

Foreigners and Outside Influences in Medieval Norway

edited by

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Who were they? Steps towards an archaeological understanding of newcomers and settlers in early medieval Trondheim, Norway

Axel Christophersen

Introduction

Where did they come from, the people who, in the late 10th century, settled on the spot located in central Norway that Snorre called the '*Kaupangr á Nidarnes*' and the '*Kaupangen ved Nidelven*', which means the trading place on the Nidar peninsula/by the River Nid? (Figure 1). From where did they come, those who established and gradually developed an urban community where there once were sandy tidal flats and sprawling sea-buckthorn shrub vegetation? From where did they come, the priests and the monks who filled the 18 churches and 5 monasteries? From where did the house owners, the craftsmen, the merchants, the prostitutes, and the dockers come? These are crucial questions that help us describe and understand the fact that within a few decades, a non-rural, sedentary community was established which, within the following century, transformed a rural landscape into an urban one? Initially, I will briefly discuss the relevance of some theoretical and methodological possibilities for an archaeological approach to finding answers to these questions. Then I will present some tentative answers based on a preliminary investigation of selected archaeological material from early medieval Trondheim (i.e. the late 10th century and the 11th century), that is the period in which '*Kaupangr á Nidarnes*' became the royal and

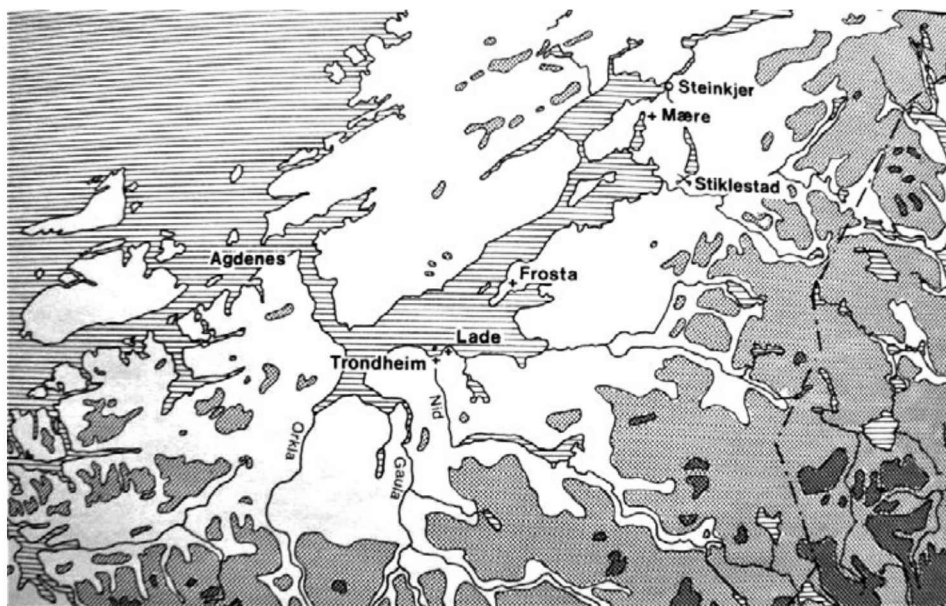


FIGURE 1. MAP SHOWING CENTRAL NORWAY WITH TRONDHEIM OR 'KAUPANGR Á NIDARNES'. DRAWING: RIKSANTIKVARENS UTGRAVNINGSKONTOR, TRONDHEIM

ecclesiastical centre called Trondheim and was, thus, transformed from a rural to an urban community. Finally, I will discuss some tentative possibilities regarding the range and nature of immigration to early medieval Trondheim. In light of the opportunities that aDNA and isotope analyses may provide in the future, my overall goal is, at a very early stage, to survey the archaeological possibilities of tracing the movement of people in space as they created communities in new places.

Theoretical considerations

Before archaeologically approaching the phenomenon of 'urban immigration' we need to clarify:

- a. The conceptual use of the word 'immigration' and, subsequently, the meaning of 'urban immigration'.
- b. The methodological challenges of using material remains to trace people moving to, and remaining in, town.

