

Abstracts: Interactions

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Keynote address

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When people meet

While we need not be reminded that it is people, not pots that travel, many archaeologists are still somewhat hesitant about going into any detail about who these people were. We talk about encounters between people, and we may even gender them, but the focus is generally on the material culture and perhaps the overall economic and cultural effect of interaction. However, unless we become more ready to discuss the identities of those involved in various networks we will not be able to perceive the complexity and the dynamics of interaction. Networking does not predominantly take place between two equal and homogeneous partners. We need to consider the social composition of the communities involved and the heterogeneity of the events.

Networks and Communication

Christina Folke Ax, Open Air Museum

Good connections – Networks in the whaling and sealing community on Rømø in the 18th century

There is a peculiar irony in the fact that in order to go north, the whalers from Rømø went south. Most of the commanders and crew from Rømø boarded whaling and sealing vessels bound for the Arctic Ocean in Hamburg and to a lesser extent in Amsterdam and other ports in Germany and Schleswig-Holstein. The same people returned year after year, and the commanders were in charge of hiring the crew and brought a substantial part of their crew with them from their home island. This suggests that networks were of importance to the way the whaling communities operated. This is further underlined in view of the fact that it seems that the inhabitants of the different Frisian islands more or less had divided the important ports between them. For example, most islanders from Föhr went through Amsterdam, whereas Hamburg was the main port of the people from Rømø.

Through an analysis of individual life-stories, the paper aims to explore the importance of networks in establishing a foothold in the Dutch and German whaling and sealing business. Furthermore, the nature of the networks will be examined. What was the basis of the relations; family, region or knowledge and education? What were the implications of being bound up in these networks, and how did it affect the lives and culture of people in the whaling communities?

Anne Lisbeth Schmidt, Department of Conservation, Science

Skin Clothing from the North – Results from the research

The research of approximately 2100 items of historic skin clothing from the circumpolar area, belonging to the National Museum of Denmark, provides with essential information about indigenous peoples' traditional use of various skin types from different animals for clothing. By means of a new system for registration and high resolution digital photography, analyses of animal

species, measurements of patterns and identification of seams, it is shown that historic skin clothing's material consumption, design and sewing technique, varied geographically, from peoples and from gender. The research also demonstrates the context between the circumpolar peoples' separate clothing items as well as whole costumes.

Einar Østmo, Collection of National Antiquities, Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo
Shipbuilding and aristocratic splendour in the North, 2400 BC-1000 AD

While travel by sea always must have been an integral part of life in Scandinavia, voyages away from the coasts and across e.g. Skagerrak appear to have begun only at the onset of the Late Neolithic, c. 2400 BC, to judge from the distribution of imports from the south in South West Norway.

Possibly, the availability of metal tools at this time was among the conditions for the invention of sea-going vessels. The vessels may have been expanded dugouts rather than hide boats, and led to the development of the paddled Scandinavian Bronze Age boat pictured on rock carvings.

When paddling was exchanged for rowing in the Pre-Roman Iron Age, the development of the Iron Age ship of the Nydam type ensued, while the quite late adoption of sails just before the Viking Age was decisive for the development of the ocean-going Viking Age ship. These three main stages of shipbuilding correspond to three stages of aristocratic splendour in Scandinavia: The Bronze Age, the Roman and Migration periods and the Viking Age.

Peter Andreas Toft, Ethnographic Collection

Small things forgotten – Inuit reception of European commodities in the Historic Thule Culture

Trade was the main motivation for the cultural encounters between Europeans and the Inuit of the Historic Thule Culture in Greenland (1600-1900). However European commodities have often merely been used by archaeologists as means of dating or simple proofs of contact or viewed as material pollution of an original Inuit culture. This paper will address how cultural biographies and social histories of European objects can provide a local (Inuit) perspective in contact and colonial archaeology. By comparison of three regions, Nuuk Fjord, Disco Bay and Southeast Greenland, this paper demonstrates how the nature and duration of interaction affected the function and social meaning of European commodities in Inuit culture.

Objects and Exchange

Anne Pedersen, Danish Middle Ages and Renaissance

Skagerrak and Kattegat in the Viking Age – border and connecting link

Water, unlike dense forests or mountain regions, is often said to join rather than separate, and for Skagerrak and Kattegat this was no less true in prehistoric times than today. Nature in itself provides favourable conditions for interaction (social, economical, political or otherwise) between communities on either side of the two seas. The Oslo Fjord region in southern Norway turns naturally towards western Sweden and Denmark, whereas western Sweden is naturally oriented towards the west via the great rivers that flow into the Kattegat, and Denmark has a long and much-pitted coastline facing the Kattegat.

