out, although the combination of beads might just reflect current fashion and available beads.

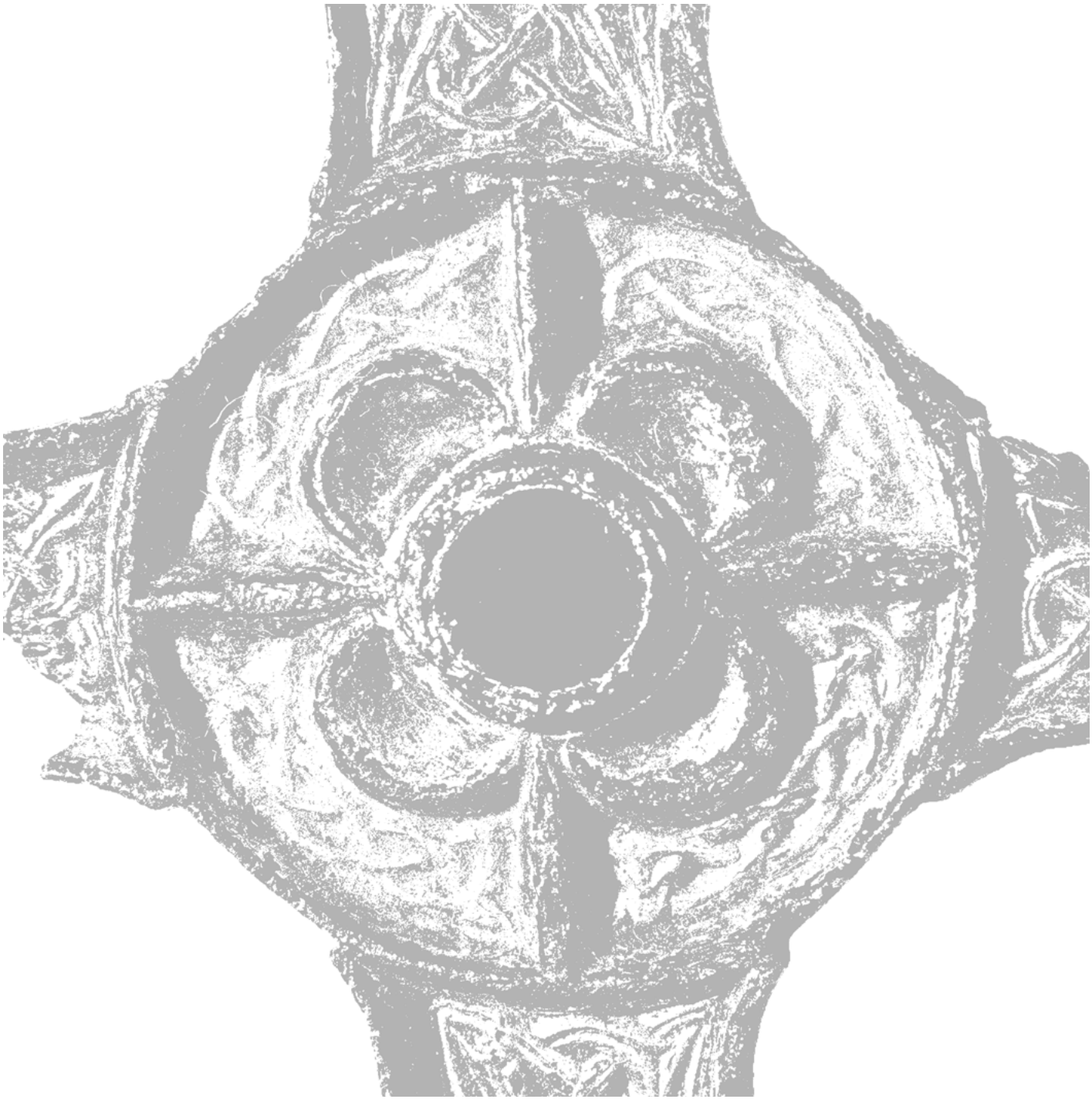
Another option might be that it was kept in circulation in Denmark before it ended up as a trade object or gift brought to Norway by a southern Norwegian tradesman or woman. The latter option would fall into a larger picture of increasing patterns of contact and exchange between Denmark and different regions of Norway during the 8th century. Norwegian graves and settlements dating to the 8th century contain types of pottery, beads and ornaments similar to items produced or exchanged in Ribe, although it is not clear whether they represent direct interaction (Sindbæk 2011). The amount and variety of goods nevertheless show that many communities in Norway at this point had considerable access to products of urban manufacture, most likely through the largest Scandinavian emporium at the time, Ribe (Munch *et al.* 2003: 203, 216; Sindbæk 2011). In Ribe, samples of antlers from reindeer suggest that exchange networks towards the Norwegian mountain areas already existed during the 8th century (Ashby *et al.* 2015). Finding a workbox in Setesdal valley is then perhaps not so surprising. Continuous exploitation of outfield resources, in particular iron, is known in the valley from the Roman Iron Age (Glørstad &Wenn 2017). The vast mountain areas in the upper part of the valley border one of the largest wild reindeer habitats in Norway, and would have been a possible resource area for antlers gathered for export. Other finds from the valley testify to considerable contact or trade with insular and continental Europe from the beginning of the Viking Age (Larsen 1980), and that possible trade links would have resulted in the influx of foreign objects during the 8th century, is not unlikely.

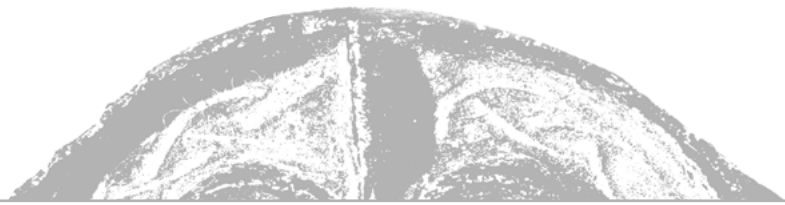
One might wonder whether the owner of an old family object, passed down through generations, would have ventured into what seems an amateurish redecoration of the lid. It does perhaps rather suggest that it was done by a new owner, not caring for its sentimental value and thus adding a redesign without thinking twice. Perhaps this was just meant as a decorative enhancement, resembling something that the owner had seen and found attractive. Or perhaps it reminded him or her of a trip across the North Sea, to the southern and exotic emporium, where the Greek cross was perhaps already in use by inhabitants or visitors with a different religion (Søvsø 2014)?

The distinctive inclusion of an unusual and antique box in the burial of the woman in Setesdal, highlights the enmeshed and unpredictable side of how societies engage and influence each other. The distinctive differences between Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon boxes illustrate how contact and influence across different regions leads to both regional and unique outcomes. The material culture constitutes an arena for demonstrating knowledge of and contact with other communities and ideologies, but the adoption and redefinition of these objects also form a way to formulate regional identities and confirm – but perhaps also question – the prevailing view of cosmology.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am deeply grateful to Matthew Delvaux, University of Boston, for providing in-depth information and evaluation on the beads from Setesdal. I would also like to thank Dr. Finn Ole Sonne Nielsen, curator at Bornholm Museum, for his generous help in obtaining information about the recently discovered workboxes on Bornholm, as well as Senior Researcher Mette Marie Hald and conservator Signe Nygaard, both at the National Museum in Copenhagen, for their positive interest and assistance in obtaining information on the Bornholm finds.





CHAPTER 6

TRANSFORMATIVE THEFT OF PAST AND PRESENT

THE HUMAN–HORSE BOND REFLECTED IN THE BIOGRAPHY OF THE VIKING PERIOD GAUSEL BRIDLE

Kristin Armstrong Oma

Around 1150 years ago, a ship sailed across the North Sea, bearing loot from Ireland to the west coast of Norway. Among the treasures were several finely made ornamental fittings of Celtic style in gilded bronze. When the fittings arrived on the west coast, their high level of technical execution and fine artistic craftmanship were recognized and appreciated. Rather than melting down the metal, the fittings were reused as a horse's bridle. At some point, the horse was decapitated and the head with the bridle was buried with a high-ranking woman, archaeologists call her 'the Gausel queen'. The find was excavated by a farmer in the 1860s, and subsequently kept in the collections of the University Museum of Bergen. In 2017, the fittings were stolen and one piece is still currently missing.

This contribution considers the role of horses in the pagan Iron Age as a background to the biography of the fittings. It further explores the notion of charismatic objects through time and space, from early Christian Ireland and its hoarding and fetishism of sacred treasures, to their transformation into the world of Viking paganism and the death cult associated with horses, to the current obsession with – and hero worship of – the long lost Viking past.

THE CHARISMA OF HORSES: AN INSTANCE OF THE IRON AGE

Where is the horse gone? Where is the rider? Where is the giver of treasure? Where are the seats at the feast? Where are the revels in the hall? Alas for the bright cup! Alas for the mailed warrior! Alas for the splendor of the prince! How that time has passed away, under the cover of night, as if it had never been!

The time of horses and heroes is aptly commemorated in the Anglo-Saxon poem The Wanderer, which renders insights into the Iron Age ethos of the lord and lady of the hall with their retainers, freely sharing loot and mead. Giving the horse primacy in the laments of The Wanderer signals its importance in this world.

In the pre-Christian societies of the Scandinavian Iron Age (500 BC–1030 AD), vestiges of horses are found in a variety of sources. These attest to the important role horses played in everyday life, as well as in the sphere of mythology and religious practice. Horse bones are frequently found in human burials and in bog sacrifices. Likewise, horse trappings and equipment are found in such contexts. Various forms of depictions of horses are also placed among grave goods. The Norse sagas and the Eddic poems spin webs of meaning around horses, and their role is revealed as, on a macro level—pathfinders between the world of men and gods, and on a micro level— a companion species. I propose that horse equipment acts as a *binder*, and is material culture that manifests and forms human–horse relationships. Thus,

Figure 47. The Gausel bridle consists of altogether 13 gilded bronze fittings, and a bit. The fittings are of Irish origins. Photo: Terje Tveit, Museum of Archaeology, University of Stavanger.

binders came to represent human–horse relations, both in personal, day-to-day encounters, and in the sphere of mythology. The presence of horses and binders in human graves suggest that the ontological status of horses should ultimately be seen as a companion species with the ability to act, emote and perform magic in human society.

The presence of the bridle in the Viking Period woman's grave from Gausel in southwestern Norway, Stavanger municipality, Rogaland county, must be understood in this context. The place horses held in Iron Age society adds a rich layer of meaning to the material culture associated with them. However, other aspects of the biography of the objects that – at one point in time during their journey through history – taken together form a bridle, add yet deeper layers of meaning. The fittings from the Gausel find were probably originally used as bridle ornaments, but might not stem from one bridle. Rather, they were probably assembled from several bridles or possibly book clasps (Aannestad 2015b). The fittings originated from Christian Ireland, were raided by Northmen, and came to the west coast as loot or as gifts consolidating alliances between Norse families settled in Rogaland and in Ireland (Bakka 1993; Børsheim & Soltvedt 2001).

What remains of the Gausel bridle is altogether 13 gilded bronze bridle fittings and an iron bit. The bridle was placed on or by a horse head in a stone cist, interpreted as a woman's grave due to the rich female jewelry, such as oval shaped brooches, a neck ring, two arm rings, a finger ring, a jet ring and a number of glass beads. A frying pan, a flesh hook, two knives, a copper bowl and fittings for drinking horns were also found in the grave, as well as a shield buckle[13] (Bakka 1993). The fittings that together with the bit made up the bridle are in Celtic style and stem from Ireland (Bakka 1993; Aannestad 2015b). The location of the grave was found during an excavation in 1997, and reopened. Coffin nails, fragments of ornaments and a small box as well as horse teeth were found (Børsheim & Soltvedt 2001:171–172). Nearby, another grave was excavated: a boat grave with a man and a horse head by his feet. This horse also had a bridle with smaller ornamental buttons, but it does not match the splendor of the horse in the grave of the Gausel queen (Børsheim & Soltvedt 2001:180–197).

Figure 48. The Gausel bridle must have added splendor to its bearer. This artwork has probably contributed to the iconic status of the Gausel bridle. Illustration: Ragnar Løken Børsheim, Museum of Archaeology, University of Stavanger.

Another opulently adorned bridle from a Viking Period grave in Rogaland, from Soma, is similarly assembled from Irish fittings that might originally have been fastened to a bridle (Aannestad 2015b:80). Based upon a contemporaneous bridle from Navan, Hanne Lovise Aannestad (2015b:80, with references to Mahr & Raftery 1976; Youngs 1997) believes that the fittings from Gausel and Soma originally stem from Irish bridles.

Borne by horses, these bridles would have been truly magnificent, the gilded ornaments with their intricate Celtic ornamentation glittering as the horses moved their heads. The bridles are truly charismatic objects – when used as intended. Together, the combination of the biography of the objects and their association with horses bring together an opulent tapestry of significance that together forms their charisma. Charisma, in this respect, emanates from material culture in qualities that are beyond the tangible, but which constitute their history, their association with cultural and mythological complexes, and with specific humans or non-humans and their biographies. In short, the charisma of the one who carries an object rubs off on the object by association, both by ownership and by skin contact. Objects worn on bodies become associated with the bearer. This is true for men carrying swords and for horses bearing bridles. Thus, the charisma of bridles cannot be grasped without considering the significance of horses.

Real-life horses were companions in work, war and wayfaring in Germanic Scandinavia in the Iron Age (500 BC–1000 AD). Scandinavia was a tightly knit region with extremely consistent ways of life, material cultures and myths (e.g. Hedeager 2011). The horse figures as an

important part of the shared Scandinavian Iron Age ethos (Oma 2011). Horse bones, tack, and pictorial representations of horses are found in various contexts ranging from house foundations, through wetland sacrifices, to various depositions in graves. I will explore how horses and their material traces came to symbolize the communication and interconnectedness, and even the seamless bonding between, first, on a micro level: horse and rider; and second, on the macro level: horse, society and the otherworld. I propose that material culture, through horse equipment, functioned as a means to create human–horse relationships and further as a means to symbolize them (Oma 2001, 2004). I shall present the world of the horse in the age of heroes, drawing on poetic lays and sagas in order to unravel the role of the horse as a companion, best friend and magical creature. I will not give an artifact-by-artifact description, a site-by-site outline, or a strictly chronological account. Instead, I will weave a tale that lets us glimpse the lives of horses throughout the pre-Christian Norse ages.

The objective of archaeology as a discipline is to intertwine patterns of understanding and knowledge from artifacts that are often flotsam and jetsam from the past. We unearth pieces of the lives of those who lived before us—whole or broken— such as objects, living spaces and monuments. We put together the pieces we have been given and with them try to find patterns that can decode how people shaped and saw different aspects of their lives, such as their beliefs, traditions, values and way of life. The Iron Age of Scandinavia was a society that was heavily structured, both in terms of social hierarchy, and also in the perception and use of the landscape. Areas were perceived as 'in', and thus safe, or 'out' as in the unknown and dangerous beyond (Hastrup 1990). The horse had a particular role to play in the lay of the land—and the traversing of it. The 'out' zones needed to be negotiated, and one safe means of doing so was on horseback (Oma, 2000, 2001, 2004, 2011). Horses were thus pathfinders that would pick their way safely through the 'out' zones. Vestiges of the lives of horses, and the beliefs associated with them, are seen in particular kinds of situations: sacrifices, graves, settlements, and in addition in various visual media ranging from rune stones, to helmets, to jewelry. Also, fascinating and inspiring sources of information are the various literary sources that were penned in Early Medieval times but recount

the sagas and myths from bygone centuries (Hedeager 2011; Herschend 1997; Sørensen 1991). These are sagas of heroes and kings, the Poetic Edda and the earliest laws. I draw upon these texts not just for the added flair, but because they reveal the deep structures of Iron Age society and the role it assigned to horses. I will follow a rough chronological order. First, I will explore the role of horses and their associated gear through Norse Iron Age societies, in relation to horses of sacrifice, horses of myth, horses of graves. Thereafter I will consider how the bit and bridle are poignant objects enabling the transmission of signals and communication between horse and rider, and eventually I will return to the Gausel queen and her steed, and the stolen bridle that symbolizes the bond between her and the horse.

HORSE SACRIFICES IN BOGS AND LAKES

Horse sacrifice is a phenomenon that was widespread across Asia and Europe from the Bronze Age (Anthony 2007; Mallory 1981; Piggott 1962) until the Christianization of Europe, when Christianity put an end to pagan customs. The practice of horse sacrifice takes the form of bog sacrifices in southern Scandinavia. These were the deliberate depositing of creatures and objects in lakes and wetlands, and were widespread in the Early Iron Age, particularly in southern Sweden and Denmark (ca. 500 BC–400 AD).

Horses are the most commonly found sacrificed animals in both the early and the late Iron Age, although wetland sacrifices in general (with or without horses) are mainly concentrated in the early Iron Age (Klindt-Jensen 1968; Møhl 1957, 1962; Ferdinand & Ferdinand 1962; Hagberg 1963). Remains of other domestic animals are represented by skeletal specimens from meat-rich parts of the body, and the bones are frequently split for marrow extraction.

In some contexts, for example at Skedemosse (Hagberg 1963; Monikander 2006), the large amounts of horse bones are believed to be the end products of feasting – the old Norse sacred feast known as *blót* (e.g. Monikander 2006). At other sites an altogether different and more enigmatic form of horse sacrifice is seen. Horse heads are placed on top of horse hooves (phalanges), and in some instances the tongue has been cut out and the tail put in its place (Klindt-Jensen 1968; Møhl 1957, 1962).[14]

There are parts of other animals in the same sites, but currents in the lakes have led to the skeletal fragments of those animals to drift apart, which indicates that the bones were wrapped up in some organic material that has disintegrated, such as the skin of the horse.

Depositing these parts of the horse in water, testifies to the importance of water as a sacred element in the Iron Age. The lakes and wetlands were areas uninhabitable for people, and as such were construed as the otherworld, the abode of the gods. Giving beings and objects to the water expresses a will not just to communicate with the beings of the otherworld, but also to transcend the boundaries between the worlds (Oma 2011).

MIRKWOOD AND WAYFARING

Just as bog sacrifices can be seen as communicating with another realm, borders and their crossings were in general an important aspect of Iron Age societies, and assistance was needed by way of otherworldly interventions. A general reading of both the literary early Medieval sources pertaining to the Iron Age as well as the landscape and patterns of resources used, evokes an image of a society divided by borders (e.g. Hedeager 1999b; Lund 2008; Wiker 2000). Anthropological theories on liminality inform us that borders are dangerous areas, and can be difficult and hazardous to cross (van Gennep 1960; Turner 1967). This reflects a fear of being stuck in the twilight, the 'grey zone', betwixt and between. In the Poetic Edda this zone is often described as *Mørkskog*, Mirkwood, that spans forests, mountains and wetlands, and is a dangerous place to traverse (Oma 2011:111–112). The only way of doing so is to ride through it; people never simply walk through (Oma 2000, 2001, 2004, 2005, 2011). The poems of the Poetic Edda describe the only safe means of crossing over such borders as being carried by horses. This reflects a well-founded fear: In those days wolves, bears and other wild animals roamed the forests and mountains. Crossing such liminal zones sets the horse apart, and in Norse folklore horses are often given the role of the pathfinder, always finding their way home.

A strategy for communicating with the divine was to use the horse as a go-between, carrying the message across to the other, otherwise unreachable, side. The quality of pathfinding could explain why horses are the

most frequently sacrificed animals in the liminal zones of bogs and lakes. Undoubtedly the sacrificial horse's role as transcending boundaries is drawn from experiences in real life. I draw upon two lines of argument to support this premise, the first being the practice of free-range horsekeeping, the second being the horse as transporter.

First, little is known of how horses were kept, but some evidence from the sagas suggest that flocks of horses were left to roam and breed in the wild, and when the need for a steed arose a horse was taken in and tamed. In the Volsungasaga, we find the story of how the legendary horse Grani became Sigurd's—the dragonslayer's—horse. Sigurd was granted the right to choose a horse for himself, and went off into the woods. He met Odin disguised as an old man, who advised him to chase the horses into a deep river and choose the one who remained standing. A young, grey, large and beautiful horse held his ground, and became Grani, Sigurd's trusted steed. It is notable that Grani was tested for his bravery in the realm of water.