The term immigration might give a notion of a large group of people coming from outside and in a short time populating the western shore of the River Nid, near the estuary where it flows into the broad Strindfjord which is a major arm of the Trondheimsfjord that connects a vast, fertile agricultural landscape with mountains and the sea. This was most likely not what happened. Rather, the influx of people was a sustained movement of either individuals or small groups of people sharing common interests and/or intentions. The challenge, at least from an archaeological point of view, is to give an in-depth analysis followed by a credible explanation of *why* people moved to a place significantly different in settlement and activity patterns from the surrounding rural environment in which a majority of the early inhabitants in Trondheim seem to have had their social and cultural origins. This early influx of people is something more than pure spatial movements from A to B. Moving into a place where 'otherness' is a noticeable quality is about something considerably more complex than an action provoked by a sudden impulse, adventurousness or new opportunities. It is, if not about forced coalescence, about following intentions, motivations, and objectives. Hence, it follows that the social practice of movement and migration is ultimately embedded in cultural behaviour and calls for contexts and explanations that deal with more than a simple transfer from A to B. Susanne Hakenbeck has pointed out that migration and demic diffusion should be referred to as a particular phenomenon within an overarching context of 'mobility' and they unfold within a particular cultural, social, economic, political, and/or environmental context (Hakenbeck 2008: 2). This conceptual redefinition of 'migration', perceived as a specific cultural phenomenon of 'mobility', implies that the movement of people from A to B is a socio-cultural phenomenon which entangles the act of 'spatial movement' with the current conditions and circumstances ruling in the place left behind and the place of arrival. The term 'urban immigration' should consequently be perceived as 'people intentionally moving from A (B, C, D etc.) into a non-rural agglomeration of dwellings and activities'. It should be used when tracing newcomers in non-rural communities and considering how this spatial movement of people acted as an integral part of the establishment of urban communities, specifically the one that developed along the western shore of the River Nid. As an archaeologist interested in how urban communities became established and developed (beyond political and economic realities), within social practice patterns,

the question of how urban immigration transformed rural places into urban communities, is an attempt at avoiding a purely diffusionist approach.

How can urban immigration be approached using archaeological material? There is a considerable deficiency of theoretical and methodological instruments with regard to migration studies in archaeology, and for this reason it is necessary to give a short introduction to how I have approached this topic. In the following, I will draw on a study of migration and material culture amongst European settlers in North America and the Anglo-Saxon migration to England in the 5th century by [Burmeister](#) (2000). His model for how to archaeologically investigate migration is not without its weaknesses, but acceptable for our purpose. Drawing on works done by [Runblom](#) (1988) and [Ostergren](#) (1988), he states that *'...immigrants in the UK shows that they lived, as it were, in two spheres. They adapted to the immigrant society primarily in those domains with which they came into contact, but the tradition of their home culture continued to have a powerful influence on their internal co-existence....it was here that the old culture demonstrated its greatest resistance to foreign influences.'* The division into an external, or public, and an internal, or private, domain is taken further, supported by Pierre Bourdieu's habitus concept. Habitus is a product of group-specific norms, perceptions and actions created over a long period of time. Hence, habitus is deeply rooted in the past and is decisive on perception and concepts grounded in the conditions of its own origin and structure. Furthermore, the external and internal domains tend to develop different material culture practices: It is within the external domain that practice first starts to modify when coming into contact with economic and cultural conditions that deviate from the conditions that created the immigrant's habitus. The internal domain, however, will continue to be organised in line with traditional concepts of private life and related material culture practices if the habitus is rejected, as often happens if it becomes intertwined with external conditions, the *public* domain. Moderating effects which have to be taken into account include time span and the purpose and conditions of residence in the different environment. There are, of course, a lot of other modifications and critical comments to be made regarding this schematic fragmentation of the dynamics of social life. For example, John Chapman has pointed out the worrying fact that *'...a postulated migration often infiltrates an area with*

similar levels of social structure, economic development, and technological capabilities, often resulting in the deposition of rather similar forms of material culture. This is precisely why it is so hard to identify prehistoric migrations without the demonstration of contrasts in habitus between different groups' (Chapman 2000:557) This can very well be the situation when discussing movement within or between regions with similar level of economy, social organisation, and subsistence strategies, but definitely not for circumstances involving spatial movements between rural areas and non-rural centres. Burmeister's model, based on Bourdieu's theory of the internal domain of habitus as relatively resistant against external influences from non-corresponding conditions, offers an opportunity to make a reasoned choice of archaeological material which, under certain circumstances, can offer the possibility of tracking urban immigration. By utilising archaeological sources from the *internal* domain of material culture practice, it is hypothetically possible to trace the movements of people coming from outside into early medieval Trondheim. One has to remember, however, that to prove urban immigration is to prove the physical presence of individuals coming from outside and *remaining* in town. This is associated with considerable methodological challenges, as Mats Roslund (2010: 240f) has discussed. In an article from 2010, he sought to trace the presence of merchants from the Holy Roman Empire in High Medieval Sigtuna using ceramic vessels, brooches, rings, and decorations on knife sheaths as types of material remains with distinct social and ethnic connections related to self-visualisation and self-representation in everyday social and cultural practice. How can we know that these objects provide clear evidence of the presence of newcomers? Simply put, we cannot, because there will always be the possibility that, in urban communities characterised by social and cultural heterogeneity, social practices and material objects brought along are used outside their original habitus, plagiarised, or copied by others. Such entangled materiality and modified social practices are amongst the most intricate methodological challenges in current urban archaeological research. On the other hand, there will always exist an element of regionally, and even locally, recognisable traits in material objects, social practices, and the constructed environment, which, when present in an assemblage of objects from an urban archaeological context, indicate some kind of external bodily

presence beyond indirect influence. In the following, I will approach this methodological challenge by using assemblages of objects representing different parts of the urban social practice pattern. I will leave the question of personal presence as an open possibility within a restricted analysis of a set of material objects and environments as proxy data for the possible presence of newcomers in the early urban community life of Trondheim. From this it will be possible to continue testing and verifying continuous presence of individuals from osteological material and DNA data.

Archaeological indications of immigration in medieval Trondheim

To make this attempt empirically feasible, I will apply the following selection of objects associated with material practices operating within the internal domain of habitus:

- a. Domestic architecture
- b. Burial customs
- c. Objects related to social visualisation/self-representation: Brooches
- d. Objects related to food preparation

By doing so, I hope to demonstrate a reliable empirical basis for proposing some initial statements as to whence people in early medieval Trondheim came.

a. *Domestic architecture*

Houses play an essential role in private, as well as public life, and because of this, houses represent a social and spatial zone where private and public life becomes entangled (Christophersen 2001: 56, Svart Kristiansen 2014: 154ff). While the exterior of a house (its building technique and use of material, architectural design etc.) corresponds to the resident's notions of how to appear in the external domain, the spatial and social organisation of the house's interior is determined by the norms and conventions developed within the internal domain. Under established socio-cultural conditions, the interior and exterior appearance of houses corresponds according to habitual norms and concepts. Burmeister's point about the two different principles or forms of assimilation of public and private material culture has been heavily discussed. In his comment

on Burmeister, David [Anthony](#) (2000: 554f) makes an important point about ‘the principle of first effective settlement’ (Kniffen 1965; Noble 1992), which states that the first settlers establish norms of social and cultural life which are followed by later settlers from same group. On this basis it seems important to focus on the oldest traces of domestic architecture and how they correspond with the appearance of subsequent domestic architecture.

At the Library site in Trondheim, there are 205 documented buildings of which 43 are from the late 10th century and the 11th century. 98 % of all houses are ‘log cabins’ built using a cog joint, or *laft*, technique. In a recent article, Helge [Sørheim](#) (2015) reaffirms what a majority of scholars already agree upon, that the laft-technique originates from the vast boreal region east of Scandinavia. The wooden houses from contemporary Novgorod and Staraja Ladoga are, from a technical perspective, similar to those found in Trondheim. A comparison of technical details of the notches from houses in Phase 1-2 (late 10th century – 1025 AD) at the Library site, has been made by Karin [Rosberg](#) (2016): According to Rosberg, a significant similar technical detail is that the joists in the 10th and 11th century houses in Staraja Ladoga and Trondheim were made using the same type of notch, called ‘vagenov’ in Norwegian. The ‘vagenov’ is a simple, almost timeless and universal way to make a connection between two logs. The ‘vagenov’ lacks the laft-technique’s basic technical principle which is to create a stable and waterproof constructive connection between two wall beams. The so called ‘findalslaft’ – a more sophisticated laft technique which makes the corners of the houses tighter and provides more stability for the whole building construction – has not been identified with certainty in Trondheim, as has been suggested ([Christophersen and Nordeide](#) 1994: 161f) ([Figure 2](#)). As recently pointed out by [Sørheim](#) (2015 :117), there are no reliable finds of laft-houses from the late 10th century or the early 11th century in any region in Norway, but the use of this technique, according to [Sørheim](#), cannot totally be ruled out. The hitherto oldest and technically most advanced laft-houses are found in late 10th century and early 11th century culture layers in Trondheim. This might indicate that the oldest documented laft technique, the ‘vagenov’, may have originally been introduced to Trondheim by people coming from Staraja