The story hints as to how horses were kept: clearly the wild (forests, mountains and wetlands) is their abode and Sigurd must enter here to find them. No archaeological evidence could demonstrate whether this way of keeping horses was used, but based upon historical evidence from Gotland in the Baltic Sea, archaeologist Anneli Sundkvist (2001, 2004) suggests that in the Iron Age horses were kept in herds left to roam in the wild until the time they were needed. It is thus likely that horses inhabited the wild, known as Mirkwood in the Eddic poems. They were born there, raised there, and became intimately familiar with the elements, as well as the landscape and its inherent dangers.

This brings me to my second line of argument: horses implemented journeys and transport across land. They could then, once tamed, use their knowledge of the wild to carry their people gently and safely across hostile ground, perilous territory. They came to possess a particular skill that set them apart from other beings; the carriers that traversed the dangerous wilderness, taking people across to the other side. Mirkwood is a metaphor for a non-place – the liminal zones – between worlds that do not normally communicate. In the Eddic poem Skirnismál, the god Frøy sends his servant Skirnir to court the giantess Gerth, and Skirnir agrees to do the

dirty work provided he gets to borrow Frøy's horse to cross the dangerous no man's land, saying: 'Then give me the horse that goes through the dark and magic flickering flames.' Before setting off on the hazardous journey Skirnir spoke to the horse:

Dark is it without, and I deem it time
To fare through the wild fells,
(To fare through the giants' fastness);
We shall both come back, or us both together
The terrible giant will take.

verse 10, The Poetic Edda, 1936a

Clearly, to Skirnir, he and the horse are on equal footing based upon the way he talks to the horse. They are in this together for better or worse, two as one.

HORSES IN LATE IRON AGE GRAVES

When humans used horses' powers, they used some technical aides to communicate with their steed from horseback—a bridle with a bit. I suggest that the bit came to symbolize the connection between rider and horse, and even the transcending of boundaries that riders and horses together accomplished. This could account for the fact that bits, bridles, and sometimes either whole horse carcasses with or without tack or the head of the horse became increasingly common grave goods in the later periods of the Iron Age, the Merovingian and Viking Periods (550–1030 BC). Space does not permit going into great detail regarding context and finds in the graves, such as the nature of the faunal remains, human and horse sex, grave goods, and types of monument, so suffice it to say that vast variation is found across time and space (see Oma 2011:73–94 for a detailed account). However, some patterns are obvious: by the Viking Age a very large proportion of both male and female graves contains horses or something connected to the horse (e.g. Andersen 1996; Braathen 1989; Jørgensen & Jørgensen 1997; Meling 2000; Müller-Wille 1972, Oma 2000; Sundkvist 1992, 2001). Similar to the bog sacrifices in the early Iron Age, both heads and hooves can be found in Viking Age graves. The head and/or tack is most frequently found, while high quality harnesses with fittings made of gold, silver or bronze are recurrently found (Jørgensen & Jørgensen 1997;

Müller-Wille 1972; Sundkvist 1992). Ice studs, predecessors to the horseshoe and fastened to the hoof to prevent slipping, that represent the hooves are sometimes found close to the dead. There is no apparent logic to what went into the graves: one horse might have one ice stud, two harnesses, and three stirrups. It seems to be a case of *pars pro toto*: You give what you have and one part represents a whole. Towards the end of the Viking Age the practice of sacrificing horses in graves became standardized, before it disappeared around 1050 together with the last of the non-Christian burial traditions (Braathen 1989).

The presence of horses in the realm of death is deepened further by the deposition in graves of objects that depict horses. Images of horses are found on free-standing pieces of jewelry, where they are trotting, on the move. Such jewelry is frequently found in graves (Gjessing 1943). Horse brooches usually depict horses in motion, such as the beautiful Veggerslev brooch, that shows a trotting horse with his head held high, a powerful chest and slender hind parts (Gjessing 1943).

Seeing the different pieces of evidence together gives an impression of horses in motion. In visual media the horse is trotting. In everyday life horses were a very important means of transport, and also the quickest way to get around on land. Horses in sacrifices and in graves were essential to the symbolic communication and transportation between spheres that would normally not communicate. Crossing these boundaries, between life and death, or between the world of humans and of the gods, was something that the people of the Iron Age could not do on their own, they needed to be carried by a horse. I suggest that the horse has a very important symbolic role in helping to create windows of opportunity through which transformations can take place. This seems to be an enduring structure throughout the Iron Age, possibly even as far back as the Bronze Age. The concept of horses being able to transcend limits between worlds came to be an organizing principle – a significant part of the Iron Age worldview, although different periods had different ways of expressing and using it. Such a quality would explain why horses attained such a high status, since this power would be imperative to possess and control.

THE BRIDLE: A HUMAN–HORSE BINDER

I argue that horse equipment acts as a *binder* that allows communication and mutual becomings between humans and horses. I suggest that the creation of a particular material culture of humans and animals acts as an articulation of the relationship between them, and is instrumental to the communication, articulation and structuring of their relationship. Binders facilitate the enactment of a relationship, and ease communication and performance between humans and animals. Humans who actively engage with animals will develop the tools that are necessary for controlling and manipulating their behavior, and the different animal species will each have their own way of responding. These kinds of objects can also be what Ingold refers to as 'the whip, spur, harness and hobble', that he interprets as objects used to dominate, designed either to restrict or to induce movement and/or pain (Ingold 2000:73). However, I argue that Ingold's position is simplistic, and grants animals neither agency nor the ability to respond and participate in a way that is instrumental to the outcome of events. Contrary to Ingold's suggestion, I hold that animals possess agency, and that they can respond and participate in their worlds in ways that impact and influence their life-worlds (see Oma 2010 for critique of Ingold's position). Birke, Bryld and Lykke (2004:171–172) demonstrate that rats in the lab, through their ability to respond, are instrumental in the formation of the material culture that surrounds them.

I suggest that some kinds of material cultures have been formed – *co-written* – by humans and animals both, by responding to each other. Such objects are, I argue, binders. The bridle is a binder that creates communication and the joint co-creation of action and meaning between horse and rider. Animals as well as humans conduct their relationship through these binders. Their behavior is conditioned and learnt through them, and young animals are socialized through them. Binders therefore exist at the interface between humans and animals. Through particular kinds of material cultures, relationships emerge as an intra-action (cf. Barad 2007).

Thinking of riding in relational terms moves the focus from the rider as carrying out an action, to an understanding of the rider and horse as simultaneously carrying and being carried by each other. Xenophon's oft-quoted statement of how riders trust their horses

Figure 49. A bit from the Gausel boat grave, excavated in the late 1990s. Photo: Terje Tveit, Museum of Archaeology, University of Stavanger.

in danger refers to the sense of the agency of horses in ancient Greece, and also of the intense bonding, and even merging, between rider and horse. Game (2004:172–173) uses the centaur as a metaphor to understand the intense and seamless relationship between horse and rider.

Rhythm that creates one whole is experienced as joyous by horse and rider both, and a sense of transcendence and a blurring of boundaries results (Argent 2010, 2012; Evans & Franklin 2010). Bridles act as binders that make certain things happen just so—they allow human and horse to co-create the act of riding. In a society that largely depended upon horses for travelling and getting about, it is understandable that the bit was a poignant object.

BRIDLES AND HORSES IN THE IRON AGE

Having ascertained the potential agency of horses and the communicative ability of their equipment, let us turn to the Scandinavian Iron Age. In general, bridles were not significantly different from today (Carnap-Bornheim & Ilkjær 1996). However, mostly the bit and sometimes metal trappings have been preserved. Organic material, such as leather straps and textiles have vanished in the soil. Both snaffle bits and curb bits were in use—although snaffle bits dominate (Sundkvist 1992), and there is ample scope for variety regarding the construction of bridles (Andersen 1996). One particularly fertile source of information regarding the multifarious nature of bridle design is the war booty sacrifice at Illerup Ådal in Denmark. About 1800 years ago an

invading army from the north made their way into what today is the Danish peninsula Jutland. The prospective usurpers brought cavalry, and their leaders were also on horseback. However, the local army firmly stood its ground and the raiders were thoroughly beaten. In the wake of the battle the victorious locals destroyed the armor and trappings of the warriors and their horses. They slashed the leather belts, reins and straps, and bent the swords, spears and shields—seemingly in a fury. The remains of the booty were cast in a shallow lake, that has since silted up and become a vast bog. Archaeologists have uncovered most of the site and unearthed a wealth of information. Previous to this find, a typology of horse tack was developed, investigating it from the perspective of a timeline evolution. However, the horses of the invading army were equipped with such assorted tack that it became clear that horses were 'dressed up' according to their own and/or their rider's individual status (see also Argent 2010 for similar argument). In some cases horse tack was decorated with fittings made of gold and silver, and the horses must have been a sight to behold as they pranced on the battlefield, glittering in their gold and silver carapaces! In technical terms, there is also variety (Carnap-Bornheim & Ilkjær 1996). Both snaffle bits and curb bits are seen, and the snaffle bits are mostly rather mild. Curb bits are normally associated with a larger degree of control, and the fact that the bits varied along a scale of mildness versus severity indicates that the riders actively sought out the best solutions for their individual relationships to their horses.

FORMING A BOND

The material culture, the human–horse binder, needs to be enmeshed in a joint practice. A seamless human–horse relationship must be *entrained*, a neologism which Game (2001:3) explains as 'learning to come in tune with' and demands openness and receptiveness from the Other (i.e. the animal). Humans and horses entrain riding together in a horse-human rhythm, in which they learn how to tune into one another. Horses and riders entrain the relation, the rhythm between, the transporting flow, the *riding*. Riding well demands that one forgets the human separate self, as riding is 'absorbing horse, taking horse into our body' (Game 2001:9) When one learns and embodies a motion, the motion is

Figure 50. Horses are often curious and want to be in on the action. Here, a horse nudges an archaeologist during an excavation. Photo: Olle Hemdorff, Museum of Archaeology, University of Stavanger.

inhabited. Thus through rhythm, horse and rider come to inhabit riding. This happens when there is time depth to a relationship, and hard work—hours of training that lead to sensual, kinesthetic and intimate knowledge of each other resulting in horse and rider moving together 'as one' (Game 2001). Consequently, thinking of riding in relational terms moves the focus from the rider as carrying out an action, to an understanding of the rider and horse as simultaneously carrying and being carried by each other (Evans & Franklin 2010:176–177; Thompson 2011). Horse and rider are engaged in the process of mutual becoming, co-creating the performance of riding. Argent (2012) explores the potential for transcendence between humans and horses in depth and investigates human–horse non-verbal communication through 'notions of corporeal synchrony, entrainment, boundary loss, bonding, joy and ecstasy that might be seen to function similarly for both humans and horses, as social actors.' More precisely, she sees transcendence playing out thus: 'When we entrain, our bubbles of space and our experience encompass more than our senses alone provide; we are both giving and receiving identity to something larger—and in such transcendence lies ecstasy.'

The literary sources that, inadvertently, describe the underlying structures of the Iron Age (Herschend 1997; Sørensen 1991), reveal just such a relationship between horses and their people. Likewise, the presence of horses in graves—an arena not just for grieving and reflecting upon the position and character of the dead, but also

for preparing for the afterlife—indicates an intense relationship between humans and horses. In the Iron Age society of Scandinavia, it appears that the horse is not seen as subordinate, but rather there is full knowledge of the character and abilities of the horse—some of which are beyond human performance. To (again) quote Xenophon—'in dangers, the rider entrusts his own body to his horse' (Xenophon 2002[1894]). Certainly this is what Iron Age people did.

There is clearly an emotional component to the human–horse relationship, considering that the mourners have placed horses, or tokens of them, with their dead. Let us return to the legends of the heroes Sigurd and Grani. The most evocative of the stories is Grani's reaction to Sigurd's death. In the Eddic poem 'The Second Lay of Guðrún', Guðrún recounts how it happened that she found out that her husband Sigurd was dead:

From the Thing ran Grani with thundering feet,
But thence did Sigurth himself come never;
Covered with sweat was the saddle-bearer,
Wont the warrior's weight to bear.

Guðrún held the reins of the horse and began to cry, as she understood what had happened:

Weeping I sought with Grani to speak,
With tear-wet cheeks for the tale I asked;
The head of Grani was bowed to the grass,
The steed knew well his master was slain.

verses 4 and 5, The Poetic Edda, 1936b

Is this the description of an unusual bond? It certainly demonstrates that such bonds were deemed possible, and that horses had the potential agency both to have and express strong feelings. Further, I find it remarkable that Grani in this story ran to Guðrún and grieved in front of her. This reveals a belief in horses having the ability to understand human relationships. Grani seeks out the wife of Sigurd to mourn together with her, and thus to facilitate a mutual recognition of the love they both bore for Sigurd—a recognition in which they can find solace, as two persons who loved this man deeply and miss him dearly.

Keeping the accounts from the sagas in mind, I find it remarkable that bits and other horse equipment were

included amongst grave goods. Whereas it is likely that horses represented a generic symbol as transformers and facilitators of the crossing of worlds and spheres that are normally not in contact with one another, it is also very possible that parts of horses and riding/wagon equipment in graves express intense, personal horse–human relationships. Thus, these kinds of grave goods exhibit lived relationships, enchainment of humans and animals, and eventually personalized human–horse mutual becomings. A oneness between rider and horse, where species barriers are obsolete, can be glimpsed in these graves, through the beauty of attunement and entraining humanness and horseness that can evolve through horseriding.

IRON AGE BITS: BINDERS WITH A SPRINKLING OF MAGIC

The enactment of relationships by means of objects that facilitate communication between humans and animals happens, as outlined above, through binders. I suggest that the various pieces of horseriding equipment found in graves and sacrifices are such binders. Animals as well as humans conduct their relationships through these binders, their behavior is conditioned and learnt through them, and young animals are socialized through them. Binders exist at the very interface between humans and animals and come to represent their relationships. Material culture is both a means to create relationships and a means to symbolize them. The presence of horse equipment in graves consequently refers to the action of riding and also symbolizes the human–horse bond that arises out of riding.

In addition to a deep and trusting real-life relationship between humans and horses, another element was present in the horse: the magical ability to communicate with the supernatural. The following quote from Tacitus' Germania illustrates this point succinctly:

> ***(...) but it is peculiar to them to derive admonitions and presages from horses also. Certain of these animals, milk-white, and untouched by earthly labor, are pastured at the public expense in the sacred woods and groves. These (...) are accompanied by the priest, and king, or chief person of the community, who attentively observe their manner***

Figure 51. This fitting from the Gausel bridle were amongst the objects that were stolen during the break-in at the Museum of Bergen in 2017. Photo: Terje Tveit, Museum of Archaeology, University of Stavanger.

of neighing and snorting; and no kind of augury is more credited, not only among the populace, but among the nobles and priests. For the latter consider themselves as the ministers of the gods, and the horses, as privy to the divine will

Book 1, verse 68–69

So, where does this leave horses in the Iron Age? Obviously their presence in life was ubiquitous. Additionally, they held a powerful symbolic significance, and as such they served as tools for people in dealing with the crossing of borders relating to life and otherworlds. They could go where humans could not, and thus they possessed some properties that were unique to them, and also desired. This ability is that of transformation, and of transcendence. But beyond the generic level, by way of Norse literature we know of horses that were given names, such as Grani, Svadilfare and Sleipnir. This exemplifies how horses were invested with agency in the Scandinavian Iron Age. Thus, it can be firmly established that horses in some cases were perceived as agents that possessed personhood. This allows an exploration of the ontological status held by horses. The presence of horses in graves, alongside people, or even the presence of binders, tokens of the interface of human–horse relationships, indicates that the ontological status of horses should ultimately be understood as a companion species with the ability to perform magic. Implicitly, they had the ability to act and emote in human society.

TRANSFORMATIVE THEFT

The Gausel queen, the horse head and the bridle assembled in a Viking Period grave must be understood within this wider context, where the bridle embodies the human–horse bond. Simultaneously, the bridle represents the violence of its transformation from Christian Ireland to pagan Norway, and the practice of pillaging and looting monasteries. The ornaments on the bridle were taken from its original early Christian Celtic context and deposited in a pagan Norse grave, where its meaning was understood both in relation to the human–horse bond and more widely to the role of horses as transformers between different spheres in pagan mythology (Oma 2011, 2016). The origins of the bridle ornaments, with their particular religious significance,

probably played a part in the reuse of the bridle ornaments since the significance of their Christian origins became instructive for which context the ornaments should belong to. The bridle became enshrined in the complex surrounding the horse, women and the journey into the realm of death (Oma 2011, 2016; Roesdahl 1978). Similarly, other Christian objects, enshrined in their holiness, were looted during raids on monasteries and became transformed and translated into a pagan understanding of the world (Glørstad 2010), in which objects with religious connotations belonged in graves rather than in churches. Still, the objects retain their outlandish origins, and thus their charisma is increased, as another layer of meaning is added to their singular biography.

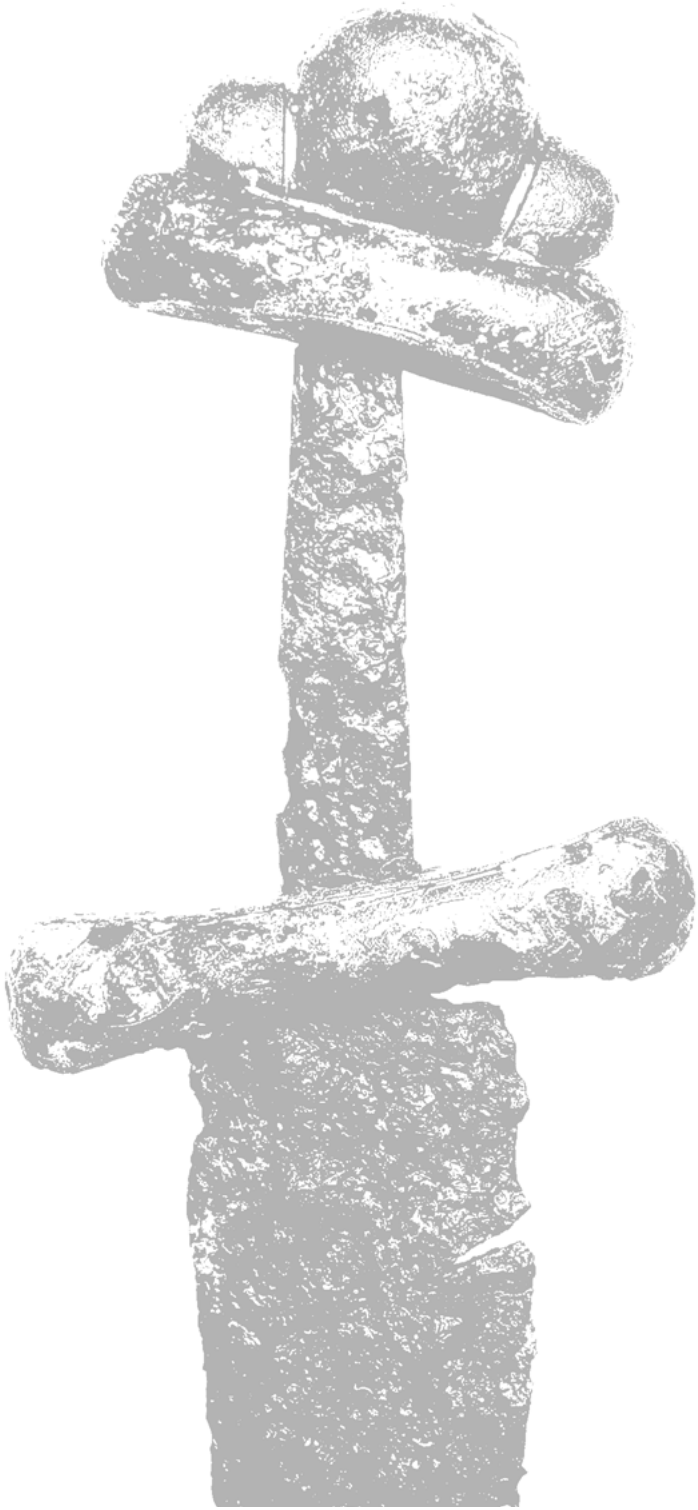
In the summer of 2017, the ornaments of the Gausel find were amongst the objects stolen in a break-in at the University Museum of Bergen, where mostly Viking Period finds were targeted (http://www.uib.no/universitetsmuseet/109704/innbrudd-på-historisk-museum). Archaeologists as well as Viking enthusiasts all over the world mourned the loss of these irreplaceable and invaluable objects, and conspiracy theories abounded. The big question was, however, would these objects – our joint cultural heritage – ever reappear on the public scene? Would we ever see them again? Further, the theft played right into the fetishism of Viking objects, which extends beyond jewelry and precious metal ornaments, to encompass the whole complex of embodying costume, personal appearance and even the Viking persona, inspired by both fascination with the sagas and portrayals in several television series and movies during the 2010s and earlier. In this respect, the Viking period artefacts and their authenticity represent a physical link to that longed-for past.

At the Museum of Archaeology, University of Stavanger, many employees were especially haunted by the nightmare that the Gausel find was lost forever. The proximity of the find place to the museum premises, the large-scale excavations in 1997–2000 when the grave was reopened and a wealth of new information about the surrounding cultural landscape was unearthed (Børsheim & Soltvedt 2001), as well as the fact that these singularly beautiful ornaments were put on a bridle placed

in a female grave, contribute to the understanding of this find as the most spectacular Viking Period find from Rogaland. Luckily, all ornaments save one have now been retrieved. The bridle in particular is imbued with a charisma that results from an entangled web of its Celtic origins, its brutal Viking Period theft and ensuing transformation into a pagan burial ritual, and not least its direct association with horses. The ornaments assembled into a bridle are therefore imbued with not just their biography and aesthetic qualities, but further with their function as a bridle, to be placed on the head of a horse and to facilitate communication between horse and rider – and as such, symbolize the intangible human–horse bond.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Deepfelt gratitude goes to my colleagues Elna Siv Kristoffersen and Håkon Reiersen for invaluable feedback on an early draft of this contribution.



CHAPTER 7

CHARISMA, VIOLENCE AND WEAPONS

THE BROKEN SWORDS OF THE VIKINGS

Hanne Lovise Aannestad

There are few groups of prehistoric objects that have such allure as the Viking sword. In movies and literature, the Viking sword is described and depicted, drawing on both written sources and archaeological material. This contemporary fascination mirrors Early Medieval written sources in which swords are portrayed as the most important weapon. Approximately 3500[13] swords dated to the Viking Age have been found in Norway, the majority in graves. A number of these swords were severely damaged and rendered unusable before deposition in the grave. The blades were beaten, bent or twisted, sometimes folded together in a way that needs preparation, expertise and equipment. The fact that these swords were subjected to special treatment, handled in a different

13 There have not been any comprehensive studies done on the swords of the Viking Age on a national level since Jan Petersen *De norske vikingesverd* (1919). This number is an estimation based on the assumption that the Museum of Cultural History holds roughly half of the archaeological collections on a national level. See also Martens (2003).

manner than the rest of the grave goods, underscores the distinctive role of swords in Norse society. In this article I will discuss the deliberate destruction of swords and other weapons from a cultural historical point of view. The irregular treatment of these swords is embedded both in the cultural historical perception of swords and in funerary rituals. A survey of Early Medieval written sources and archaeological material is essential for a more profound understanding of the phenomenon.

This study shows that even if the idea of a biographical or animated presence in a certain sword demanded a ritual for 'killing' these powerful objects during burial rituals, the bending, twisting and destruction of swords and other weapons must also be seen as an expression of a more general idea of swords, weapons and funerary rituals in Late Iron Age and Viking Age Scandinavia.

INTRODUCTION

One of the striking features of the material culture of Viking Age Norway is the many weapons that have been found. Buried in graves, the weapons reflect a society in which warfare and violence were widespread and important, both in a symbolic and physical sense (Andrén 2006; Price 2002). The prosperous male graves often contain highly ornate swords, imported from continental Europe or the British Isles, but also more common graves contain swords and other weapons, plain in form and probably locally produced. One of the more puzzling features of the weapon graves of the Viking Age is the extensive practice of destroying weapons prior to burial. The swords have been deliberately destroyed. The blades are bent and broken, and the edges have severe cuts and traces of violent handling. This deliberate destruction also includes, to a lesser degree, other weapons.

Bending weapons before depositing them in lakes or graves is known in European prehistory at least since the Bronze Age (Bradley 1998). In the large depositions of weapons in bogs from the Roman Iron Age, several of the weapons were destroyed, bent or broken (Davidson 1994 [1962]:6–7), among them a find from Illerup-Ådal, Denmark. Bent swords are also found in several graves from the early Iron Age. The large weapon deposits from the Danish bogs are generally viewed as a form of sacrifice, giving the weapons to the gods as a payment for a victory in war (Ilkjær 2000; Jensen 2015). The general understanding of the destruction of weapons in Viking Age graves is often linked to the idea of a 'killing' of the sword so that it could follow the deceased into the afterlife (Davidson1994 [1962]:484–485;Grinsell 1961). The violent of the destruction of weapons in deposits and graves is also associated with the violence and wildness of the Scandinavian warrior culture in the Iron Age (Andrén 2006:35).

Even though the phenomenon has been known since the early 19th century and frequently mentioned in museum records, there are no comprehensive studies of the bent and destroyed swords of the Viking Age. There are brief mentions in archaeological literature (Davidson 1994 [1962]:6–7; Rygh 1877:189–191; Shetelig 1912:107, footnote 4 with references), but archaeologists have shown a lack of interest in the subject. Until recently the secondary treatment of objects, including reworking and intentional damage or repairs, did not gain a lot of attention in archaeology. In object studies, the focus has traditionally been on topics relating to production and provenance, stylistic and functional traits of the objects, and, to a lesser extent, on how the objects were integrated into multiple social processes over time. However, there was a noticeable change in the late 20th century, with the term object biographies facilitating increased focus on the dynamic agency and significance of objects through the processes of production, use, and deposition (Aannestad 2015b; Ekengren 2009; Gosden & Marshall 1999; Joy 2009). This study of deliberately destructed swords from Viking Age graves is inspired by this line of thought. The article presents an exploration of the collection of swords in the Museum of Cultural History, Oslo, and employs a broad approach to the question of how this practice can be understood.

Recent studies have emphasized the idea of animism in Viking Age ontology, perceiving the sword as a powerful presence, an inalienable object, associated or connected to a person or a lineage or having certain biographical features, therefore needing to be destroyed or taken out of circulation. The concept of charisma can be a fruitful approach towards gaining a more profound understanding of this phenomenon. According to Marianne Vedeler (this publication), charisma in objects can be seen as a capacity to evoke awe and adoration, associated with the object's material and immaterial aspects. Written sources emphasize the significance of swords. Norse poems and sagas tell stories about the sword as a marker of social status and prestige, but they also tell stories of swords with distinct powers: swords of beauty, swords with names and personal biographies, swords of magic and mystery (Aannestad 2015a; Brunning 2013; Burström 2015; Lund 2009, 2011, 2013, 2017). Was this capacity for power and magic, life and death a reflection of the perception of real swords in the Viking Age? And can the charismatic properties of swords be understood as a motivation behind their destruction in burial rituals?

THE BROKEN SWORDS OF THE VIKINGS

This study is a survey of the collection of Viking Age swords in the Museum of Cultural history at the University of Oslo. The museum holds archaeological material from southeastern Norway.[14] This includes roughly half of the archaeological material from Norway. The collection represents different landscapes, ranging from the coastal zone to alpine areas, and subsequently probably also different groups of people in what was a politically and somewhat culturally fragmented region in the Late Iron Age and Viking Age (Solberg 2010 [2000]:277–293). Thus, the destroyed swords in the collection of the Museum of Cultural History can be a point of departure for a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, both in Scandinavia and the Scandinavian diaspora.[15]

14 The museum district includes 10 counties: Østfold, Akershus, Oslo, Hedmark, Oppland, Buskerud, Vestfold, Telemark, Aust-Agder and Vest-Agder.

15 Deliberately destroyed swords from the Scandinavian diaspora, e.g. in graves with other Scandinavian ethnic markers, are recorded at several locations in the British Isles, among them in Dublin at the cemetery Kilmainhaim (Davidson 1994 [1962]:10; Grinsell 1961:488-489) and in France, L'Île de Groix, Morbihan (Bjørn and Shetelig 1940).

The Museum's archaeological collection holds 1,598 swords dated to the Viking Age (750–1000 AD). 260 of these swords (16.3 %) have visible signs of bending or twisting the blade done prior to the deposition.[16] The damage on the sword blades varies, from a slight twist to a completely folded or whirled blade (fig. 52). For the former, there are two main forms of bending, the U-shape and the S-shape, in which the U-shaped have one main bend, typically near the middle of the blade (fig. 54), and the S-shaped blades are bent in two places in opposite directions, in the upper and lower parts of the blade (fig. 53). In addition, there are several atypical variants, from the spiral seen in picture 52, to a completely folded blade in figure 55. A number of swords have also been registered with more irregular damage resulting in injured or broken blades, thus presenting a more violent and arbitrary impression.

There seems to be a slight distinction between the cautious bending as seen in figure 52, violent and irregular damage like cuts or slashes in the edges, and multiple and irregular bending often resulting in breakage of the blade in several places. However, the differences between bent and broken sword blades are not necessarily a result of different practices. The diversity in damage could also be the result of a difference in steel quality, affecting the flexibility of the sword blade, making some of the blades more fragile and easier to break. In addition, several of the apparently carefully bent swords also have traces of hard blows to the edges, presumably done prior to the bending. Thus, it is not possible to make a clear distinction between different ways of performing the destructive act on the swords, even though there seems to be a diversity of practices in the handling of the blades.

In a number of graves with deliberately destroyed swords, damage has also been inflicted upon other objects. The most common are spears, often bent in a U-shape in the same fashion as the sword blades (fig. 59b). A number of graves contain spears and axes

16 This number includes swords with recorded information of bending and additional physical examinations of the objects. Traces of deliberate destruction are not always mentioned in museum catalogues. Due to corrosion and fragmentation it is often difficult or impossible to register signs of initial bending or twisting, and several of the damaged swords are so poorly preserved that it is not possible to tell whether they were subject to intentional destruction prior to burial. Therefore, the total number of deliberately destroyed swords is likely to be higher.

Figure 52. Severely twisted sword with hilts of type R, pommel missing. In addition to the bending, the blade has severe cut marks at the edge near the point (not visible in the picture) (C15888). Photo: Kirsten Helgeland/Museum of Cultural History.

Figure 53. Sword with hilts of Petersen type O, double folded in S-shape (C13848). Photo: Kirsten Helgeland/Museum of Cultural History.

with cuts from hard blows to the edges. Deep cuts on shield bosses, inflicted with an axe or a sword are also quite common (fig. 56, fig. 59 c, d). In a number of graves the the shield bosses are evidently damaged by weapons from the same grave, suggesting that the damages are inflicted during the funerary rituals, and not a result of previous battles etc. Signs of intentional damage on additional weapons are most common in graves with bent swords, but are also found in some graves where the swords have been left intact. However, intentional damages on other weapons that swords were not systematically recorded in this study, so the extent of this phenomenon is not known.

The warrior grave from Gjermundbu in Ringerike, Buskerud can serve as an example of a grave with multiple and complex signs of destruction.[17] The grave was discovered incidentally by a local farmer in 1943, and contained an exceptionally rich male grave with the equipment of an elite warrior of the Viking Age, including several weapons, a chain mail, stirrups, spurs, gaming pieces, tools etc. (fig. 57; see also Grieg 1947). The sword, of Petersen type S with silver plates on the hilt and Jelling style ornamentation, has signs of bending prior to cremation (Grieg 1947:3), but is now broken into three fragments. The helmet, so far the only helmet found in a Viking Age grave, also had signs of intentional damage, among which were perforations of the right front plate, clearly visible in figure 58. The size

17 C27317

Figure 54. Sword with hilts of unknown type, closest parallel in type Æ, blade and grip bent (C35118). Photo: Mårten Teigen/Museum of Cultural History.

Figure 55. Sword Hilts of Petersens type O, blade are twice bent (C52324). Photo: Ellen C. Holte/Museum of Cultural History.

and shape of the perforations indicate that they were inflicted by the spears in the same grave (V. Vike 2018 pers. comm.). In addition to the sword and helmet, the two axes in the grave both have deep cuts on the edges done prior to burial.

It is evident that the deliberate damaging of objects in Late Iron Age and Viking Age burials is predominantly inflicted on offensive, and to a certain extent, defensive weapons like shields, and in the Gjermundbu case, a helmet. However, there are occasional accounts of deliberate damage inflicted on other objects, among them the so called magical staffs (earlier interpreted as roasting spits; for a discussion of the interpretation of magical staffs in graves and deposits, see Brunning 2016; Gardeła 2016:215–218). In the collection of the Museum of

Figure 56. Shield boss with a deep cut, probably inflicted with an axe from the same grave. C14535. Photo: Ove Holst/Museum of Cultural History.

Cultural History there are also observations of similar damage inflicted on scythes and weaver's batons.[18]

Consequently, the intentional damaging of swords and other weapons, weapons for both attack and defence, was a widespread practice in the Late Iron Age and Viking Age, and can be observed on 16.3% of the swords in the museum collection. Due to corrosion and general decomposition, it is in many cases not possible to determine whether the damage was done prior to burial, or if it is a result of post-depositional damage and poor preservation conditions. Thus, the estimated number of intentionally damaged swords and other weapons must be considered to be a minimum. Accordingly, the deliberate damaging of swords was not a deviant practice, but rather a widespread and quite common part of the diverse funerary rituals of the period. Furthermore, deliberate damage is observed mainly on swords and other weapons. Thus, it seems that this was a practice first and foremost associated with the warrior sphere of Norse society. I will return to this discussion later.

18 C23905, C33234

BROKEN SWORDS AND FUNERARY RITUALS

Both cremation and inhumation burials were practiced during the Viking Age in Norway, but the majority of burials are cremation burials with a cremation patch (Shetelig 1912; Stylegar 2007). Based on the recorded observations and registrations done by early 20th century scholars, it is generally acknowledged that the bent or broken swords occur in cremation graves during the Viking Age (Shetelig 1912:172), and this study confirms that this is somewhat accurate, with a few exceptions. Of a total of 260 swords with visible signs of intentional damage, 169 swords come from graves where there is sufficient information to decide on the treatment of the body (cremation/inhumation). Of these 169 swords, 155 are from cremation graves and 14 stem from what appear to be inhumation graves.

In this study, the criteria used for defining a grave as a cremation grave are observations of oxide scale on the swords or other objects from the same context. Oxide scales are traces on iron having been exposed to high temperatures, often found on iron objects burned in funerary pyres. In addition to the observation of oxide

scales, the number of cremation graves also includes contexts with reported observations of charcoal and/or burned bone. On some of the blades there are visible signs of hammering overlapped by the oxide layers (Lund 2013:endnote 1), strongly indicting that the bending was done prior to the burning of the body and grave goods. However, the oxide layers are seldom preserved to an extent where it is possible to observe this, hence it is not possible to determine whether this was a common practice.

The 14 inhumation graves include swords from contexts with (records of) unburned bones, in which the placement of the grave goods and/or lack of charcoal indicate an inhumation burial, as well as burials with observations of mineralized wood from the grip or scabbard of the sword, making it unlikely that they had been in a cremation pyre. Unfortunately, none of these swords were found *in situ* or in professionally excavated contexts. This makes it difficult to determine the details of the funerary ritual.

91 swords are stray finds, and/or were found by non-professionals, and contain inconclusive information on the burial rituals due to a lack of information

Table 2a

COUNTY	SWORDS	BENT SWORDS	%
Østfold	40	1	2,5
Akershus	133	27	20,3
Oslo	23	1	4,3
Oppland	265	52	19,6
Hedmark	237	79	33,3
Buskerud	144	17	11,8
Vestfold	253	22	8,6
Telemark	222	36	16,2
Aust-Agder	87	6	6,9
Vest-Agder	54	9	16,6
Total	1458	250	17,1

Table 2b

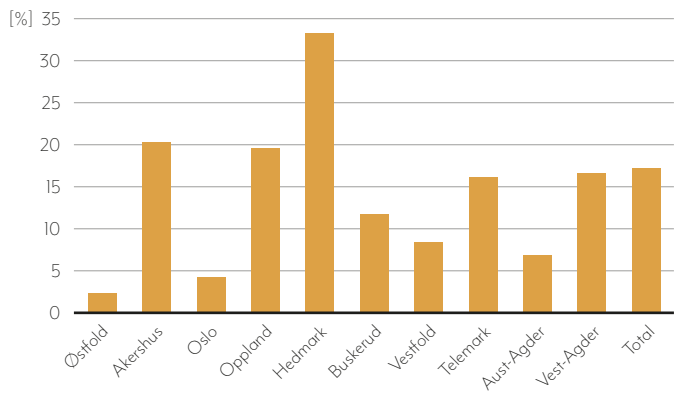


Table 2a, b. The table incudes the swords with signs of deliberate bending and twisting from the ten counties in the collection of the Museum of Cultural History dated to Viking Age. Table 1a presents total number of swords, the number of swords with signs of being bent prior to the burial. Table 1 b visualise the percentage of swords with signs of deliberate bending for each county. The swords found outside the museum district were left out of the statistics, due to them being not statically significant in this context.

Figure 57. Sword, chain mail, and stirrups from the warrior grave from Gjermundbu in Buskerud. According to the museum catalogue, the sword was intentionally bent before the burial. Unfortunately, the blade is now split in three fragments. The sword is of type S (Petersen 1919) with ornaments of Jelling-style on upper and lower hilts, the sword type commonly dated to the 10th century (Petersen 1919). Photo: Museum of Cultural History.

Figure 58. The helmet from the grave from Gjermundbu. The helmet is damaged, probably from a spear or another pointed object on the right frontal plate. It cannot be ruled out that this could be the result of damage prior to the burial, the helmet being a part of a warriors gear and probably used in battle. However, the damages on the sword and axes in the grave make it plausible that the damage was inflicted during the funerary rituals. Photo: Museum of Cultural History.

a)

b)

c)

d)

Figure 59 a–d. Grave find from Sør-Odal in Hedmark, flat grave with cremation patch. Both the sword, spear and both of the shield bosses are deliberately damaged, the shield bosses with severe blows from a sword or an axe. Sword of type T and spear of type K dates the grave to late 10th century. C37550. Photo: Kirsten Helgeland/Museum of Cultural History.

about the context, and extensive corrosion leaving neither oxide scales nor traces of organic material.

There are noticeable regional differences in the occurrence of deliberately damaged swords (table 2a, b). Table 2a shows that the counties of Akershus, Oppland, Hedmark, Telemark, and to some extent Vest-Agder have the highest number of bent swords both in absolute terms (Table 2a), and in terms of the share of the totality of swords dated to the Viking Age (Table 2b). The majority of destroyed swords occur in inland areas, whereas the coastal areas have a lower frequency, both in relative and absolute terms. The variation in number and occurrence must be taken as an argument for local, regional, and cultural variations in funerary rituals in general, and weapon burials in particular.

The result from my survey of deliberately destructed swords from eastern Norway is somewhat contrary to the remark Håkon Shetelig makes on the subject in his survey of Iron Age graves in western Norway (1912).[19] According to Shetelig, deliberately destructed swords are observed in nearly all cremation graves with swords from the Late Iron Age and Viking Age in western Norway (Shetelig 1912:172). Shetelig does not substantiate his statement with statistics. However, the regional variation in the occurrence of destructed swords in eastern Norway makes it likely that there could be substantial variations in occurrence between western and eastern Norway.