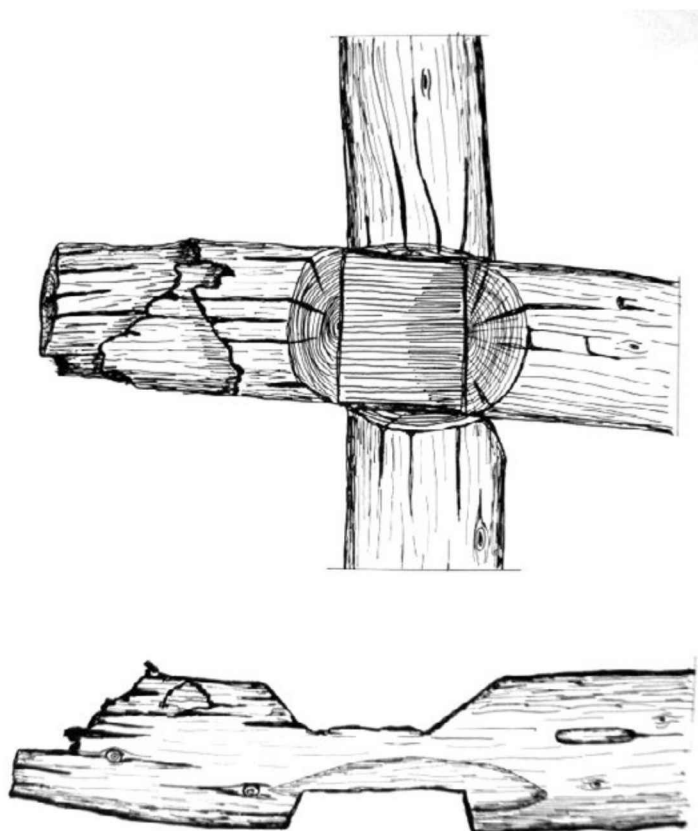


FIGURE 2. 'FINDALSLAFT' USED IN BUILDING K60, DENDRO-DATED TO 1004 AD, FROM THE LIBRARY SITE, TRONDHEIM, NORWAY. DRAWING: RIKSANTIKVARENS UTGRAVNINGSKONTOR, TRONDHEIM V/ EGIL HORG.

Ladoga. If, however, we consider the internal spatial organisation of the early houses in Trondheim, the evidence does not support a hypothesis of the early wooden buildings in Trondheim having been built by immigrants from the east. The oldest houses from the Library site are spatially organised according to local/regional traditions of private life. It has been pointed out by researchers (cf. [Christophersen 2001](#); [Myhre 1982](#); [Price 1994](#); [Skre 1996](#)) that the two-roomed, lafted house that appears in urban contexts in the late 10th and early 11th centuries shares basic similarities with contemporary



FIGURE 3. RECONSTRUCTION OF BUILDING K60 IN PHASE 2, LIBRARY SITE, TRONDHEIM, NORWAY. THE BUILDING IS DENDRO-DATED TO 1004 AD. PHOTO: TROND SVERRE SKEVIK, NTNU UNIVERSITY MUSEUM, TRONDHEIM.

rural longhouses in Norway and the colonised North Sea region. The shared elements of interior organisation and construction are: the neutral entrance room leading from outside into the dwelling room, mentioned in Norwegian medieval documents as the ‘stove’, with a central fireplace later moved into a corner; fixed wall benches; and, earth floors that soon became wooden floors. Buildings K11.2 from AD 964+/-10 and K60 from AD 1004 (Figure 3), seem to be the earliest definite examples of laft-buildings in Norway. They both meet the requirements of the above-mentioned parameters of local/regional spatial organisation (Christophersen 1999; Christophersen 2001). Hence, it follows that the building-type they represent, despite its resemblance to eastern houses from regions that Norwegian Vikings frequently visited, was most probably built by local or regional people well acquainted with, and experienced in building in, a simple laft technique. This technique was obviously used because of the many practical advantages it has compared to other building techniques when houses need to be constructed in confined spaces in a narrow,

urban landscape. The laft technique seems, from this point of view, to have offered opportunities to build houses encompassing a traditional rural habitus and a daily private life surrounded by the very different social and spatial environment that eventually evolved into an urban habitus.

b. Burial customs

Medieval Christian burials followed papally authorised theological doctrines and liturgical practices, and it follows that Christian funerals should have followed a universal pattern. However, as Kristina Jonsson summarised in 2007, excavations of cemeteries in Scandinavia and elsewhere in northern Europe reveal a variety of contemporary Christian burial practices. This provides an opportunity to search for specific regional burial practice patterns in an attempt to answer the question of spatial movements and urban immigration. Jonsson (2007) argues that *'the burial ceremony in itself was...probably an important occasion for the manifestation of social identities'*, which is a pivotal aspect of urban migration processes, and, subsequently most relevant to us. A feasible methodological approach is to identify regional features appearing in deviant socio-cultural conditions within which the performance of the funeral rituals took place. This seems to be possible in the case of early medieval Trondheim. Extensive excavations have been carried out in the medieval cemeteries of St. Olav's, St. Gregorius', and St Mary's, as well as a recently excavated wooden church, hitherto unidentified, from the early 11th century. Three distinct burial practices can be detected in this assemblage: 1) graves with burial rods 2) charcoal graves and 3) graves with small wooden crosses placed on the body's chest. The crucial point is whether these observed practices can be attributed to immigration.