Regional variation in the practice of handling swords and other weapons must be seen in connection with the remarkable variety in burial practices in the Viking Age, both in the treatment of the bodies and in the inner and outer construction of the graves (Shetelig 1912; Price 2008). In certain areas, cultural practice and local identity can explain some of the differences in burial practices (Callmer 1991; Svanberg 2003), but in other areas, the variations are striking within the same areas and even the same grave mound (Shetelig 1912:177–179, 201, footnote 3 with references, fig. 406; Stylegar 2007:65–66). These variations indicate that several different ideas and concepts of death and the afterlife existed within the same group and to some extent within the same household (Lund 2013:49).

19 Vestlandet (western Norway) covers the district of the University Museum of Bergen, consisting of Hordaland, Sogn og Fjordane and the southernmost parts of Møre og Romsdal.

This study confirms the idea that deliberate damaging of swords is a practice that first and foremost has occurred as part of a cremation ritual. This observation is, as earlier mentioned, consistent with the established view on the destruction of swords in burials (Rygh 1877:189–191; Shetelig 1912:107). However, even if the large majority of bent or otherwise deliberately damaged swords are found in cremation graves, this study shows that bent swords also are deposited in inhumation graves. This implies that the connection between the act of damaging swords and cremation rituals has to be somewhat modified. From the data from eastern Norway we can draw the conclusion that even if there is a clear connection between cremation rituals and the bending of swords, regional variation in the practice is observable, leading to the assumption that even if deliberately destructed swords are found in cremation graves from all over the Viking World including the diaspora, this is also a practice somewhat connected to local or regionally specific cultural or religious traits.

FOR WHOM THE SWORD BENDS

In an investigation of possible motives behind the deliberate destruction of swords, it is relevant to ask who was buried with the broken swords. Viking Age graves are assumed to reflect the social status of the deceased (Solberg 1985), even though several other cultural, social, and religious factors must have influenced the exterior and interior of the graves. It is generally acknowledged that graves with a full set of arms (axe/sword, spear and shield) are linked to high social status in the Viking Age society (Hofseth 1981; Solberg 1985), and that a sword seems to signify the highest social status (Martens 2003; Pedersen 2008; Solberg 1985). However, in Norway the number of graves with swords is so extensive that one must assume that the sword was a relatively common feature amongst the free men who owned land (Martens 2003). Therefore, a sword in itself does not necessarily mean that the owner was a part of the upper elite of society.

The high quality sword, here understood as swords with ornamented hilts and/or pattern welded blades and blades with inscriptions, make up at least 1/4 of the deliberately destroyed swords. Even if the majority of

these are plain, probably locally produced sword types,[20] the high number of ornamented swords[21] suggests that the deliberate destruction of swords was a ritual performed among the social elites in the Viking society, as well as among the farmer with rights and resources to carry a sword.

A weighty argument for associating the destruction of swords with high social status in the warrior society is the existence of bent swords found in equestrian burials. These are rich weapon burials with riding gear like stirrups and spurs (Braathen 1989; Pedersen 1997, 2014). In all, eleven of the graves with bent swords also contained stirrups and spurs.[22] Although horse equipment, like bridles and parts of harnesses, is quite common in both male and female graves in Viking Age Scandinavia, graves with stirrups and spurs are scarcer. These types of objects usually appear in rich male graves with other objects linked to high social status, like high quality swords and spears (Braathen 1989; Pedersen 1997, 2014). The introduction of this technology in the Viking Age is associated with increasing contact with the Carolingian social elites (Pedersen 1997:132–133). The art of riding with a saddle, stirrups and spurs enabled the mounted warrior to employ his spear more efficiently (Pedersen 1997:131). It has been suggested that the men buried in these equestrian graves held certain political functions in the Viking Age society, associated with the expansion of the kingdom (Braathen 1989; Pedersen 1997, 2002), and the amount and quality of grave goods indicate a connection to the highest strata of the Norse society.

Thus, the occurrence of swords and the quality of many of the weapons and additional grave goods suggest that the deliberate destruction of swords and other weapons should be associated with the social elites in the Viking Age society. However, variations in the grave goods and the quality of the swords indicate that the deliberate destruction of swords was not a ritual reserved solely for the elite, but rather a practice including a wider array of individuals equipped with weapons.

20 Type M and Q, see Petersen 1919

21 Pattern welded blades or blades with inscriptions, sword types R and S, and some of the more elaborate H and K swords, see Petersen 1919.

22 C10790, C10791 (same grave), C11318, C13698, C13906, C15835, C15836 (same grave), C15935, C15973, C16023, C27317.

THE SWORD AS A SYMBOL OF POWER AND AUTHORITY

A point of departure for interpreting the meaning behind the practice of deliberately destructed swords is the social and ontological significance of swords in the Viking Age.

There are no specific mentions of the destruction of swords in funerary rituals in Early Medieval literature, even though there are several descriptions of weapons being a part of the burial. This could be due to the late date of the sources, and that the ritual destruction of swords to a large extent was a non-uttered performative ritual act, physically and bodily expressed and accomplished, and therefore not remembered or found relevant in the oral transmission of the stories. However, from Norse literature there seems to be a number of somewhat related ideas of swords as significant and charismatic objects that can offer some clues to understand the practice of the destruction of swords and other weapons.

In *Hrafnsmál* (attributed to *Thorbjorn Hornklofi*), the following passage describes the sword as a part of the kingsmen's appearance or *persona:*

> ***By their array and their gold rings, it may be seen that they are associates of the king. They possess scarlet cloaks with splendid borders, swords bound with silver, coats of ring mail, gilded baldrics and graven helmets and rings upon their arms; such things has Harald [Fairhair/Hárfagr] bestowed upon them.***
>
> ***Ravnsmaal, translated by Kershaw 1922***

The swords are here presented as an identity marker, signifying a particular status or role in connection to the king. This is one of several references to a more general conception of the sword in Iron Age and Early Medieval society, associating swords in general, and ornamented swords in particular with authority and power (Brunning 2013:243–247, see also Härke 2000; Aannestad 2015a).[23]

In addition to this general idea of swords, the written sources have numerous references to specific

23 Similar descriptions of mighty warriors and kings with weapons are plentiful in the sagas and in the mythical poetry of the Edda, as in *Gudrunskvida II* (*The Second Lay of Gudrún*), v. 19, *Laxdœla saga* (*The Saga of the people of Laxárdalr*) v. 21. For a broader discussion of the sword as a personal adornment in the Viking Age, see Aannestad 2015a.

swords: swords with personal names, specific traits, and biographies.

One of the most well-known swords in Early Medieval Norse literature is the sword *Skofnung*. *Skofnung* is mentioned in several sources, linked to a number of warriors. It was said that the sword was the best of all swords in the northern lands, renowned for its supernatural hardness and sharpness, as well as for being imbued with the spirits of the King's twelve berserkers. After King Rolf of Denmark's death, *Skeggi* broke into the grave mound and took the famous sword Skofnung that was buried with the king. In addition to *Hrolf Krakes saga* and *Kormáks saga*, Skofnung is also featured in *Islendingadråpa* and *Landnamabok* (Davidson 1994 [1962]:172).

Another well-known sword in saga literature is *Tyrfing*, known from *The Saga of Hervör and Heidrek* (Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks). In a dramatic passage, Hervor demands that her dead father, King Agantyr, give her the sword, buried with him in the grave mound on the island of Samsø in Denmark. Hervor's motive for this deed is that Tyrfing is an important symbol of royal power for Hervor to pass on to her son and heir. In the saga, Tyrfing is portrayed both as a symbol of royal power and lineage, as well as an object with certain magical powers linked both to its origin and the circumstances surrounding its production, as well as to the biographical features of the sword.

The Saga of Hervör and Heidrek is one of the legendary sagas, generally viewed as less historically accurate than other sagas, often containing references to supernatural motives and beings. However, the story of the *sword Tyrfing,* can serve as an example of a certain motif or the idea of swords in general, reflected in written sources. From *Saxo* to the Norse sagas, stories of swords with magical and symbolic characteristics are told: dangerous and magical swords that give the owner power and authority. The idea of powerful swords is probably part of an older European tradition, articulated as a central motif in *Beowulf* and other old myths (Bazelmans 1999; see also Davidson 1994 [1962]; Brunning 2013). Sue Brunning explores the idea of the 'living' sword from an interdisciplinary perspective, and focuses on the relationship between the warrior and the sword in Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian cultures from 500–1100 AD (Brunning 2013). She examines life histories, biographies, sword names, character descriptions, and various

contexts, both in archaeological material and contemporary literature. *Skofning* and *Tyrfing* have ambiguous powers, they represent both a trait and a potential, being difficult to control, but also a necessary means to gain power over people, both symbolically and physically. The tales of *Skofnung* and *Tyrfing* also exemplify an important ontological characteristic of the Viking Age: the idea that certain objects could have a personality, or be considered to have a form of life (Brunning 2013; Burström 2015; see also Lund 2009, 2011, 2017).

THE CHARISMA OF THE VIKING AGE SWORD

The term charisma is a fruitful approach to the cultural and ontological understanding of Viking Age swords in general, and the deliberate destruction of swords and other weapons in cremation graves. According to Marianne Vedeler (this volume), the term charismatic object refers to the situation where forces are present in an object. The object is no longer merely an object. It becomes a *thing of value*, linked not only to the functional or economic properties of the object, but to a broader collective narrative. The collective narrative entails the idea of the magical, transcendental, or religious power residing in the object. Through these collective narratives, the charismatic objects acquire the power to control people, and by controlling the object, you also controlled its powers (Vedeler this volume).

As stated earlier, the powerful swords in Early Medieval Norse literature are a recurring motif, representing a form of collective narrative of the sword. As an example, the sword *Tyrfing* represents the idea of the charismatic object as stated by Vedeler: an object of value and power that can be handed over from person to person, the transaction following certain given rules. Written sources mention several objects with transferable powers, objects that could transfer charisma and power from the leader, as in the term *haminga* (Price 2002).

The Norse society was a warrior society. Warfare, violence and weapons were means of power, and had symbolic importance as expressions of the warrior role and warrior values. In the Late Iron Age and Viking Age the idea of certain swords and swords in general was well known, rooted in oral histories and in the martial and material culture of a society where war and

warfare were central, both in everyday life, and as a fundamental ideological characteristic (Andrén 2006; Härke 2000; Price 2002). The extensive acts of destruction of swords and other weapons in cremation graves could be seen in connection to the swords having special powers, inalienable objects that had to be removed from circulation, with the act of destruction as a way of preventing the re-use of this potentially destructive or dangerous object. This is in line with the argument used by Reiersen (this volume), who sees the destruction of serpent-head rings in the Roman Iron Age as a destruction of specific objects with charismatic, dangerous, and non-transferrable characteristics.

There is hitherto no record of deliberately destructed swords in Danish Viking Age graves (Pedersen 2011:57). Given the correlation with deliberately destroyed swords and cremation burials, one reason for this absence could be that cremation burials from the Viking Age are few in Denmark, mainly existing north of Limfjord. Danish cremation burials dated to the Viking Age are generally considered to be modest graves with little or no grave goods (Ramskou 1951). However, unlike Norway, wetland deposits of objects, tools, weapons, and jewelry are widespread in in southern Scandinavia. Julie Lund sees the wetland depositions as a way of taking dangerous or inalienable objects out of circulation (Lund 2008, 2011, 2017). In Anglo-Saxon England, the finds of deposited weapons in wetland areas seem to increase during periods when weapons disappear from grave finds. John Hines has therefore suggested that burying weapon in graves and in wetland deposits are different solutions to the problem of handling inalienable or charismatic objects in a safe way (Hines 1997b:378–382; see also Härke 2000). Given the presumably shared understanding of certain swords as charismatic or inalienable objects in Norse society, the widespread practice of destroying weapons and especially swords in funerary rituals in Norway may be understood as being comparable to wetland deposits in southern Scandinavia.

As previously stated, the large majority of deliberately destructed swords are from cremation graves. It seems that funerary rituals had a significant impact on the treatment of weapons, and that the act of destroying swords was an integral part of the cremation ritual. Cremation of the dead is performed in various forms

throughout the Late Iron Age and Viking Age (Shetelig 1912:179–201). Even though cremation takes various forms, the general idea is that the burning of the dead often represents a rite of passage (van Gennep 1960), a transition of the individual into a different state of being (Williams 2015). Cremation of the dead can also be understood as a way of releasing the spirit of the dead (Fowler 2004, 92–93; Williams 2015), and as a form of sacrifice, giving the dead to deities (Fowler 2004:95; Østigård 2000:50).

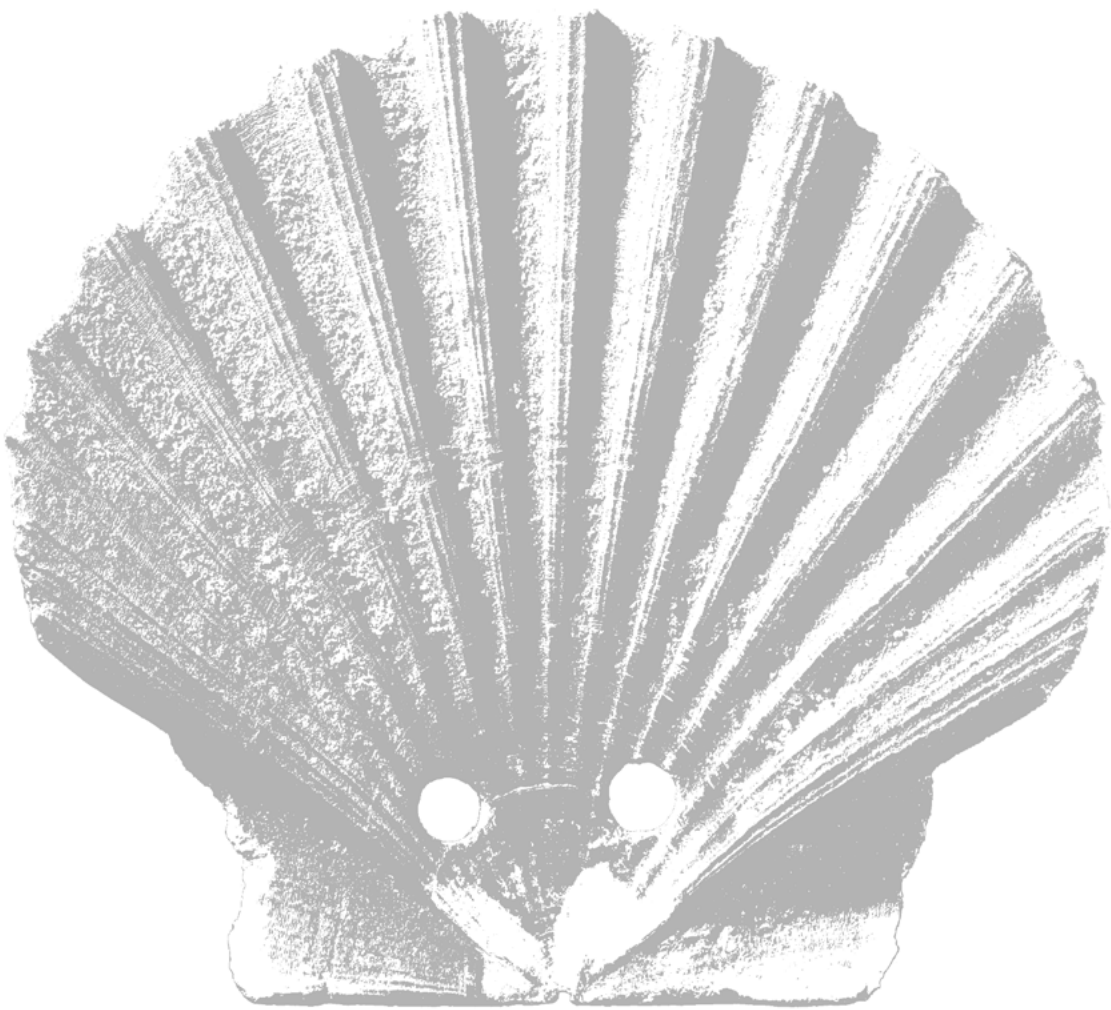
The cremation process is often one of several ways to transform the physical body in the burial, and it is linked to a sort of theme, involving the transition of other forms of material culture (Williams 2015). Thus, the destruction of swords and other weapons in cremation rituals can be seen not only as an act of 'killing' certain charismatic and potentially dangerous swords. The deliberate destruction could also be an act of transformation, either as part of a violent ritual performed during the burial helping the transition of the dead warrior, or as an act performed upon the weapon itself, transforming the power of the weapon to a different state of being. This theory also coincides with the idea of the charismatic sword, having a form of magical, transcendental, or religious power residing in the object itself.

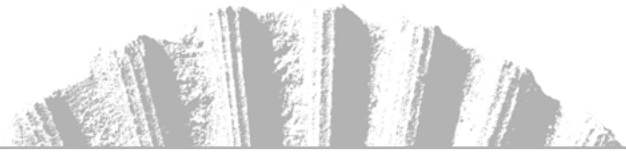
SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS

This article gives an overview of the deliberately bent and otherwise destructed swords of the late Iron Age and Viking Age in south-eastern Norway. Damage varies from careful folding of the sword blade to violent handling with blows and cuts, often including other weapons from the same grave. The destruction of objects is a practice first and foremost carried out on weapons, linking it to the warrior sphere of the Norse society. Regional variations in frequency show that culture specific traits were significant, and that the deliberate destruction of weapons in funerary rituals was one of several different practices reflecting a complex set of ideas about death and the afterlife in the Norse society. The close connection between cremation burials and the practice of destroying weapons confirms the idea that the practice should be understood as an integral part of the funerary ritual. However, the destruction of

swords in Viking Age graves cannot be fully understood without taking the collective narrative of swords in the Norse society into account. The charismatic swords of the Viking Age were magical, powerful and dangerous, and therefore needed to be handled in a safe way to protect society.

Archaeological, historical and ethnographic studies confirm that the practice of breaking and destroying objects during burial rituals was widespread from prehistory onwards in various cultures all over the world (Grinsell 1961). According to Grinsell, the reasons behind the ritual destruction of objects are multiple, varying from the mundane and practical to the spiritual and ontological (Grinsell 1961; se also Grinsell 1973; Gardeła 2016:216–217). The tales of certain charismatic swords from written sources can certainly provide a general idea of swords and weapons in the Viking Age. However, the charismatic properties of certain swords from Norse literature and poetry are not sufficient to explain the number of swords and other weapons that were bent, twisted, and in other ways broken and laid down in graves in the Viking Age. To fully grasp and understand the phenomenon of breaking and burying swords in the Viking Age society, we need more research, both technical studies of the various practices of destroying weapons and other objects, the different stages of the funerary rituals, and the religious and social contexts of burial practices. Thus, the violent destruction of swords and other weapons is a key to expanding our knowledge of the complex relationship between funerary rituals, ideas of death and the afterlife, and conceptions of war, violence and weapons in the Viking Age society.





CHAPTER 8

MEDIEVAL PILGRIM BADGES

SOUVENIRS OR VALUABLE CHARISMATIC OBJECTS?

Margrete Figenschou Simonsen

This study will consider pilgrim badges and their contexts together with written sources relating to the pilgrim phenomenon in the Medieval Period. Pilgrim badges are mostly small, metal reliefs depicting saints, holy persons, crosses, symbols or natural shells which can be connected to a place and church where relics or other devotional objects are kept. The badges were bought at the holy place and brought home. Pilgrim badges consist of two main categories, as physical objects once fastened to the outfit (cloak, hat or bag) or as impressions, facsimile reliefs, cast on medieval church bells. In Norway a total of ca. 70 original badges have been found, including facsimile reliefs and molds. In the Nordic countries altogether the number is ca. 500, including ampullas. Most of the pilgrim badges can be dated to the High and Late Medieval period, ca. 1130–1537, but some of them cannot be dated with more accuracy. The main focus in this study will be on the Norwegian material, other European finds

will be used as examples when relevant. The analysis consists of two levels: firstly, an individual level. Who were the pilgrims, what were their motives and where did they go? What did the badges mean to the owner? Transformation and change of social status through 'rites de passage', penance and indulgence are central. Secondly, a collective level, the Catholic church and the local community, will be considered. Included here are aspects of religion and magic. What was the relation of the badges to the pilgrims in medieval society, economically and socially? In relation to the function of the badges and their meaning, I want to find out how they were used as charismatic objects, and what charismatic effects they had. Were these objects perceived as a form of icon? By proximity to sanctity they were believed to have protective and healing powers. Finally, the term 'pilgrim badge' and its usefulness will be discussed, compared to 'souvenir'.

INTRODUCTION

Trondheim, on the fringe of the Catholic medieval world, was in the Middle Ages a magnet and place of attraction and the home of St. Olav's shrine. This was a sacred place for both Norwegian and international pilgrims, and the martyr became the most popular saint in the north. Today, the old pilgrim roads are used again by modern pilgrims and hikers. The pilgrimage is enjoying a renaissance period, attracting more people every year. The sacred journey or pilgrimage is an important practice in the world religions of Buddism, Islam and Christianity. Also the Greeks and Romans in antiquity went on sacred journeys to visit temples and other sacred places (Coleman & Elsner 1995). The usefulness

of the concept 'pilgrimage' in different cultural settings across time and space has been debated (see e.g. Eade & Sallnow 1991; Coleman 2002), but it will be used here, seen in a historical and culture specific context, and not as a universal homogeneous phenomenon (Coleman 2002; Eade & Sallnow 1991:2–3). The aim of the trip was the sacred place. These places had cathedrals where graves of the saints, relics, a holy picture, a miraculous cross or sculpture were located, or they represented a place or city where one believed miracles had happened (Davies 1994; Jensen 2015). Not just relics, but also pictures, icons and sculptures were different forms that transmitted sanctity after the death of a saint (Jaeger 2012:132). At the sacred places different rituals, processions and masses took place. But the motives and reasons for pilgrimage and hazardous travelling were manifold.

To bring something home, a souvenir from the Holyland or other places, was a habit harking back to the very beginning of Christendom, and the item could be a pebble, a shell, a palmleaf or a bottle of healing oil or water (Sande 2009). Today, we usually call such items 'souvenirs'. Collecting souvenirs from holidays to remember distant places and certain occasions seems a normal activity. Also for pilgrims in the Middle Ages, it was important to bring home objects which could show where you had been. Moreover their souvenirs were even more valuable, and served more needs. At the end of the 12th century the production of badges in metals such as lead and lead-tin alloy (pewter) began (Andersson 1989; Hopper 2002:134; Spencer 1968). Badges were produced and sold at the most visited sanctuaries. In Aachen a total number of 130,000 badges were sold during the feast days of 1466, which meant that this production occupied quite a lot of people (Krötzl 1994:101). Although there were other popular saints and shrines in Norway, like St. Sunniva at Selja, Bergen and St. Hallvard in Oslo, there were no badges related to them as far as we know. Norwegian pilgrim badges were only connected to St. Olav and Trondheim.

In this essay I will examine pilgrim badges, as the physical remnants of pilgrimages brought back from the sacred places with intention, i.e. as meaningful objects. Pilgrim badges are found in medieval churches and monasteries, in graves, in settlements, along medieval roads, and several new finds have been made by metal detectorists. In London and Paris, and other places,

a great number of pilgrim badges have been found in water deposits along rivers. This pattern is not recorded in Norway so far. The role and meaning of these badges are not fully understood and opinions vary. Some people see the pilgrim badges as ordinary tourist souvenirs wasted after use. I rather want to show that these objects represent valuable, charismatic and powerful amulets people cared for through life (Gilchrist 2008; Jaeger 2012; Sande 2009:99). Also, pilgrim badges had a function as a signifier of status and they represented 'the sign' of a pilgrim (Spencer 1968).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Although pilgrimages in Christianity can be traced back to the 4th century, pilgrimages from Norway and Scandinavia are seldom documented until the 10th and 11th century (Bjelland 2000; Krötzl 1994:103). The earliest sources of possible long distance pilgrimages from Norway is a Menas ampulla of clay dated to the 6th century found in Asker (C7965), and stones with runic inscriptions of Jerusalem pilgrimages from the 10th and 11th centuries (Andersson 1989:137; Krøtzl 1994:103–104). Pilgrimages to Trondheim started shortly after the death of King Olav (1030, Figure 60).

By the end of the 11th century, according to Adam of Bremen, Nidaros was a major shrine and lots of pilgrims came from faraway places (Blom 1981:307; Krøtzl 1994:109). Seen as a martyr, he was claimed a saint the year after his death (Lindow 2008:106). Christianity was established and St. Olav was to become the most popular saint in the Nordic countries (Blom 1981:307). Also in the Baltic region and the British Isles outside the Scandinavian settlements, in East Anglia, Yorkshire and the urban centers in England and northern Germany the cult of St. Olav became popular (Lindow 2008:106–107).

However, the Norwegian pilgrim tradition started before the shrine of St. Olav was established in Nidaros (Bjelland 2000; Nedkvitne 2009:131). People, in this early phase meaning the aristocracy, traveled as pilgrims to far away places like Jerusalem and Rome (Bjelland 2000; Krøtzl 1994). Harald Sigurdsson (Hardråde) visited the sacred places of Palestine in 1034, where he took a ritual bath in the River Jordan (Soga om Harald Hardråde; Krötzl 1994:104). King Sigurd Jorsalfare is probably the most well-known. He visited Santiago de Compostela in

Figure 60. St. Olavs body deposited in the shrine, ca. 1300. Detail from altar frontal, Nidaros Cathedral. Photo: Eirik I. Johnsen, © Museum of Cultural History.

1109, and Jerusalem the year after, although as an armed pilgrim on a crusade (Jensen 2015:121; Molland 1981:295). Two hundred years later the pilgrimage would become a mass phenomenon, but the Reformation put an end to international pilgrimage by forbidding it (e.g. Bjelland 2000:324; Luthen 1992:139; Molland 1981:299). In Norway, the role of the pilgrimage can still be detected in place names, stone crosses and old roads.

PILGRIM BADGES AND FACSIMILE RELIEFS: NORWEGIAN FINDS

Pilgrim badges are mostly, small, metal reliefs depicting saints, holy persons, crosses, symbols or natural shells which can be connected to a place and church where relics or other devotional objects are kept. They are decorated on one side only. The badges were bought at the holy place and brought home. Pilgrim badges consist of two main categories: physical objects or impressions, facsimile reliefs, cast on medieval church bells. In Norway a total of ca. 70 original badges have been found, including facsimile reliefs and molds. In the Nordic countries altogether the number is ca. 500, including ampullas (Andersson 1989). The badges from Scandinavia relate to a period of more than 300 years from the end of the 12th century to the beginning of the 16th century (Andersson 1989:16). The main focus in this study will be on the Norwegian material[24], other European finds will be used as examples when relevant.

Badges of lead alloys were produced in several places such as Rome, Rocamadour, Cologne and Santiago as early as the end of the 12th century (Andersson 1989:16; Spencer 1968:139). The production of pilgrim badges was licenced by the church. The producers could be different sorts of craftsmen, such as goldsmiths, mirror-makers, woodcarvers or specialists in petty wares of tin and lead, and the trade was monopolized by individual persons or certain families (Andersson 1989:18–19; Spencer 2010:7–8). In Santiago in the 15th century, production was even more organized, with unions for souvenir makers. The metal badges were formed as thin plaques,

24 Concerning the Norwegian finds, this essay is based on the works of Roar Hauglid (1938, 1944), Kurt Köster (1983), Lars Andersson (1989), and later finds documented in the university museums' databases www. unimus.no, and www.digitalt.museum.no. Recently, two pilgrim badges depicting St. Bridget of Vadstena have been recorded at Hedmarksmuseet, Hamar by the author and archaeologist Kristian Reinfjord (HKH 14424-14426).

Figure 61. St. Olav pilgrim badge, Bø church, Telemark (C36647/112), late 15th century. Height: 4.4 cm. Photo: Ellen C. Holte, © Museum of Cultural History.

free figurines, and openwork with empty spaces meant for silhouette effects and other material on the reverse (Andersson 1989; Spencer 1968). The last is a more complex type to produce. The size is mostly between 4–6 cm high. Mostly, the badges have holes, loops or pins for fastening to the clothing, hat or bag. Nevertheless, some of the pilgrim badges have no physical features for fastening (e.g. St Olav from Bø C36647/112, Figure 61).

Most of them cannot be dated with accuracy, because they mostly represent stray finds without contextual information.

Badges made of lead and lead-tin alloy (pewter) became widespread, while other metals were not that common. One reason for this may be that they were cheap and the technique simple. Lead and tin are metals with low melting points and probably did not demand highly skilled handiwork (pers. comm. Conservator Elin Storbekk, Museum of Cultural History). Badges could also have been made of perishable materials like cloth, leather or paper not surviving to today, or even valuable materials like gold and silver (Spencer 1968:137, 2010:7–12; Webb 2002:163).

Figure 62. St. Bridget pilgrim badge, Oslo (C1830), 15th century first part. Height: 6 cm. Photo: Lill-Ann Chepstow-Lusty, © Museum of Cultural History.

In Norway ca. 55 original badges are recorded. Most of them are made of lead and lead/tin alloy or copper alloy, some are natural shells and one is made of parchment (Figure 62–63).

Most of these badges have forms well-known to the places of origin, with place names around the image, though some are hard to identify because the images were used in many places. This is true especially of the depiction of Jesus on the cross (Calvary groups), and the madonna with child. Pilgrim badges depicting St. Olav and St. Bridget of Vadstena dominate. The production of pilgrim badges of St. Olav has also been documented by the finding of a casting mold, found near the medieval church of Trondenes, Harstad (Figure 64).

Other Scandinavian places visited by Norvegian pilgrims are documented by pilgrim badges from Stockholm in Sveden and Kliplev in Denmark (Figure 65)[25].

Among exotic finds originating from long distance journeys are badges from Lucca (volto santo), Rome (Peter and Paulus) and Bari in Italy (Figure 66), badges

25 T18098/c, Følling church and C1253, Hovedøya monastery.

Figure 63. St. Ursula depicted on a piece of parchment (C13793/a), Hopperstad church probably 16th century first part, Sogn og Fjordane. Photo: Lill-Ann Chepstow-Lusty, © Museum of Cultural History.

Figure 64. Mold of sandstone (above) with a casted impression (under). Trondenes, Nordland (Ts2298), 15th century first part. Photo: Tromsø University Museum ©. Production of pilgrim badges can possibly be linked to the priest Svein Erikson, who also was deacon of Nidaros.

of St. Maria, from Rocamadour, France (Figure 67) and Tours[26] (St. Martin).

Natural shells connected to St. James, assumed to originate from Santiago de Compostela in Spain, are proof of quite a long distance pilgrimage (Figure 68)[27].

Several shells and fragments of shells are represented in the Norwegian finds. Badges in the form of a shell were also cast in metal as lead and copper alloy, in different forms and sizes (Andersson 1989:107, 117; Köster 1983; Mitchiner 1986; Spencer 2010:246–247). Shell badges were also sold at Mont Saint Michel in France, but these also depict the Archangel Michael (Lamy-Lasalle 1970:Pl. XXVIII; Ward-Perkins 1993:Pl. LXX, 28). As the shell symbol was also used in decorative mounts, especially on belts, it can be difficult to sort out what represents pilgrim badges and what were mounts for decorative use (see e.g. Egan & Pritchard 2002; Spencer 2010). Several recent detector finds in eastern Norway belong to this

26 Selje monastery B9025/c, Bryggen in Bergen BRM0/50364, BRM0/50366, Lübeck nr. 7425

27 KHM: C53157, C60747, C60754, C59959, Aks.2018/21, Hamar: OF97399, Trondheim: N39053, N39926, 4N40763, N160576, N4609

group and need to be discussed further[28]. The shell was also used as a general symbol of pilgrimage and could be incorporated into other items.

Intermediate, or middle-range pilgrimages are documented by pilgrim badges from Canterbury (Thomas Beckett, Figure 69), Maastricht (Servatius), Elende (Madonna), Cologne (St Ursula, The Three Magi/Kings), Gottsbüren (oblat with crucifixion) and Königslutter (Christ with Peter and Paul, and Emperor Lothar II)[29].

The contexts for the Norwegian finds comprise two main categories: church finds and finds from urban settlements. Today, more stray finds have been uncovered because of metal detectors in rural areas, near medieval churches and ancient roads. This corresponds well to Sweden and Denmark, but here too several pilgrim graves have been excavated with pilgrim badges in situ (Andersson 1989). Many pilgrim graves have also been excavated in Germany (Köster 1983). A long tradition in Norway was to bury people in churches, under the floor. New burials have been dug into older ones, and may have disturbed the context and find situation. Because of this, and in comparison with neighbouring countries, there is reason to believe that many of the pilgrim badges found in churches originated from graves, and that possible grave finds have been underestimated.

The badges are commonly seen as a result of pilgrimages made by individuals, who by foot, horse or ship made the journey themselves. This is of course difficult to know for sure. Falsifications and replicas, or obtaining badges through theft or as gifts must have been part of the medieval world as indicated in contemporary literature (e.g. Webb 2002:73; 163 with references).

The practice of casting copies of pilgrim badges on church bells seems to be a tradition in the Rhine area in Germany and in the Scandinavian countries in the Late Medieval Period (Andersson 1989:20; Hauglid 1944). In the work of Lars Andersson (1989) he refers to 80 Scandinavian bells, whereof 7 were Norwegian medieval bells. This includes medieval church bells in Gjerde, Sauda, Ullensvang and Nedstryn churches in the west, Rakkestad and Hol churches in eastern Norway, and Alstahaug

28 One way is to look at the holes and riffles and the technique used. According to Köster the medieval badges have two holes at the muscle part, and riffles on both sides (C59958, C60754, C60747).

29 Hamar: HKH13662, Selje monastery B9025d and Bergen BRM0/2802, Voss church, Bergen: BRM0/50365, Ma101, Voss church

Figure 65. Pilgrim badge St. Hjaelper, Hovedøya monastery, Oslo (C1253), Late Medieval. Photo: Lill-Ann Chepstow-Lusty, © Museum of Cultural History.

Figure 66. Pilgrim badge St. Nicolaus, (C34738/B049_255), ca. 1300/1400. Lom church, Oppland. Height: 4.5 cm. Photo: Lill-Ann Chepstow-Lusty, © Museum of Cultural History.

Figure 67. Fragment of pilgrim badge depicting Madonna de Rocamadour, 13th-14th century, Sjøhaugen, Nordland (Ts12291). Photo: Julie Holme Damman, ©Tromsø University Museum.

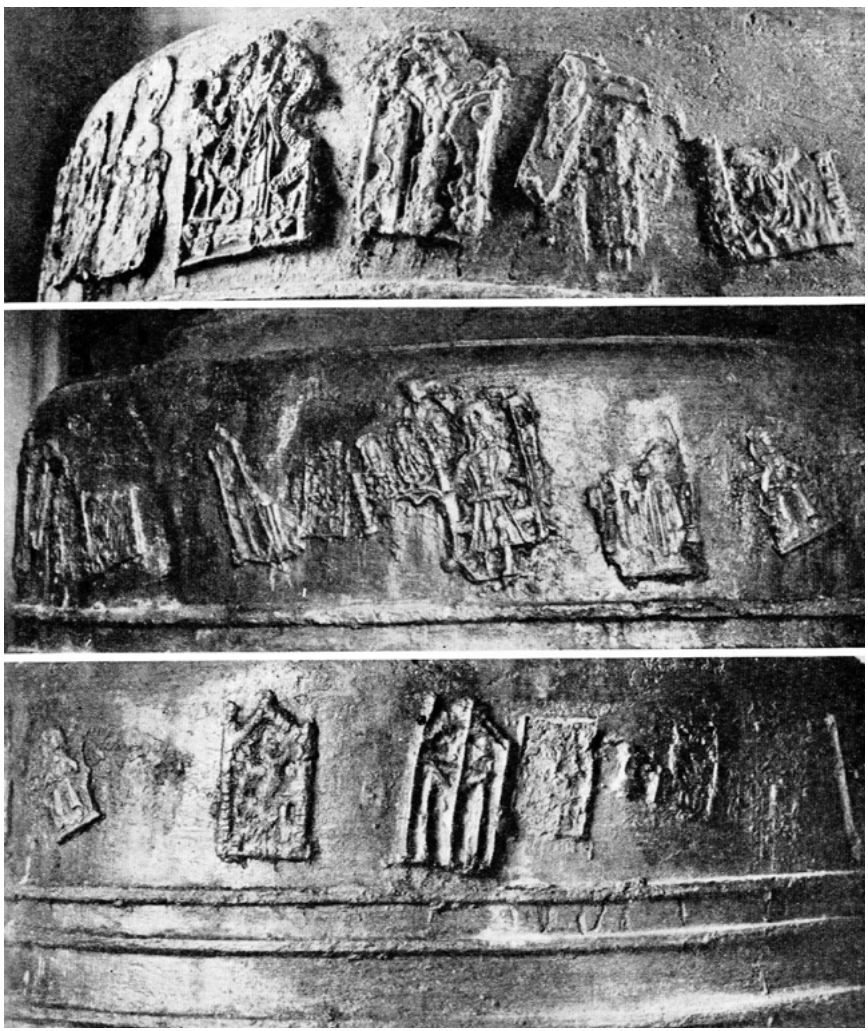
Figure 68. Shell badge, Alstadhaug church, Nordland, (T-18846-134). Height 7.3 cm. Photo: Per E. Fredriksen, © NTNU University Museum.

Figure 69. Pilgrim badge depicting St. Thomas Beckett, (HKH13662). Detector find from Domkirkeodden, Hamar, Hedmark. Width: 1.6 cm. Photo: Margrete Figenschou Simonsen, Museum of Cultural History.

church in Trøndelag (Andersson 1989; de Groot 2015; Hauglid 1944). The bells generally have two or more pilgrim badge reliefs around the rim, but one of the Gjerde bells has an exceptional number of images (Andersson 1989; de Groot 2015; Hauglid 1944; Lange 1986; www.niku.norgeskirker.no, Figure 70).

The reliefs of pilgrim badges on the bells are mostly of the same type as the original badges, e.g. St. Bridget, St. Olav and St. Servatius, but they also throw light on sacred places not documented on the original badges, like St. Brynolf in Skara, Sweden (Gjerde, little bell). Unfortunately many of them are Calvary depictions without a known place of origin. What do these images represent and how should they be understood? To decorate the bells with images of known saints seems an obvious reason but perhaps not the only one. Or are they some kind of votive offering or gift? (e.g. Andersson 1989:20–22; Hauglid 1944; Åmark 1965). The images are probably not cast in the bell metal. It is more likely that a copy or facsimile relief of an original badge is put on the bell's surface when it was made (Andersson 1989:21–22; Hauglid 1944:63–64, Åmark 1965). Examples of identical images from one bellmaker indicate that badges were

Figure 70. Pilgrim badges, Gjerde church little bell ca. 1500, Etne, Hordaland. After Hauglid 1944: 67.



copied in a mold and not melted down (Andersson 1989:21–22).

Instead of personal, physical objects the facsimile reliefs are copies of objects, and the relation to the original object is diffuse. We do not know how the images were copied or who the owners of the original badges were. Nevertheless, they are images of known and popular saints and holy persons and well-known religious situations, like Jesus on the cross at Calvary, St. Servatius, St. Olav and St. Bridget with their attributes. Their use is quite different though, and can be seen as serving the society or collective, the church and the parish. This question will be discussed later in this essay.

Figure 71. St. Sebald and fellow pilgrims, Legenda Aurea, 1492. After Gad and Gad 1975:105.