1) *Burials with grave rods*: They are documented in 12 of more than 300 burials from the cemetery around the church of St. Gregory, but all are dated to the second half of the 13th century and are, thus, of lesser interest to us (Figure 4). It should though, be mentioned that Caroline Arcini (1999) has suggested that this burial practice may indicate that a group of people immigrated to Trondheim during the 13th century 'from the south'. Despite its very wide geographical presence in Scandinavia, France, Germany, and England, the burial practice of placing grave rods under or beside the dead has been documented at relatively few sites. The



FIGURE 4. A 13TH CENTURY BURIAL (SKJ263) WITH GRAVE ROD FROM THE CEMETERY OF ST. GREGORY/ST. OLAV, TRONDHEIM, NORWAY. PHOTO: RIKSANTIKVARENS UTGRAVNINGSKONTOR, TRONDHEIM.

majority of rod burials in Scandinavia come from the cemetery around St. Stefan's and the Holy Trinity Church in Lund, Sweden (Cinthio 2002: 83ff, Jonsson 2007). English researchers (e.g. Roberta Gilchrist 2008) suggest that this particular burial practice derives from Denmark in the Early Middle Ages, but it is disputed. Also disputed is the symbolic meaning of this practice, which is beyond our ability to know. From the point of view that a majority of burial rods come from early medieval churchyards in southern Scandinavian and are relatively rare in number outside Lund, it is likely that the rod burials practice originated in southern Scandinavia amongst individuals or groups of people in a particular social and/or religious setting. Its appearance in Trondheim around the middle of the 1200s indicates a small population of southern Scandinavian origin in Trondheim at that time.

2) *Charcoal burials*: Of particular significance are the recently (2015-2016) unearthed charcoal graves from a hitherto unknown early medieval church. In all, 15 individuals have been documented, of which 2 individuals, who died between 1165-1275 AD were buried with ca. two cm of charcoal between their bodies and the base of the coffin. Charcoal was furthermore found randomly scattered around two more individuals. Charcoal burials appear in different variations, of which a bed of charcoal placed between the dead and the surface upon which the body rests is the earliest charcoal burial

practice known and the one which we will concentrate on. This burial practice has about the same prevalence as the contemporary burial rod practice, but from where and from what this practice derives is ambiguous. The English archaeologist Julian Richards (2002: 165) suggests the burial practice emerged from the encounter between the Scandinavians and Anglo-Saxons; while the Swedish archaeologist Maria Cinthio (2002), based on the distribution of charcoal graves from the two early medieval Lund cemeteries mentioned earlier, points at England as the region of origin. A comprehensive study of charcoal burials in England undertaken by James Holloway (2009: 224) sheds a more nuanced light on the dynamic behind the use and prevalence of this particular practice. He states that *'...in some cases, links between burial practice in England and burial practice in other countries can be demonstrated; elsewhere, the links are extremely unclear...'*. He does not deny the idea of an English diaspora in early medieval Lund based on Maria Cinthios observations of the amount, distribution, and locations of charcoal burials from the cemetery around the oldest Holy Trinity church. However, strongly supported by Anders Andréén (2000: 14), he additionally emphasises the importance of the particular social context (Holloway 2009: 234) and the importance of expressing ethnic belonging through burial practice: *'Outside its original context, the rite may have gained another connotation- that of 'foreignness' or 'Englishness' (Holloway 2009: 235)*. From this we cannot automatically infer from the presence of charcoal burials the presence of an English population in Trondheim in the mid-12th century, but, following Holloway's reasoning, we cannot ignore the possibility.

3) *Cross burials*: Burials with small crosses of various materials placed on the body's chest occur in Britain, France, and Germany, as well as in Scandinavia. The same burial practice, with wooden crosses placed near the dead and inside the grave, is known from Herjolfsnes, in Østerbygd on Greenland's west coast, and from Trondheim. From the cemetery around a little stone and turf church located on Herjolfsnes ca. 50% of the buried dead were equipped with a small wooden cross placed on their chests. From the late 10th – early 11th century cemetery associated with St. Olav's church comes one coffin burial with a wooden cross inside the coffin. The cross is identical to one of the crosses from Herjolfsnes (Figure 5). The excavation



FIGURE 5. WOODEN CROSS (T016564) FROM A COFFIN BURIAL FROM THE FIRE-STATION SITE 1947, TRONDHEIM, NORWAY. PHOTO: AXEL CHRISTOPHERSEN, NTNU UNIVERSITY MUSEUM, TRONDHEIM.