Figure 72. Part of wooden staff, with a preserved iron stud. The staff is fastened with four iron wedges and a ring. Detector find near the Pilgrim road, Hardbakken, Dovre, Oppland (C59186). The wood is radiocarbon dated to the Early Medieval Period, 870 ± 30 BP, 1050-1140 AD calibrated (Beta-353188). Photo: Mårten Teigen, © Museum of Cultural History

STATUS AND DRESS

Clothing and bodily adornment are important ways of expressing identity. In the Middle Ages dress was regulated according to social class or group, status and income. Certain colors and fabrics were legally restricted and controlled (Effros 2002; Hodges 2000; Høiaas 2009:40–41; Molaug 2009:51–52). Dress and clothing can be seen as a coded language with different symbols and signals, and clothing was used to distinguish particular social groups (Effros 2002).

Pilgrims were easily recognizable by their outfits and accessories. At the start of the journey their equipment was consecrated, blessings being given by the bishop or priest (Luthen 1995:19). The pilgrim became a member of a distinct social group in the church (ordo) (Halvorsen 1996:21). Their status was marked by certain elements: a long dress of cheap fabric, a staff, a bag and also a hat with a broad rim, folded upwards in the front (Halvorsen 1996:21, Figure 71).

The staff often seems to have had a metal stud on the end (Figure 72).

This is well documented in paintings, on gravestones, and described in texts of the time (see e.g. Gad & Gad 1975; Hopper 2002; Jensen 2015; Luthen 1992). Also, excavated pilgrim graves with badges in situ confirm this pattern (Andersson 1989; Köster 1983). In the *Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer writes: 'They set thir signes upon their hedis, & som upon thir cappe' (cited in Hopper 2002:133). The badges could also be hung around the neck as pendants (Ward-Perkins 1993:256). An old word

for 'pilgrim badge' is 'pilgrim sign' which indicates that the badges had a function as a signifier of status (Spencer 1968). The badge was a visible sign of the pilgrim's status and credentials as a pilgrim, and authenticated the trip (Hopper 2002:133). Pilgrim badges also served as personal adornment, decorating the clothing and manifesting prestige in relation to the range of places visited (Hopper 2002:133; Ward-Perkins 1993:256). William Langland, a 14th century cleric writes: 'You can see by the signs in my hat how widely I have travelled – on foot and in all weather, seeking out shrines of the saints for the good of my soul' (cited in Hopper 2002:133). These objects were quite visible on the bearer's outfit, especially shells recorded to be as much as 8 cm high[30]. These badges, combined with other equipment and clothing, made these individuals easily recognizable.

The anthropologists Victor and Edith Turner have claimed that Christian pilgrimages can be defined as rites of passage, a liminal phase in transition between social roles (Turner & Turner 1978; see also Jensen 2015:68–71). They are characterized by a liberation from profane social structures symbiotic with a specific religious system. Other common traits are the joining together of companions, purity rituals and a change in social status. Criminals could, for example, go on a pilgrimage and gain the social status of a free person, and in some way enter a new social class. Through the rituals at the sacred places the individual was transformed. In a society where most people were illiterate, physical proof must have been important, e.g. physical objects or letters. For pilgrims awaiting a new status as a free person, a pilgrim badge must have been important evidence of their pilgrimage, and thus the badge could serve as a visual sign and proof of a fulfilled pilgrimage. In the year 1199 Pope Innocent III gave the priests in the Vatican the right to cast and sell 'lead and pewter signs bearing the images of the apostles Peter and Paul with which visitors adorn themselves for the increase of their own devotion and as proof of their accomplished journey' (Spencer 1968:141 with refernces, see also Molland 1981:294, or Webb 2002:163). A pilgrim was regarded as a holy person, a 'sancrosanct' that all good Christians were expected to help and give food and shelter (Spencer

30 Shell: N40763, Trondheim and C33968/TG 1869, Tønsberg. Even bigger ones existed, see Spencer 1968.

1968:143). The pilgrim was a person of unquestionable honor. That pilgrims would be respected and helped on their journey was assured by several letters and laws from 1152 onwards (Blom 1981:308; Luthen 1992:28–29). Along the roads, shelters (sælehus) for pilgrims were built (Blom 1981:308; Weber 2007:186–187). In the National Act (1274) roads, boats and grasslands for the pilgrim's horse were protected and the king's men had a duty to serve them (Blom 1981:308; Luthen 1992: 29–30). The grasslands were called Olavs vanger. The badges could serve as easily recognizable passports and signs of persons demanding respect and help (Spencer 1968:143). It was important to legitimate oneself, and false pilgrims are also mentioned in written sources.

From illustrations and excavated pilgrim graves it seems as though the pilgrim's dress was quite common and standardized. Placing the pilgrim badges on the hat, coat or bag was the norm in life and death. A humble attitude with cheap clothing seems to be the rule, at least when it comes to the ordinary and religious pilgrims. But pilgrimages and visiting the shrines were common practices among people from all classes, after a first phase connected to the upper class and warrior elite (e.g. Bjelland 2000; Krötzl 1994; Nedkvitne 2009). In both paintings and literature, people are depicted with exclusive clothing: the middle and upper class pilgrims and secular pilgrims (Hodges 2000, Figure 73; Winny 1980).

There were also pilgrims who did not carry a staff, but traveled by horseback or by boat (Olsen 2013). In the general prologue of the *Canterbury Tales* (end of 14th century, Winny 1980), pilgrims are described in great detail: the monk had a gold pin to fasten his hood, the merchant had a beaver hat from Flanders, the lawyer had a belt of silk (lines 196, 274, 331). The widow from Bath had scarlet socks and new shoes, pearls, sharp spores and a hat 'as brood as a bokeler'[31] . She had been to Jerusalem, Rome, Bologne, Santiago and Cologne (lines 467–475). Only the pardoner is mentioned with a pilgrim badge, 'a vernicle from Rome sewn on his cappe'[32] (line 687). Though this must be interpreted as a satire of moral decay in the Late Medieval Period, since the pilgrimage

31 A bokeler is medieval shield type (No. buklare)

32 A pardoner was a person selling indulgences and the vernicle (Veronica) is a pilgrim badge with the image of Christ's face, sold in Rome. See e.g. Spencer 2010: 251-252.

Figure 73. Canterbury pilgrims, unknown artist 1455-62. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

is described as a holiday excursion with other than religious motives, Chaucer's poem tells us that pilgrims were all kinds of people and that not everyone was humble and poor (Winny 1980:6–7). The picture of the pilgrim is probably more complex and varied than is often indicated. The dress of travelling nobility and secular pilgrims was quite different from those of the poor beggar or criminal (Hodges 2000). However, Bridget of Vadstena, a pilgrim of the aristocracy, saint and founder of the Bridgettines, was depicted in the later Middle Ages with traditional pilgrim equipment: staff, bag and hat with pilgrim badges (Figure 74).

These show that the symbols of a pilgrim were still the same in the 15–16th century.

Figure 74. St. Bridget of Vadstena. The pilgrim badges on her hat probably are meant to show pilgrim badges as the Holy face (Rome) and the three oblates (Wilsnack), The Bavarian State Library. After Luthen 1992:73.

MOTIVES

Why people went on long and often hazardous journeys, is hard to understand in our secular society. Research on modern pilgrimages has shown that aspects of the physical trip in itself, as well as some kind of spirituality, may be relevant factors across time and space (e.g. Jensen 2015). Letters, pilgrim passports, wills and property lists, along with contemporary literature are different source materials for illuminating motives. For some pilgrims it was not something they did voluntarily, thus the trip could have been forced upon them as penance for crimes. Prestige, combined with warfare, were central factors for the elite pilgrims who went to Palestine in the early and high Middle Ages (Bjelland 2000; Nedkvitne 2009). Other motives often seem to be connected to healing, such as causes of illness, help for oneself or others, giving thanks for help received and blessings, as well as redemption of one's own sins or penance for crimes committed, or perhaps just a wish to travel (Hamilton 2003:106–107; Jensen 2015:124). Pilgrimages were used as punishment for incest, sorcery and murder (Molland 1981:297; Jensen 2015:124)[33]. The motive of pure devotion was also perhaps always relevant (Krötzl 1994:100). Pilgrimages were sometimes combined with other needs like trade, clerical meetings, and warfare (crusades) (Bjelland 2000; Krötzl 1994:100; Luthen 1992). Several pilgrim badges have been found at

33 DN VIII, nr. 122, for Rome, 1339. DN XI nr. 249, for Trondheim and Vadstena, 1482, DN IX nr. 94, for a 7 year pilgrimage outside Norway, 1325. DN VIII nr. 9, for Rome and Dacia, 1320-1330.

Bryggen, Bergen (BRM0/50364, BRM0/50365, BRM0/50366, Lübeck nr. 7475), which may indicate a link between the Hanseatic tradesmen and pilgrimages, and that visits to shrines were also combined with trade. In 1347 King Magnus Eriksson applied to the pope for permission to visit the Holyland, and to bring with him falcons to sell to the Sultan of Iraq and other Arabian customers (Luthen 1992:30). The link to trade can also be seen in the spreading of the cult of St. Olav to the British Isles and Germany (Lindow 2008:106–107).

Furthermore, people made a vow of pilgrimage which was binding and hard or impossible not to fulfill. The merit gained by travel and worship could outweigh the accumulation of sins and ensure salvation for the individual pilgrim. Some places had more to give than others, and a system of measuring this existed. Indulgences, or the remission of temporal sin, became a major motive for pilgrimages, but the relationship between forgiveness and penance was unclear to the secular people (Halvorsen 1996:20; Hamilton 2003:108–109).

Cathedrals and shrines attracted pilgrims. To stay for special feastdays and participate in masses and processions provided extra merit. The chance for a miracle cure was easiest through proximity to the relics or other holy objects in the sanctuaries. It was generally understood that relics could cure illness and protect against all kinds of danger (Vedeler 2009:74). Every miracle was precisely recorded, and the incident documented in the hagiography or miracle book. Studies of recorded miracles show that they happened both close to and far from the shrines, after the visit (Andersson 1989). Miracles often happened during masses or sermons during which a lot of people were gathered (Andersson 1989; Krötzl 1994:226–228). In Trondheim, several miracles happened on Olav's feast days. Pilgrims with illnesses were placed near the relics for healing, and could stay there for a longer time, day and night; they could also sleep in the church. The relics could also be held over the pilgrim, moved around the person's body, or people could sleep close to it (Krötzl 1994:217, 227–228).

In the *Canterbury Tales* we meet pilgrims with other than devotional motives, like leisure and curiosity, and searching for a new spouse (Lunden 1992; Winny 1980:6–7). This may indicate that motives varied and that religious motives were not necessarily the most important for every pilgrim. Pilgrimages could in the

Late Medieval Period also be made by professionals who undertook the journey on behalf of others.[34] This profession, called 'palmerer', has survived in the surname 'palmer' (Hopper 2002:133; Spencer 2010:4). To sum up, the pilgrimage as a mass phenomenon, included different social groups with different motives, not only religious ones.

AMULETS

An amulet is an object carried on the body or kept at home to protect against affliction (Gilchrist 2008:124). Its protective powers could be healing, apotropaic or exorsistic (ibid.). In a study of British finds, Roberta Gilchrist lists different types of amulets used in medieval graves: textual amulets, charms and consecrated objects. Pilgrim badges belong to the group of consecrated objects, sacralized by physical contact with relics or a shrine. This turned them into secondary relics with apotropaic power (Gilchrist 2008:129 with references; Spencer 2010:248). Pilgrim badges found in graves are placed by the head or the legs of the deceased, and in one case the badge is related to a bag. In one female grave a badge in the form of a Pièta was found. Analysis shows that the deceased had suffered from severe rickets, and the badge had probably served as an amulet (Gilchrist 2008:129–130). In another grave a lead sheet with animal hair was placed on a man's leg. The animal hair probably signified healing magic. In about 60 medieval graves from western Europe, lead papal bullae were found placed in the hands or on the chest of the dead. The bullae's deposition in this context is explained either as once attached to a papal indulgence document for the dead individual, or the lead itself may have served as an amulet (Gilchrist 2008:129–130). The images of Peter and Paul on the bullae, may also be a parallel to coins with emperor portraits, which in early medieval contexts, together with bracteates and medallions, were used for protective purposes. Finds in different contexts, e.g. settlements, show that the bullae were used a long time after their original use

34 A document in the archives confirms this. It says: 'Brother Klaus at St. Bridget's altar in Vadstena monastery, confesses that Eilif Olafssön has correctly made his Pilgrimage with Confession and Offering. Herbrand Aasulfssön from Romenes in Skien county, "Be it as good and powerful as if the Man himself had done it"'. DN I, letter nr. 898, dated 1472.

attached to documents, probably as amulets for apotropaic or protective reasons. In Gilchrist's study she also finds that on some rare occasions 'magic' objects were deposited with the deceased. These objects are fossilized sea urchins, pieces of lead, coins, single beads, rods, ash, pearls, white stones, ancient objects (Roman), pearls, potsherds, tiles, jet and amber. Gilchrist thinks these were intended to protect the dead, or for healing rather than guarding against demonic spirits (Gilchrist 2008:148). These graves break the normal pattern of the Christian burials, as Christian graves usually do not contain grave goods or coffins. Of primary importance in Christian belief was maintaining physical integrity, so that the body was able to be transformed and resurrected (Gilchrist 2008:121). Amulets, instead of objects of commemorative display, were therefore preferred as grave goods. Gilchrist suggests that the magico-medical charms placed with the dead were intended to treat or heal the corpse in the grave to prepare for resurrection on Judgment Day. This exemplifies, according to Gilchrist, the medieval belief that the body might heal after death, and is not only related to saints but also to common people (Gilchrist 2008:149).

The metal lead seems special, and there are interesting parallels in small crosses and small bent pieces/packages or amulets of lead with runic or Latin inscriptions, which were found several places in Scandinavia and are dated to the Middle Ages[35]. They have been found in different contexts, such as burials and settlements, but most of them are stray finds (Gjerløw 1980:18–22; Imer & Stemann-Petersen 2016). The inscriptions are either Christian or magic formulas, which can be interpreted as apotropaic. Also, in English and French burials lead-plates with necrologic or exorsistic inscriptions have been found from the period of ca. 1000–1200 (Gjerløw 1980:18–22). A church meeting held in Arboga, Sweden in 1412 decided that 'incriptions in lead' (skrift i bly) to prevent illness and fever were forbidden (Ejerfeldt 1981:217). This shows that lead was used for magical purposes in spells and charms.

The deposition of consecrated objects, like pilgrim badges, papal bullae, and inscriptions of sacred names, suggests no clear distinction between magic and religious amulets placed in the grave. The boundary

35 Called 'runebrev', i.e. 'rune letters'.

between religion and magic seems indistinct, and according to Gilchrist (2008:123), even demonic magic is a type of religious practice in which spirits are called on for favors. New types of amulets, in medieval graves compared to earlier periods, like rods and textual amulets, are examples of a redirection of folk magic serving Christian purposes. She concludes that people put charms and materials with occult powers in the graves to heal or transform the corpse, to ensure its resurrection and to protect the dead in purgatory (Gilchrist 2008:153). Hybridization in the liturgy of the medieval church is also seen in the use of older, pagan 'magic' rituals, such as the use of water for the newborn in baptizing, and the use of the ritual combing of the priest's hair before mass (Lasko 1956:343; Simonsen 2015; Steinsland & Sørensen 1994:72).

In urban settlements like Paris and London, but also in Kalmar, Uppsala and in Lödöse, pilgrim badges were found in river deposits, springs and harbour basins (Andersson 1989:19; Hopper 2002:133; Merrifield 1987:108–109, 113). It has been claimed that the river finds show that pilgrim badges were just ordinary tourist junk thrown away after use (e.g. Sande 2009). In the Thames not only badges, but also a lot of coins, knives and swords, were found bent and folded before deposition (Merrifield 1987:110–113). The deposition of votive gifts or offerings in waterlogged places such as moors, springs and wells was a ritual that had a long tradition in Europe. The bending of the objects has been explained as an ancient pagan form of 'killing' an object to be devoted (Merrifield 1987:91). Instead of items thrown away as rubbish, river finds indicate votive offerings.

In a cupboard (triptych) in Voss's medieval church, four pilgrim badges were found together (Andersson 1989; Hauglid 1938). The badges were found in 1936 when the church was restored (Hauglid 1938:117). In England, scallop shells have been documented as votive offerings put into the foundations of new buildings, and as votive offerings in particular churches (Spencer 2010:248 with references). In Selja, Sogn og Fjordane, in connection with a grave, five pilgrim badges were found together in a clump, stitched together (Hauglid 1938:117)[36]. The pilgrim badges were deposited outside the coffin, probably

36 B9025a-d. Their origin are Bari, Lucca, Maastricht and Noblat, one is not identified according to place (Hauglid 1938, Andersson 1989)

put in a bag or purse, but not placed on the skeleton. This find indicates the use of badges as amulets, not necessarily placed on the body.

Many of the Norwegian finds of pilgrim badges are without loops, clasps or pins for fastening. Badges without such a system, were perhaps not used on the clothing, bag or hat. They could have been used as 'loose' amulets put in a purse, a bag or put away for protecting the home[37].

PILGRIM BADGES AS CHARISMATIC OBJECTS, ICONS AND RELICS

Charisma can be explained as supernatural and exeptional powers or qualities of divine origin or exemplary, special talents or gifts, which create admiration (www.brittanica.com, Jaeger 2012:11). Stephan Jaeger claims that charisma is also a quality in works of art, which can be seen in its effects or the reactions of people. Some of these qualities are: it enlarges/heroizes the person who possesses it, it inspires imitation, and it stimulates the imagination (Jaeger 2012:22–23). As with persons with charisma, charismatic art can transform a devotee. The pilgrim badge often has an image of a holy person or a saint, on the front. This image can be defined as an icon, an imitation or mimesis of a holy person. The icon recreates the presence of the saint. Icons are powerful images, through their visions of the divine. Divine power resides in the image. It operates in a dialogue with the worshipper. For believers the saints are 'alive' in the image, and use their power in miracles and intercessions, where they can transform a person or a situation (Jaeger 2012:123). Also, through miracle stories, the saints existence and incidents related to them were 'documented'. A goal for the pilgrim was to come close to the saint and their power, since prayer was then most effective (Solhaug 2009:56). A parallel to the icons are the crucifixes and crosses and other miracle working sculptures, visited by pilgrims for

37 Examples: St. Olav's badges, C36695, C36647/112, C59902, shell: C59958, C60747 and Beckett badge HKH13662.

cures and devotion[38]. In the saint's image the saint was present, and could perform miracles (Solhaug 2009:61). The French called the producers of the pilgrim badges 'miracliers' (Spencer 2010:7). There were in fact reports that people were cured by touching pilgrim badges from Santiago, Rocamadour and Canterbury (Spencer 2010:17). In addition, the pilgrim badges are forms of relics, because of their physical contact with the sacred. They were consecrated objects, which means sacred. A relic is a real physical object related to the saint, or the body itself. According to Jaeger relics work by means of their aura, which can be explained as the sum or accumulation of all the associations that can be linked to an object, and the time gone by (Jaeger 2012:99). The object/relic was real and it had touched the saint. Although pilgrim badges are not real relics, they have been physically close to the shrine. The saints bodies represented healing power and light, which made the graves sacred (Angenendt 2016:18). This divine power could be transmitted to the individual believer by sight or touch (Jensen 2015:117). The aura principle may have played an important role in the transmission. Icons and relics transmit sanctity through their holy powers, and this was why pilgrims were attracted to them, and undertook hazardous journeys to reach the sacred places. Charismatic art/objects function when people want to live in the higher world they depict, and to behave according to its laws (Jaeger 2012:42–43). The enlarging effect and otherness from everyday life, which the pilgrim badges represent, make them objects of the sublime.