was carried out in 1947 and the excavator perceived this at the time 'to be the first discovery of its kind in Scandinavia' (Petersen 1947: 68) after Digre (unpublished report) and this may still be true today as far as this investigation has found. The other wooden cross from Trondheim is also identical with a cross from Herjolfsnes (fig. 144, no. 135, s. 206). It was found in a layer connected to a lafted house

built in the early 1200s. This may indicate that the crosses were used for other purposes, rather than solely as a part of a symbolic burial practice. The excavator of the Herjolfsnes church, Poul Nørlund, put forth the theory that at least some of these crosses may have been processional crosses or devotional crosses held in a person's hand during the burial ceremony (Nørlund 1924: 218f). In the Middle Ages, individuals could express and strengthen their faith through simple personal devotions conducted in a corner of one's home. Holy symbols helped in these spiritual endeavours, since they made the objects of devotional practices tangible. Such symbols were produced from a wide variety of materials, reflecting the wealth and rank of the individual (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Oct. 2001/ https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/priv/hd_priv.htm). The relationship between the late medieval crosses from Herjolfsnes and the identical crosses from Trondheim is somewhat ambiguous, but it points to a plausible connection between Trondheim and Greenland, which at that time was included in the Archbishop of Nidaros' diocese, from which he received taxes and fees paid in valuable goods like walrus rope and tusks. If so, the wooden cross burial locally practiced in Trondheim may indicate the return of a person to Trondheim after having stayed for a while in Østerbygd. We do not know the sex of the dead person, but if male it is possible he had been one of the archbishop's local representatives in Greenland in the beginning of the 13th century or simply a returned tradesman.

c. Objects related to social visualisation/Self-representation: Brooches

In efforts to preserve identity, material symbols used in everyday self-representation procedures are important. Clothes, jewellery, decorative elements, and ornamentation on accessories like shoes, combs, weapons, bags etc. are artefacts that have the potential to indicate the existence of 'otherness'. For critical reasons, however, we have to bear in mind the symbolic complexity and use of such objects, and that '*...few artefacts can be said to have a distinct social and ethnic connection*' as Mats Roslund (2010: 241) has repeatedly pointed out. From early medieval Trondheim there comes a significant amount of objects related to self-representation, amongst them rings, beads, brooches, pendants and buckles. Most of these objects seem initially to be of local or regional origin, like for example, the Urnes-buckles and the many belt and ring



FIGURE 6. 'ZELLENEMAILFIBELN' (N115067) FROM KRAMBUGT.1991/2 SITE, TRONDHEIM, NORWAY. THE BROOCH WAS FOUND INSIDE A HOUSE, PHASE 6 (LATE 11TH CENTURY).

buckles. The Urnes buckles may indicate broader contact with southern Norway, West Sweden, and Scania as well. A few artefacts are clearly from outside Scandinavia and worth giving a closer look, such as a disc brooch from the Library Site, dated to 1025-1050 AD which has an enamelled cross motif similar to Francian-Ottonian 'Kreuzemailscheibenfibeln'. According to Müller-Wille (2003: 451ff), these appear in many local variations within the Rhine-Meuse area, Westphalia, Lower-Saxony, and the northern part of the Netherlands. Jens Ulriksen (2002/2003: 146f) typologically describes a particular variant of these brooches which he calls Irish-Scandinavian 'Zellenemailfibelen'. They typically have a secondary needle, locally attached to the back in order to attach the fibula to clothes (Figure 6). The one from the Library site has a needle, and a mould for the bottom part of the needle comes from a layer dated to 1075-1125 AD (Bergquist 1989: 72, fig 38). According to Ulriksen, they were produced in Ireland and in Scandinavia and are dated to the 9th and 10th centuries. The one from Trondheim is from the second half of the 10th century or earlier. Another brooch is of the 'Scheibenfibula' type, which has certain parallels to disc-fibulae from the Rhine-Meuse area,

but it also has similarities to late Viking Age pelta-decorated brooches from Birka. A third brooch, a 'Buckelnfibel', has a slightly elevated centre decorated with a central symbol and radiating triangular parts. It comes from an early 11th century context and so far has no known parallels in Scandinavia.

This brief review of just a few examples of brooches from early medieval Trondheim shows that a few brooches probably have their origins in the Rhine-Elbe area and/or Ireland, but most of the brooches and pendants seem to be locally produced in a traditional late Viking-early medieval style, like the Urnes brooches found at the Library site in late 11th-early 12th century contexts (Christophersen 1987: 102f). Also locally produced are the many small bronze crosses (Bergquist 1989: 77, fig. 43 and p. 83, fig. 50). All in all, the brooches that may have their origins in regions outside the area dominated by 'viking style preferences' represent a negligible amount compared to those locally produced. The few foreign brooches may have come to Trondheim with random itinerant traders and craftsmen.

d. *Objects related to food preparation*

Cooking and serving food has given rise to a number of practices intimately connected with, and thus important for, recreating the habitus of private life. The material resources associated with these particular practices creates a stable and significant assemblage which is relatively simple to distinguish from the regionally diverse cooking and serving practice pattern. Commodities, firewood, the fireplace, and objects for preparing the food (e.g. the storage, cooking, serving, and drinking vessels, the cutlery etc.) are among the most frequent and significant objects related to daily life practices that appear in medieval urban excavations, and thus are an exceptionally applicable category of finds for identifying cooking and serving routines different from local practices. Irene Baug (2015: 39) briefly discusses this when she argues that '*changing food customs and implementing new dishes and new ways of preparing food within a culture involve a certain resistance*'. The amount and chronological distribution of various utensils for cooking, baking and serving food in early medieval Trondheim seems to correspond to this hypothesis.