The aura and character as a secondary or indirect relic, make these objects charismatic objects. As valuable amulets, icons and relics they have a sublime character. They represent objects from another realm than everyday life. They were carried, used or given away as votive gifts for their protective, healing and powerful character. Seen in this manner, a pilgrim badge represented more than a simple souvenir, a memory of a certain occasion, proof of fulfilled pilgrimage, or

38 In Røldal, a miracle working crucifix 'sweated' curing droplets (see page 23). In Borre a miraculous cross was venerated by pilgrims far away, also by Queen Margrete I. The Madonna of Rocamadour was a crude wooden sculpture much venerated. In Norway three pilgrim badges witness this pilgrimage: BM34, BM6242a, Ts12291. In Kliplev, Denmark there was a miracle working crucifix called Sankt Hjaelper, one badge from this place is found in the church of Hovedøya monastery (C1253, Figure 65).

a way to distinguish social groups. Nevertheless, one should not forget that the pilgrim badges could also have functioned as souvenirs, though I think this was not their primary role (e.g. Webb 2002:164–166). Secular badges with religious motifs were also produced, and sold at religious festivals and feast days (e.g. Mitchiner 1986; Spencer 2010). These badges were perhaps ordinary souvenirs in the modern sense.

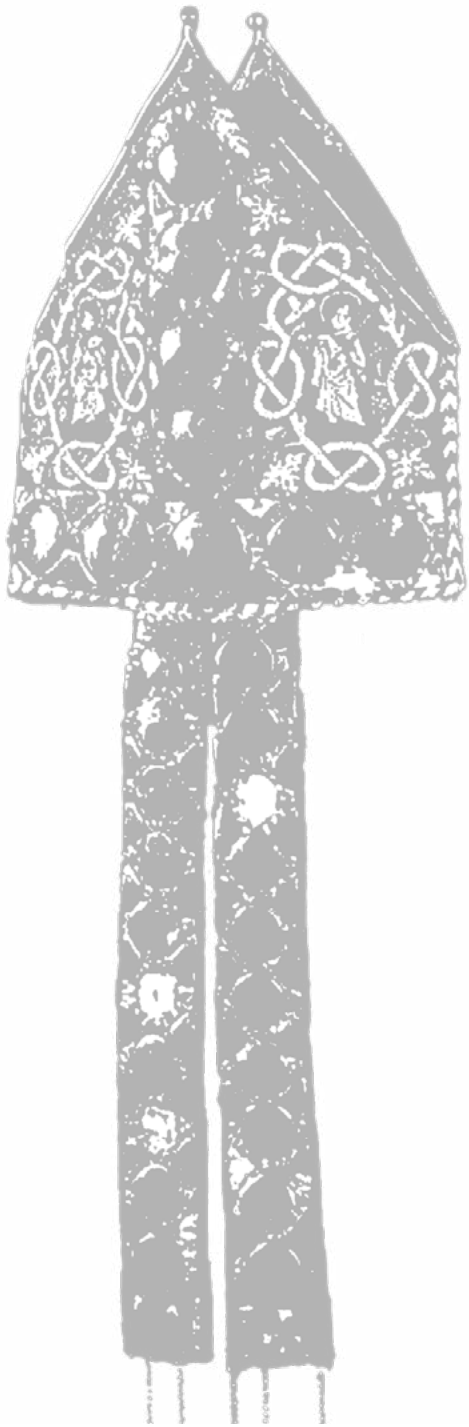
But what is the link to the pilgrim badges on church bells? What do they have in common? It cannot be the physical object, because the bells do not have the objects, but a facsimile of the original, if the theory is correct. Divine power resides in the image itself, with the holy person. This makes them powerful images, and can explain why pilgrim badges were copied and put on church bells. Perhaps in the medieval way of thinking, the powerful images would protect the church and disseminate divine power whenever the bell was ringing. Their importance and meaning beyond the personal level is thus manifested in medieval church bells, spreading out their holy powers in the parish, hidden but not lost.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Pilgrim badges were meaningful objects with several functions. Instead of a cheap souvenir thrown away after use, it could serve as a 'valuable' souvenir commemorating a distant place and a long journey. This would bestow prestige. However, the term souvenir does not cover all the different layers of meaning attached to the badge. The pilgrim badge also functioned as a travel pass and proof of a fulfilled pilgrimage. As a sign of status as a pilgrim, it could transform the individual into a holy person, a sacrosanct. The badge was also a sign that the sinner had done penance, and had a new status as a free person. Through the images of saints and holy persons the badges represented icons, i.e. holy images. Also, physical contact with shrines, relics and other veneration objects, turned them into indirect relics. These qualities made them charismatic objects and powerful amulets. As amulets they could be used in magic, for protective and healing functions, or could serve as apotropaic objects. They were probably seen as miracle working objects. Their meaningfulness and qualities were reasons for decorating church bells with

pilgrim badges. That these badges were used on the bells, tells us that they were perceived as 'real' religious images with a certain value. The use of pilgrim badges indicates that the distinction between religion and magic in the Middle Ages was unclear. As holy images with divine power they could protect the church and parish. Every time the bell was ringing holy power was being spread out into the parish. The pilgrim badges were charismatic objects of the sublime.

The concept 'pilgrim badge' is broader than the former 'pilgrim sign'. This enables a broader perspective, which can more successfully convey the different functions of these objects. The difficult distinction between religious and secular badges can also be included and, as shown above, this is important as well.



CHAPTER 9

THE LINKÖPING MITRE

ECCLESIASTICAL TEXTILES AND EPISCOPAL IDENTITY

Ingrid Lunnan Nødseth

Questions of agency have been widely discussed in art history studies in recent decades, with scholars such as Alfred Gell and W. T. Mitchell arguing that works of art possess the qualities or powers of living beings. Recent scholarship has questioned whether Max Weber's notion of charisma as a personal quality can be extended to the realm of things such as charismatic objects or charismatic art. Textiles are particularly interesting in this regard, as clothing transforms and extends the corporal body acting as a 'social skin', this problematizes the human/object divide. As such, ecclesiastical dress could be considered part of the priest's social body, his identity. The mitre was especially symbolic and powerful as it distinguished the bishop from the lower ranks of the clergy. This article examines the richly decorated Linköping mitre, also known as Kettil Karlsson's mitre as it was most likely made for this young and ambitious bishop in the 1460s. I argue that the aesthetics and rhetoric of the

Linköping mitre created charismatic effects that could have contributed to the charisma of Kettil Karlsson as a religious and political leader. This argument, however, centers not so much on charismatic objects as on the relationship between personal charisma and cultural objects closely identified with charismatic authority.

The Swedish rhyme chronicle *Cronice Swecie* describes how bishop Kettil Karlsson in 1463 stripped himself of his episcopal vestments (biscopsskrud) in the cathedral of Linköping, only to dress for war with shield and spear (skiöll och spiwt) like any man who could fight well with a lance in combat:

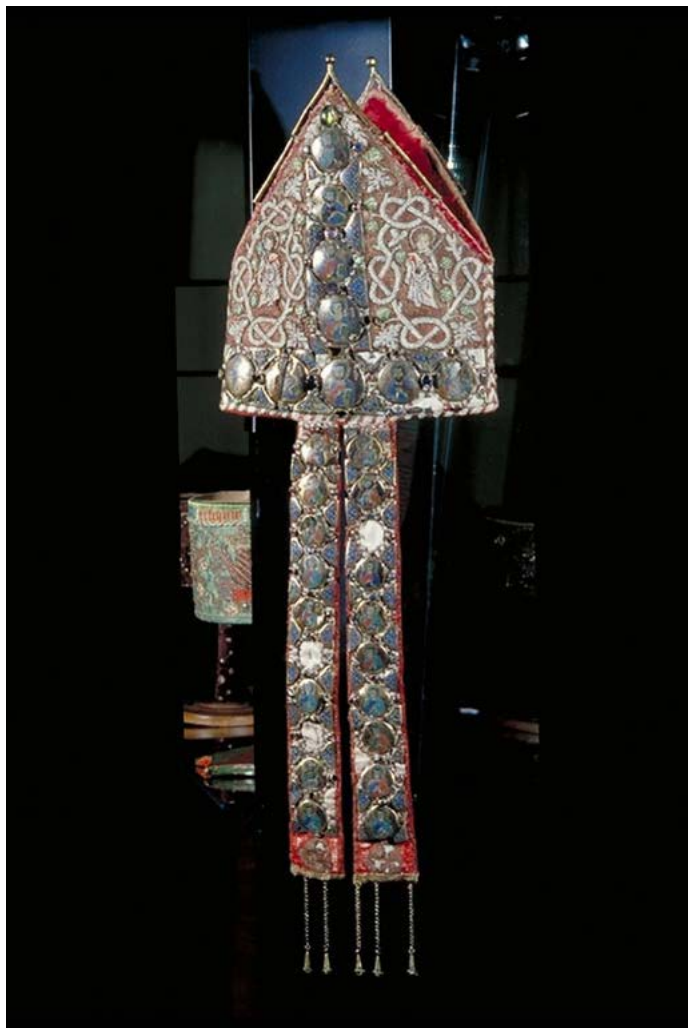
> ***I lynköping nedherlagde iag myn biscopsskrud och tog ighen både skiöll och spiwt / Och redde mig wth som en örligx man som glaffwen i striid well brytha kan.***[39]

> ***[In Linköping I laid down my episcopal vestments and took up both shield and spear / And equipped myself as a warrior who can break lances in combat.]***

This public and rhetorical event transformed the young bishop from a man of prayer into the leader of a major army. It is also testimony to the intimate relationship between clothing and identity. This article explores this relationship by looking at one of Kettil Karlsson's most precious vestments: the Linköping mitre (Figure 75). The mitre is a headdress reserved for bishops (and some abbots), in the shape of a tall triangular folding cap with two lappets hanging down from the back. Covered in silk, gold and pearl embroidery and decorated with cloisonné enamels, jewels and metal detailing,

39 G. E. Klemming, *Svenska Medeltidens Rim-Krönikor. Nya Krönikans Fortsättningar eller Sture-Krönikorna, vol. 3*, (Stockholm: P. A. Norstedt & Söner, 1867). 152. Takk til førsteamanuensis Ivar Berg (NTNU) for hjelp med oversettelsen.

Figure 75. The Linköping mitre on display, showing the back of the headdress; with St Peter and St Paul, and the lappets decorates with byzantine enamels. © Gabriel Hildebrand, Historiska Museet, Stockholm.



this luxurious vestment is one of the most fascinating objects displayed in the textile galleries at the History Museum in Stockholm (inv.no. 3920:1). Unlike many of its counterparts in the museum, we can say with a reasonable degree of certainty where this headdress was made, for whom it was made, and where it was in use. Previous research has, however, focused mainly on techniques of manufacture, dating and provenance (Branting & Lindblom 1928; Estham & Nisbeth 2001). This reflects a general trend within scholarly approaches to medieval textile art, where questions of visual context and meaning have been largely overlooked. In his biography of the Fermo Chasuble, Avinoam Shalem points out that 'Any scholar writing on, say, the use of light and shadow in the paintings of Rembrandt or the sculptures of Dan Flavin is not necessarily expected to provide us with a color analysis of the pigments used by Rembrandt or the electrical system of the fluorescents of Flavin.' (Shalem 2017:9). There is no doubt that scientific technical analyses have been, and will continue to be, important to the field of textile studies. In this article, however, I will focus on ecclesiastical textiles as embodied art; how they mediated both body and identity.

Faced with sumptuous art such as the Linköping mitre, the significance of luxury ecclesiastical vestments as symbols of social and political power and rank becomes apparent. These issues have been addressed in recent research, utilizing Barth's concept of a 'vestimentary code' drawing parallels between clothing and language (Dimitrova & Goehring 2014:7; Miller 2014:9). Miller, for example, has argued that the lavishly decorated vestments of the 13th century can be understood as a material and visual language employed as a political tool and an instrument of reform. Although the metaphor of clothing as language is helpful in emphasizing the symbolic qualities of clothing, this model assumes some essential, shared properties of language and objects, which are highly problematic. In his essay 'Clothing as Language', Grant McCracken argues that clothing is not usefully compared to language, but operates within a very different system of communication (Mc Cracken 1990:57). He suggests that the modus operandi of textiles is more understated and intangible than that of language, and therefore our interpretation of clothes and textiles is less conscious. Thus, he argues that this inconspicuousness is an advantage of clothing as a means of communication: 'It has to this extent great propagandistic value in the creation of meaning' (Mc Cracken 1990:68–69). In other words, we do not necessarily 'read' clothes, but we sense them and perceive them in a less conscious manner.

This sensory or somatic aspect of clothing and how it communicates meaning, is particularly relevant for ecclesiastical vestments. Research on copes, chasubles and mitres often ignores the fact that these objects of art were worn on human bodies. I would like to argue that clothing, more than being a marker of social and political status and hierarchy, extends and transforms the body as a 'social skin'. Anthropologist Terrence Turner developed this concept when studying the Amazonian Kayapo tribe, where bodypaint functioned as dress and hair, occupying significant social space beyond the body (Turner 1993:15–39). Reading clothes (broadly defined to include bodily adornments, jewelry and hair) as a second skin, a *social skin*, allows a more complex understanding, where clothes are performative and constitutive. Jane Burns has used this concept in her discussion of gendered clothing in medieval French lyrics and romances to show how clothes and fabrics can create

representations of both gender and status (Burns 2014). In this article, the concept of ecclesiastical clothing as a 'social skin' will be employed to underline the interrelated and complex relationship between the priestly body and the priestly garments. My argument is that this intimate and codependent relationship demonstrates how ecclesiastical vestments were important to episcopal identity, and, consequently, how they were used strategically in fashioning a bishop's public image.

AESTHETICS AND MATERIALITY OF A *MITRE PRETIOSA*

The mitre's linen ground is entirely covered with embroidery and applied ornament. Seed pearls are used extensively for lettering, figures and décor. The white, shimmering pearls form a striking contrast to the golden surface of the background, made of gold threads couched in red silk. This effect would have been more prominent some 500 years ago, when the gold threads shone more brilliantly. Another arresting feature of the Linköping mitre is the cloisonné enamels applied in the form of bands on the headpiece and down both lappets. Each enamel roundel is framed by ornamental enamel plaques and precious stones such as rock crystal, imitation jewels and turquoises, illuminating the preciousness of this garment. Small metal bells on fine chains are suspended from each lappet, and the top of the mitre is embellished with a silver gilt knob. All of this material splendour created a varied and luxurious surface.

This luxurious materiality is characteristic of the *mitre pretiosa* or the precious mitre. By the 15th century, a hierarchy of different mitres was established: 1) the *mitre simplex* was without ornament and made in plain white silk or linen, and worn at funerals, Good Friday, and for the blessing of candles on Candlemas, 2) the *mitre auriphrygiata* was decorated with rich embroidery of gold, silk and sometimes seed pearls, and worn during Lent, Advent and other fast days and for penitential processions, and 3) the *mitre pretiosa* was the most valuable, decorated with jewels, metal plates and pearls in addition to silk and gold embroidery. This luxurious headpiece was a display of episcopal splendour, worn only on the days of a *Te Deum* service (Braun 1913:404). Note that the 'Cæremoniale Romanum' does not give

any instructions as to the motifs or design of the mitres, the account of this order of mitres focuses solely on their materiality. The use of plain fabric, embroidery, jewels and metal plates establishes a material hierarchy carefully fashioned for different religious occasions. Furthermore, this same material hierarchy communicated the powers and splendor of a bishop and reflected his position in the ecclesiastical hierarchy. For example, at provincial councils, only the archbishop was allowed to wear a *mitra pretiosa* while the other bishops wore the *mitre auriphrygiata* and any mitred abbots would wear a *mitre simplex* (Braun 1913). Parallels can be drawn to the secular aristocracy, where sumptuary laws were introduced in an attempt to regulate secular dress according to social position (Andersson 2014:16). Jewels, for example, were potent markers of social rank, and thus reserved for knights and clergy with a substantial income.

Materiality

Technical analysis is required in order to determine the exact materials used to make the gems. The distinction between precious stones and 'glass gems' seems, however, to be of less importance and the two are often used in parallel (Hahn 2012:92; Melin 2014:260). The medieval viewer was not as occupied with the realness of gems, as with their associated meanings – what Ittai Weinryb has described as *material signification* (Weinryb 2013). Medieval viewers had a nuanced and rich perception of luxury materials such as different kinds of fabrics or gems. In Norse literature and sources, we can identify more than ten different terms used to describe silk (Falk 1919:66–70). Cynthia Hahn identifies an equally diverse material knowledge in medieval encounters with jewelled reliquaries: 'Materials could be identified by source, and whether the designations were accurate or inaccurate, stories were associated with individual gems. Rather than just a confused and glittering surface, viewers saw individual elements given added prestige by their association with other elements – a myriad of points upon which to begin contemplation' (Hahn 2012:43). I have argued elsewhere that this range of associations – medical, magical, religious – was known in late medieval Scandinavia through lapidaries and religious texts (Nødseth 2017 see also Vedeler & Kutzke 2015). Hahn points out that these material associations and

Figure 76. Details from the front of the mitre, enamel showing an angel, surrounded by precious stones, pearls and goldwork. © Gabriel Hildebrand, Historiska Museet, Stockholm

significations could indeed be inaccurate, but they were nevertheless effective, coloring the viewer's perception of the object.

A comprehensive material analysis of the Linköping mitre is beyond the scope of this article, so one example is chosen to illustrate how gems could signify a wide array of material meaning. The four enamel medallions on the front of the mitre are all framed by additional enamels and blue and green gems – likely imitating sapphires and emeralds, see figure 76. Sapphires consist of the mineral corundum (translucent in its purest form), and the sought-after deep blue color actually results from impurities in the stone (iron and titanium). According to Peder Månsson, a Bridgettine monk, bishop and writer from the beginning of the 16th century, sapphires could strengthen virtues like kindness, piety and charity (Månsson 1913–1915:488). He described sapphires as expensive stones with a beautiful shine when you hold them up to the sunlight. Emeralds and sapphires evoked the Heavenly Jerusalem, where they adorned the foundations of the city walls together with other precious stones (Rev 21:20). This material metaphor is echoed in the pearl embroidery, reminding the viewer of the twelve pearl gates (Rev 21:21). Furthermore, both sapphires and emeralds once adorned Aron's breastplate – the archetype of a bishop's vestments – and were thus especially fitting for the decoration of a mitre (Exodus 28:19). Due to its associations with piety and celibacy, the stone was often used for episcopal rings and other jewelry worn by the clergy (Melin 2014:263).

Together with the seed pearl embroidery and the glimmering gems, the cloisonné enamels are the most striking feature of the Linköping mitre. Among the enamels are 38 figurative silver gilt roundels depicting apostles, Christ, a seraph, and a number of unidentified male figures without *tituli*. The cloisonné enamels definitely predate the embroidery, but there has been much discussion about their original context. A mixture of Latin and Greek lettering, and of different techniques, give them a hybrid character difficult to pinpoint. Origins in the Rhineland, Limoges, Venice and Palermo have been suggested. Venice has been the prevailing view, but more recently Paul Hetherington has challenged this interpretation proposing a workshop in Constantinople under Latin rule. This would explain the mix of Latin and Greek lettering, and the distinctive Byzantine character of the works (Hetherington 2008:13). After the Latin conquest in 1204, Pope Innocent III decided that Latin bishops should be appointed to dioceses with mixed populations (Tricht 2011:312). The presence of a Latin episcopacy after 1204 created a demand for new liturgical vestments, and it is not unlikely that skilled goldsmiths in Constantinople continued their work, after the occupation, for their new Latin patrons. After the fall of the Latin Empire in 1261, we can assume that these vestments became obsolete and found their way to central Europe. From this point on, however, their history is unknown until they appear in the Vadstena/Linköping context some 200 years later. It is worth noting, however, that Hetherington's careful examination revealed that the enamels most likely came from two or more different sets of vestments, and traces of reuse before their application to the Linköping mitre suggest that there was at least one other intermediate user (Hetherington 2008:14).