A. Bakestones

The big, round bakestone made of soapstone and used for baking non-fermented bread was not introduced to Trondheim before the first half of the 12th century (Weber 1989) (Figure 7). Irene Baug (2015: 44) has recently argued that the limited distribution and use of bakestones in Norway reflects a regional variation in social and cultural food habits and practices. From this it could be suggested that an unbroken tradition of food preparation practice, that excluded the use of soapstone bakestones for making bread, existed in Trondheim from its founding until the beginning of the 12th century. Baug (2015: 39f) argues that the changing bread baking technology was subjected to both social and economic resistance.



FIGURE 7. BAKESTONE FROM LIBRARY SITE/FA, TRONDHEIM, NORWAY, PHASE 10 (13TH-14TH CENTURY), MADE OF ØLVE-SLATE. PHOTO: TROND SVERRE SKEVIK, NTNU UNIVERSITY MUSEUM, TRONDHEIM.

B. Cooking pots and household vessels

The tradition of using soapstone vessels for cooking goes back to the Pre-Roman Iron Age in Norway, but became particularly common during the Late Iron Age and the Middle Ages.

This seems to fit with the fact that no more than ca. 2% of the total amount of pottery from the Library Site is dated to before 1100 AD (Reed 1990: 50f and table 4). The traditional local use of soapstone vessels is dominant compared to the amount of various types of continentally produced pottery right up to Library Site Phase 6 (1150-1175 AD) (Reed 1990: 53). Furthermore, the total amount of pottery shards from before ca. 1100 AD (Library Site Phase 1-4) represents no more than a maximum of 17 vessels, of which only 5 vessels belong chronologically to Phase 2 (1000-1050 AD). This implies that ceramic vessels were practically not in use as ordinary household utensils amongst the sedentary population prior to the second half of the 11th century, and only used exceptionally, at least on a daily basis, before the first half of the 12th century. A substantial increase in the use of imported pottery does not seem to have occurred in Trondheim before the second half of the 12th century. Measured in number of maximum units per phase in the same period, the distribution of vessels according to their provenience shows that 37% of all vessels prior to 1100 AD derive from various kilns that operated in eastern England (Stamford, Gimston, London, and East Midlands), while nearly 32% derive from various locations in the west Baltic area, or are alternatively copies of Slavic ceramics produced in Scandinavia (south Swedish or Danish). The remaining 16% of vessels originate from various production sites in the Rhein-Elbe region/southern Scandinavia (Paffrath, Aardenburg, Farum Lillevang), while one vessel (blue alkaline glazed ware) comes from the eastern Mediterranean/Syria/Egypt (Reed 1990: 72). Furthermore, the rim shards of two bowls from Phase 2 were identified by Reed to as being of Byzantine origin.

How can the distinctive distribution patterns of foreign pottery that appear in Trondheim during the period ca. 1000-1100 AD cast light on early immigration to Trondheim in the same period? In his doctoral thesis, Mats Roslund (2001: 56ff) thoroughly analysed and discussed how cultural identity and material culture are entangled and how this can be utilised in tracing migration and movement between early medieval town

communities in northern and eastern Europe. Particularly, he asks why cooking pottery of Baltic ware types appear in large amounts in Swedish towns after ca. 1000 AD and proposed that they are either imported, produced by imported slaves who had mastered the technology and the design, or produced by locals based on influx of Baltic prototypes (Roslund 2001: 203ff). Another possibility, not directly discussed by Roslund, is that Baltic pottery that appears in small amounts may indicate (amongst other possibilities) cross-cultural marriages, and that cooking pottery was brought from women's homes as part of a dowry or, more likely, as necessary and familiar daily household utensils to be used in their new homes. If so, the scattered occurrence of non-local cooking pots in the first century of the rising urban communal life of Trondheim could indicate an influx of individuals, possibly women, from west Baltic and/or southern Scandinavian areas. The remaining few vessels are pitchers, jugs, and beakers, mainly originating from eastern England or the Danelaw area, which at this time was a part of King Knut the Great's North Sea Empire. Taking into account the utmost rarity of these vessels in the period of current interest, they too represent exotic objects which might have been brought to Trondheim as gifts or as traded or looted goods. Finally it has been suggested that two jugs from the Mediterranean/Byzantine/Syrian region, the shards of which were found in Trondheim in Phase 2 (1025-1050 AD), were brought to town by a member of King Harald Hardråde's Varangian Guard, the bodyguard of the Byzantine emperor (Reed 1990: 77).