There are numerous examples of reuse in medieval ecclesiastical textiles: chasubles were often cut to new shapes, and embroidered orphreys were removed and reattached onto new vestments. As Shalem has pointed out, textiles lent themselves particularly well to reuse due to their soft materiality: they could easily be reshaped into new forms or attached to other materials. Regarding the practice of textile reuse, I am not primarily interested in how they were reused, but rather the reasons why: the cultural, material and social implications. Shalem's scholarship has shown how the reuse of

Islamic textiles in the Latin West was motivated by cultural exchange and reappropriation as the textiles took part in complex intercultural processes: 'The spoliated new object oftentimes consists of at least two different times: that of the former, reused object, which has its history embedded in the past; and the newly created object of the specific present in which it was made.' (Shalem 2017:9). The Linköping mitre reflects its contemporary milieu in iconography, the use of color and materials. In the case of the cloisonné enamels, they simultaneously echoed a distant past. Much of the original iconographical meaning was lost in the 15th century. It is unusual to find fourteen apostles present (their *tituli* in Greek were not readily readable in late medieval Sweden), only one seraph, and no roundels with images of the Virgin. This eclectic collection of iconography supports Hetherington's hypothesis of two original sets of enamels. Furthermore, it suggests that in the assembly and application of the enamels onto the Linköping mitre, the materiality was more important than the iconography. Cloisonné enamels were precious objects used and reused for liturgical and royal vestments, as diplomatic gifts, in secular attire, book covers and even architecture. In the Byzantine world, they became a symbol of luxury and sanctity, the combination of expensive materials and a labor intensive and highly specialized production made them especially desirable (Cutler 2002:575). In the Latin West as well, enamels were soughtafter because of their precious (although fragile) materiality.

Iconography

From a stylistic and technical point of view, this rich pearl embroidered piece could have been made at Vadstena Abbey in southern Sweden, the motherhouse of the Bridgettine Order. The abbey is situated in the diocese of Linköping, and the Linköping bishop had annual canonical visitations. The relationship between Vadstena Abbey and Linköping cathedral is also evident in the rich collection of embroidered vestments made by Bridgettine nuns in the Linköping cathedral (Estham & Nisbeth 2001:101–137). Bridgettine nuns led an ascetic life and were not allowed to touch money or to own valuables, but they made luxurious textiles in precious materials 'to adorn the churches and praise God' (Nødseth 2017:128). Vadstena embroideries are characterized by ornamental and floral motifs, often in relief and lavishly

Figure 77. The front of the mitre with the Annunciation scene (unfortunately, partly cropped out if this image). © Gabriel Hildebrand, Historiska Museet, Stockholm.

decorated with seed pearls, corals and tiny metal spangles. Although the reuse of cloisonné enamels makes the Linköping mitre a unique case, the Vadstena style of embroidery is quite distinct and can be recognized in the excessive use of seed pearls, relief embroidery and a characteristic color palette of red and green.

Moving on from the material significance to the iconography, the following will focus on the interpretation of images and symbols on the Linköping mitre. The front of the mitre shows the Annunciation: the Angel Gabriel with a scroll reading 'Ave gracia' on the left, facing the Virgin Mary with a scroll reading 'Ecce ancilla' on the right (figure 77). Both figures are surrounded by embroidered lilies covered in seed pearls. The latter inscription might allude to the Angelus prayer: a devotion commemorating the Incarnation. From the 14th century, this prayer became part of everyday life with the ringing of the Angelus bell at 6am, noon and 6pm. The Angelus opens with the words 'Angelus Domini nuntiavit Mariæ, et concepit de Spiritu Sancto.' 'The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary, and she conceived of the Holy Spirit.' This text reflects the iconography of the embroidery well and includes the words 'Ecce ancilla

Domini': 'Behold the handmaiden of the Lord'. Bridgettine nuns would have been accustomed to saying the Angelus three times a day.

The back of the mitre displays the figures of Saint Peter holding a key and a book on the left, and Saint Paul with his sword and a book on the right. Both saints are framed by intertwining vines creating a symmetrical pattern of knots, vine leaves and grapes. Both figures and frames are predominantly embroidered with seed pearls, with the exception of smaller details such as the saints' attributes, faces and the grape clusters. Saints Peter and Paul were patrons of Linköping cathedral, and thus a fitting motif for the bishop's headpiece. Furthermore, the eighth and final book of Birgitta's books – called *Liber caelestis* – opens with a chapter on Sts. Peter and Paul symbolizing the double power in the world, the secular and the ecclesiastical (Birgitta of Sweden, book 2 chapter 7, 2012). The importance of Peter and Paul to the Bridgettine Order is also evident by their presence on a 15th century alter frontal made for Vadstena Abbey church. Interestingly, this same altar frontal also displays the Annunciation with the kneeling Angel Gabriel and the Virgin Mary below a scroll reading 'Ave Maria gracie' (inv.no. 23022:7 History Museum, Stockholm). The iconographic and stylistic parallels between the Vadstena altar frontal and the Linköping mitre strengthen the hypothesis of the latter having been made in the abbey's workshop.

ECCLESIASTICAL VESTMENTS AS 'SOCIAL SKIN'

In the following I will contextualize the immediate context of any mitre, namely the bishop's head and his body. As stated in the introduction to this article, the fact that ecclesiastical vestments were worn on human bodies is often overlooked in textile research. These garments were always seen on the body of the priest as part of his religious persona. The mitre was a highly symbolic headpiece instrumental to episcopal self-representation with a powerful propagandist potential, as demonstrated by bishop Kettil Karlsson's public 'undressing' in Linköping cathedral.

In her discussion of sumptuous courtly dress in French medieval romances, Jane Burns argues that clothes and bodies are interrelated in a much closer and

more complex manner than the 'familiar paradigm of clothes covering a body beneath' (Burns 2014:12). Two examples from *Prose Lancelot* illustrate this. Burns points out that a knight stripped of his armor is a man 'stripped bare' even though he was fully clothed (Burns 2014:136). In contrast to this shameful 'nakedness' of knights, exposed skin is often described as part of the courtly lady's attractive appearance. The white skin of a lady's chest, neck and hands attracts much attention in courtly literature, and was part of her social identity: 'the skin itself constitutes the aristocratic woman's typical garment' (Burns 2014:137). Burns' concept of the relationship between body and clothing is in line with Turner's idea of a 'social skin'. I argue that ecclesiastical clothes can be understood within this same theoretical framework, enabling a new understanding of ecclesiastical vestments.

Just as armor was instrumental to the knight's social identity, liturgical vestments were instrumental to the identity of the priest. In fact, Guillaume Durand —liturgist, Papal administrator, and Bishop of Mende (1286–1296) — likens the priest to a fighter 'wearing sacred vestments as if he is armed with weapons'. This metaphor is continued for several paragraphs describing each vestment as a weapon: the amice is a helmet, his alba a breastplate, the stole is a lance, his chasuble a shield, and the Gospel book is the priest's sword (Durand, Book3:1:3, 2010: 134–136). Like a wounded knight who lost part of his armor in battle and faced a shameful defeat was 'stripped bare', disgraced priests were stripped of their vestments in church – a public ritual that was probably taken from military demotions (Elliott 2004:61). The grim practice of desacralizing clerical bodies in order to make them liable to secular penalties (including the death penalty) involved more than removing clothes in the broadest sense (including rings and pastoral staff). In order to remove the priest's sacrality, Durand recommends shaving off the clerical tonsure and scraping off the holy unction from hands and head with a piece of glass or a sharp knife (Elliott 2004: 67). I believe that this last point demonstrated the complexity of the bishop's social skin: hair, skin, clothing and jewelry work together in constructing, performing and displaying episcopal identity.

Headwear was the most important social distinction in the Middle Ages. Only unmarried girls in

puberty, and social outcasts like prostitutes, wore their hair loose and uncovered (but here, local customs also varied), while children and adults all wore variations of headgear from tightfitting coifs to veils and hats. Since both men and women wore sleeved tunics, headgear became an important indication of rank, social position and gender (Gilchrist 2012:79). Miller suggests that the practice of tonsuring young boys destined for an ecclesiastical career around the age of twelve developed out of the need to distinguish men of the clergy from secular society, since these lower ranks of clergy often wore regular clothes (Miller 2014:23). This was also the first step in a process of religious refinement through seven orders of the clerical hierarchy before the boy could be ordinated as a priest. Through the anointment with holy oil the priestly body became consecrated space. (Gilchrist 2012:180). From now on, the priest would prepare for mass in the sacristy in a ritual of vesting, saying vesting prayers focusing on the symbolic virtues of each garment as he dressed. Grooming his head was an important part of this ritual, washing away the 'sins', combing his hair straight to get rid of impure thoughts. Elaborately decorated liturgical combs are preserved in many medieval collections, a testimony to the importance of this part of clerical dressing.

Few men reached the next and highest level in the clerical hierarchy. The religious and social importance of medieval bishops was reflected in their headgear. At the end of the ordination ritual as it is described by Durand in his *Pontificale Guilelmi Durand* (PGD), the mitre was placed on the newly consecrated bishop's head accompanied by a mitre prayer describing the mitre as a fearsome and radiant helmet:

> ***Lord, we place on the head of this your bishop and champion the helmet of protection and salvation, so that with face adorned and head armed with the horns of both testaments, he may appear fearsome to the adversaries of truth and, by the bounty of your grace, may he be their mighty enemy. You who endowed the face of Moses your servant, adorned from the fellowship of your discourse, with the brightest horns of your splendor and truth, commanded a crown to be placed upon the head of your high priest Aron.***
>
> ***Durand PGD. I.XIV. see Mc Millan 2005:188***

With this blessing of the mitre, the vestment was given a prominent role in the ordination ritual (Figure 79). If the bishop celebrated mass, one of the deacons would take off his mitre before the sacrament of the Eucharist in respect for God and put it back on the bishop's head afterwards. As these examples show, the priest's head was important for his physical but also symbolic appearance, and his headwear (tonsure and for bishops: mitre) became an important social marker.

Because of the prominent place of the mitre, and its social and visual significance, it was an extremely useful tool for episcopal self-fashioning. Caroline Vogt has discussed a group of late 12th or early 13th century mitres with images of the martyrdom of St. Beckett as a medium of constructing episcopal identity and public persona (Vogt 2010). Their iconography emphasizes both the head of the martyred saint as well as the bishop's head, thus indicating the significance of the bishop's head as seen in the ritual of his consecration. As Beckett himself was a bishop, murdered and having the crown of his head cut off, it was highly symbolic that the same exact part of the head was covered by the mitre. In the case of the Linköping mitre, the form of episcopal self-fashioning is somewhat different. While the Beckett mitres had a very powerful iconography, it is through materiality that the Linköping mitre displays the power and significance of its wearer. By the mid 15th century, the idea of a trident hierarchy for mitres had gained influence and the Linköping mitre's status as a *mitre pretiosa* held great significance. As argued above, the luxurious materiality of metal plates, enamels, imitation jewels and gold was instrumental to the vestment's prestige. Although the iconography was fitting for a bishop's mitre, it was through the precious material's splendor that Kettil Karlsson constructed his episcopal identity.

EPISCOPAL IDENTITY & CHARISMATIC AUTHORITY

So far, we have considered many of the factors that make the Linköping mitre a fascinating and unique piece: its overt materiality with gold and imitation jewels, the rarity of its cloisonné enamels, the uniqueness of a well-preserved mitre from medieval Scandinavia (one of very few). Another interesting aspect of the Linköping

Figure 78. The lappets with Kettil Karlssons coat of arms on the left, and Linköping episcopal see on the right © Gabriel Hildebrand, Historiska Museet, Stockholm.

mitre, is that we know a great deal about who it was made for, namely one of the most famous political figures from 15th century Scandinavia. The mitre bears the personal coat of arms of Bishop Kettil Karlsson, indicating that this vestment was made for his episcopacy (figure 78). Even though he was bishop of Linköping for just six short years (1458–1464), he had a prominent role in the government of Sweden, both as the leader of military operations and as de facto regent of the realm. When the plague took his life at the age of thirty-two, he had become one of the most powerful men in Sweden.

Economic decline and political instability, with power struggles between powerful Swedish families and the king, but also peasant revolts, characterized Sweden in the mid 15th century. In this society, bishops had a strong social position as both ecclesiastical prelates and secular princes. The duality of episcopal office was widely accepted and even recognized in Canon Law. Late medieval bishops often participated in battles and could be skilled warriors and strategists. Moreover, these bishops often came from powerful and influential families and it was considered natural and justified that they engage in conflicts and confrontations

between dynastic families, or factions within families. When Christian of Oldenburg was elected king in 1457, this initially meant a stronger position for the church and Bishop Kettil Karlsson (Vasa) and his uncle, the powerful Archbishop Jöns Bengtsson (Oxenstierna). Soon enough, however, King Christian imposed additional taxes in order to fund his military campaigns in Holstein. This was not well received among either the peasants or the clerical and secular aristocracy. Power struggles between the Council of State led by Jöns Bengtsson and the king intensified, resulting in the king capturing the archbishop and holding him captive in Denmark in order to strengthen his position in Sweden. Bishop Kettil responded by taking the sword and swearing that he would liberate Archbishop Jöns. The event is recorded in *Cronica Swecie* (from the beginning of the 16th century) and quoted in the opening section of this article. He raised a large army of both noblemen and peasants, and won a decisive battle against King Christian at Haraker (1464). The Council elected Bishop Kettil as *rikshövitsman* (*de facto* regent of Sweden) from February to August 1464. After a short-lived return of King Karl Knutsson that autumn, Bishop Kettil was again elected regent from December 1464 to his death the following year.

This brief account of events serves as a background for our understanding of the complexity of episcopal identity and responsibilities in 15th century Scandinavia. As Brigitte Miriam Bedos-Rezak has pointed out, the medieval concept of identity did not address personal identity as we see it today: 'Rather, identity in the 11th and 12th centuries centered on a logic of sameness and operated by assuming a model of similarity, referring to human beings as members of an identical species, or to the person as psychosomatic whole, a social agent identical to itself with respect to number, essence, or properties.' (Bedos-Rezak 2000:1492). It is this latter category that is of particular interest to this article; Bedos-Rezak's concept of a 'medieval identity' (addressing the 11th and 12th centuries) still holds relevance in the 15th century. Considering the mitre as a social skin, together with the rest of Kettil Karlsson's episcopal vestments, these objects are part of his identity defined by Bedos-Rezak as *the person as a psychosomatic whole, a social agent.* The ritual of publicly re-dressing in church, transforming himself from a man of prayer into a military leader,

Figure 79. *The consecration of Saint Augustin*, compartment of a larger retable painted by Jaume Huguet between 1462 and 1475 for the convent of Sant Agustí Vell in Barcelona. Now in the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, MNAC Barcelona. Photo from the Google Art Project (no copyright).

was of great importance to 15th century episcopal identity. When Bishop Kettil lay down his episcopal vestments and dressed himself in armor, his social skin was transformed. In her discussion of 15th century Swedish 'warrior bishops' Anna Waśko argues that the duality of a bishop's position as both clergyman and knight, between religious and secular responsibilities, could be problematic. The symbolic act of removing his vestments and taking up a sword signified the separation of the two roles: 'He did not fight against the king as clergyman, he did so as a knight and a military and political leader who protected the liberties violated by the ruler. […] these functions must be separated once again for the duration of prayer (the episcopal vestments) and fighting (the sword and armor).' (Waśko 2018:447).

The events discussed here are recorded in *Sturekrönikan* (covering the period 1452–1478), written for Bishop Kettil's opponent Karl Knutsson's successor (Sten Sture). It was

written shortly after the fact, and as such, it is reliable in its account of events. On the other hand, it might be colored by the motivations of Karl Knuttson's milieu, meaning that its authors did not favor Bishop Kettil and his uncle Archbishop Jöns. Waśko has analyzed the chronicle carefully and points out that despite the hostile attitude towards both bishops, Kettil is actually described as an accomplished military leader who participated in battles, and he became a symbol of Swedish resistance against Danish kings (Waśko 2018:480). In contrast to his uncle, Kettil appears to be fair (urging King Christian to release his uncle, hoping to avoid military intervention) and much respected. Acquiring the position of bishop at an unusually young age (requiring a papal dispensation), leading the Council of State, raising a peasant army to revolt against King Christian, laying siege to Stockholm, negotiating his uncle's release and acting as regent – all of these accomplishments suggest that Kettil Karlsson was a charismatic leader with great authority.

The concept of charismatic authority was introduced by Max Weber to describe a type of leadership where authority is closely linked to the charisma of the leader. Weber (1968:49) juxtaposes this category with legal authority and traditional authority. Weber argued that charisma was a trait of personality:

> ***a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader.***
>
> *Weber 1968b:48*

As we have seen, late medieval bishops were most definitely 'set apart from ordinary men' and they were also believed to be more sacred and exhibit 'exceptional powers or qualities'. Furthermore, it is clear that these powers were inaccessible to ordinary men, prohibited to enter the choir, to touch sacred objects and matter, or to participate in the liturgy. Also, the power of a bishop was bestowed upon him by the pope as God's vicar on earth, and thus of divine origin. The late medieval bishop therefore fits in well with the Weberian definition of charismatic authority. Adding to this what we

know of Bishop Kettil's life and episcopacy from contemporary sources, it is likely that he was indeed regarded as a charismatic leader in a Weberian sense. How did these embodied qualities of charisma become apparent to others around him? Jaeger extends Weber's definition to encompass representations of personae, charismatic art from Byzantine icons to Dürer's self-portraits: 'Charisma in art develops through artifice and imitation, out of embodied and lived charisma. Charismatic art is a mimesis of charismatic presence; just as effects derive from living and from represented charisma.' (Jaeger 2012:11). Acknowledging the embodied quality of charisma, he argues it was presented through what he describes as a 'staged performance', a conscious self-representation (Jaeger 2012:26).

Celebrating mass is a kind of performance as described by Jaeger. The performativity of ecclesiastical textiles is often overlooked by art historians, but there are some notable exceptions in studies by Barbara Margrethe Eggert (2013), David Ganz (2014) and Christine Brandner (2015). The Linköping mitre, I would argue, was not only part of, but instrumental to, the self-representation of Bishop Kettil. It was the greatest symbol of his elevated position: his charismatic authority. We have discussed how the mitre took part in different rituals: the consecration of a bishop; how it was removed and then placed back on the bishop's head during mass; how the bishop's head was 'prepared' for this precious headwear during years of wearing his tonsure; through ritual washing and grooming; and the final anointment elevating his body to the status of bishop.

Recent work in charisma theory has made the leap from charismatic persons to charismatic objects, the topic of this collection of papers. One can argue, that charismatic forces can be transferred from a person to a highly symbolic and powerful object. Jaeger makes this leap maintaining that charismatic art operates through 'artifice and imitation': a substitute for charismatic presence. In the case of the Linköping mitre, I would, however, argue that the object is not charismatic art in the sense of a mimesis of charismatic presence, or a form of represented charisma. If we accept the idea of episcopal vestments as a 'social skin', garments such as the mitre can be perceived as part of the bishop's social and religious body and, therefore, part of his personal charisma. In other words, the charismatic effects of

this *mitre pretiosa* only came into play when worn by the bishop. In a forthcoming article on 'Charisma and Material Culture', Paul Binski argues that *faces* and the aesthetic experiences of light, shine and sparkle are central to the language of charismatic effect (Binski forthcoming). This idea of sparkle, shine and shifting light is also found in the rich surfaces of the Linköping mitre, framing the bishop's face. Returning to Durand's blessing of the mitre, he describes how the bishop emerges with 'face adorned' by the mitre. The materiality and aesthetics of this mitre, as discussed above, were important to the mitre's charismatic effects.

The event recorded by *Cronica Swecie* and quoted at the beginning of this article certainly testifies to the performative powers of a mitre and its importance to the charismatic authority of its owner. Here, the bishop stages himself in a precalculated performance transforming him from a man of prayer into a man of fighting. This public and rhetorical transformation was not only effective in winning over public opinion and raising an army to liberate his imprisoned uncle. It also made sure that the different roles of the bishop remained clear and separate. I have argued in this article that the richly decorated mitre took center stage during these events. The precious materials of the Linköping mitre communicated meaning on different levels: not only presenting the mitre as a highly symbolic *mitre pretiosa*, but also as 'charismatic language' adorning the face of Bishop Kettil, as described in the mitre prayer by Durand. Discussing the power of textiles beyond the language metaphor, this article has interpreted ecclesiastical vestments as a social skin, exposing the intimate relationship between priestly bodies and ecclesiastical clothing.

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