The overall conclusion of the above review of the assemblage of early pottery specifically related to the daily household suggests that no external cooking practices were brought into Trondheim from surrounding culture areas. One plausible exception to this is the simple cooking pots in reduced black earthenware probably originating from the western Baltic and/or southern Scandinavian area.

Conclusion

The paramount question above has been: from where did the first inhabitants of early medieval Trondheim come? This question is still to a large extent unanswered, primarily because there is a lack of material studies from the surrounding rural regions, and also because the appearance of material objects and cultural practices is not necessarily

dependent on migration and movements alone. Locals who had visited regions outside central Norway could have brought exotic objects, practices, and behaviours back home to be locally introduced. What can support this is the fact that the material objects and the practices related to them appear quite isolated and are only found in small quantities. Although the analysis presented above is preliminary, it shows with a certain degree of credibility, possible areas which immigration and newcomers *might have come from* to Trondheim during the late 10th century and the 11th century (Figure 8). The most likely regions in which these influxes had their roots are eastern England/the Danelaw area, the west Baltic coast, and the area between the Rhein and the Elbe. A more exotic ingredient in the early history of migration to Trondheim is the possible arrival of individuals from such distant places as Greenland and the Near East. People, either as individuals or in small groups, from these regions may have made their way to early medieval Trondheim for shorter or longer visits. Some of them also might have become residents and contributed to the life of the community and its gradually changing character. *So far, however, there are no observations that indicate a significant migration from regions outside Scandinavia* and even less evidence of the establishment of a diaspora inside the town itself during the Middle Ages. On the contrary, the most striking observation is that most of the daily life challenges seem to have been carried out within a traditional routine everyday life, utilising the traditional material resources of household utensils and nutritional sources. The houses were erected with local craft skills and in accordance with local concepts of technical standards and the spatial organisation of daily life activities. The observed external burial practices stand out as rather isolated incidents. The personal items so far examined are dominated by local or regional items, and the few coming from outside – if they weren't locally produced imitations – appear as unusual and exotic items. All together the above discussed archaeological observations indicate indirectly, that most of the settlers of the first 4-5 generations of urban development on the Nidarnes peninsula came from the region of central Norway, but a random influx of individuals or small groups from outside this region also seems to have taken place.

How does this fit in with new research based on information from other sources? There are no contemporary texts from the period which directly support or reject the above general conclusions. The written sources



FIGURE 8. THE MAP SHOWS THE NORTH EUROPEAN REGIONS FROM WHERE PEOPLE IN EARLY MEDIEVAL TRONDHEIM HAVE EMIGRATED.

provide only indirect information about craft and commercial activities. For that reason craft and trade have been the most prevalent factors in the discussion of the basic dynamic and motivating forces driving people to move from rural districts to urban centres and/or from towns to other towns with reference to the growing economic activity and population expansion in northwestern Europe from the 8th century onwards ([Benevolo 1993: 23](#), [Helle 2006: 107ff](#), [Hodges 1996: 289ff](#), [Nicolas 1997: 54ff](#), [Verhulst 1999: 68ff](#)). Another independent source of information about past movements and migration is isotope analysis. The archaeo-osteologist Stian Suppersberger Hamre has analysed the oxygen isotopes

in the teeth of ca. 100 skeletons from the cemetery around St. Olav's church in Trondheim. Although he has based the analysis on somewhat younger source material, his results correspond astoundingly well with those presented above. In the group of 41 individuals studied, who died in Trondheim between ca. 1200 -1350 AD, nearly 42% had moved from distant locations in Norway and/or Sweden (between 300-400 km from Trondheim), 15 % had moved from an area to the southwest of Scandinavia (e.g. Scotland), 15% from a southern continental area (e.g. Spain, Italy, or southern France), 7% had moved southward from Trondheim during their childhood and returned, while one individual had moved to Trondheim from a distant northern area, probably North West Russia (Hamre et al. 2017). The most astonishing result of the study was that 40% of the medieval individuals were born elsewhere from where they were buried (Hamre and Daux 2016). This indicates that the influx of urban settlers, at least in the High Middle Ages, was based on regional movements of individuals or small family groups that left their rural background, along with the associated experiences, routines, and practices, to move to town. This seems to have been the normal way urban communities increased their populations during the Middle Ages according to studies of migration to towns in medieval England (cf. Unwin 1990).

What ultimately transformed Nidarnes from a rural landscape to an urban landscape was that objects, ideas, attitudes, behaviours, and practices were brought together by a mixture of newcomers, guests and returnees, the majority of whom were from the local region, but some of whom came from further afield. To fully understand this pivotal process, we need a more comprehensive understanding of the early settlers' intentions and motivations, which we ultimately have to search for in the migratory movements of the time and the consequences for the places people left and the places they settled.

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