In the Viking Age and in the early post-Viking Middle Ages the first written evidence of relations across the joint waters emerges – the rune stones, the Frankish Annals from the beginning of the ninth century, the trader Ohthere's account of his journey around the year 890, the Norse sagas, the skaldic

poems and the historical chronicles of later times. These sources are often brief, centering on the social and political elite, and their statements moreover coloured by the goals and ambitions of each individual writer. Additional information can instead be sought in archaeology, and the aim of this paper is to explore the material evidence of interaction across the Skagerrak and Kattegat following the basic assumption, that finds and the contexts in which they occur can be viewed both as concrete evidence of exchanges within the regional networks, and as a meaning-bearing and communicative element which could be applied actively in the efforts of individuals, groups or local communities to promote their interests. The paper sets focus on specific object types, such as selected metal artefacts originating in Denmark (or being transferred via Denmark) and valued raw materials from Norway and Sweden, and contemporary burial customs as potential evidence of local identities or common practices in the region.

Helle Winge Horsnæs, Royal Collection of Coins and Medals

Gold imitations of Roman coins produced in European Barbaricum

The gold imitations of Roman coins make up for c. 20% of all finds of gold coins from the period until AD 395 in both Denmark and in Ukraine. Stylistic analysis indicates that they were produced in several areas, and the majority were pierced or looped to form pendants. They were probably used by chieftains to demonstrate their power, and the wide distribution of the imitations is evidence for the connectivity of the so-called Barbarian societies whose leaders are able to take part in tightly knit elite networks over long distances and disseminate social and political identities by taking over and transforming the content loaded Roman coin.

Gitte Tarnow Ingvardson, Royal Collection of Coins and Medals

Nørremølle – the largest Viking silver hoard of Bornholm

In the first half of the XIth century a hoard of almost two kilos of silver was deposited on a settlement on the east coast of Bornholm. The hoard is composed of 1194 minted and un-minted silver objects, produced in many different areas from the British islands in the Northwest to the Caliphate in the Southeast. In this paper I will tell the story of the hoard: What is the content of the hoard? How, why and, by whom was the hoard gathered? and where and why was the hoard deposited and why was it not regained?

Lisbeth Imer, Danish Middle Ages and Renaissance

Greenlandic runic inscriptions

In Greenland around 150 artefacts with inscriptions have been found, dating from the Norse settlements (c. 985-c.1450). Because of the favourable preservation conditions, Norse settlements in Greenland give us a glimpse of life in the countryside in the Middle Ages unlike anything seen before with modern Danish eyes, and thus we are able today to research the tradition of writing that the Norse settlers left. The inscriptions are various, but it is quite clear that it was in divine worship that writing really found expression. Faith and superstition are closely related, as it was thought that one could expel a disease – a sorceress – with a Christian prayer. The religious rural population used writing in personal worship, on tombstones, and in connection with their everyday work.

Preservation and Decay

Martin Nordvig Mortensen, Inger Bojesen-Koefoed, Jan Bruun Jensen, Poul Jensen, Anne Le Boëdec Moesgaard, Natasa Pokubcic, Kristiane Strætkvern, David Gregory, Lars Aasbjerg Jensen, Michelle Taube, Nanna Bjerregaard Pedersen, Department of Conservation, Science

Conservation and drying methods for archaeological materials modified for use in northern areas

The most common method today for conserving waterlogged organic material is vacuum freeze-drying, a technique that requires expensive and complicated equipment. The present work explores simplified methods with a potential for outdoor freeze-drying in cold regions. This involves simple drying agents such as silica gel and molecular sieve and alternative wood impregnation agents at atmospheric pressure. Furthermore the effect on duration and quality of freeze-drying is tested for different materials used for packaging the impregnated objects during freeze-drying at atmospheric pressure. Mathematical models describing the freeze-drying process are developed and tested on the investigated systems. Preliminary results will also be presented from an experiment where fresh wood is inoculated with strains of wood-degrading microorganisms and characterised after a period of degradation to learn about the traces left in the wood by the different strains of microorganisms.

Jørgen Hollesen, National Museum of Denmark & Centre for Permafrost, Department of Geography and Geology, University of Copenhagen, Henning Matthiesen, National Museum of Denmark, Bo Elberling, Centre for Permafrost, Department of Geography and Geology, University of Copenhagen, Jan Bruun Jensen, National Museum of Denmark

Kitchen-middens and climate change – the preservation of permafrozen sites in a warm future

Archaeological material may be extraordinary well preserved in Arctic areas, where permanently frozen conditions in the ground slows down the decay of materials such as for instance wood, bone, skin, hair and DNA. However, the mean annual air temperature in the Arctic is expected to increase with 2.5-7.5° C by the end of the 21st century. This may have a significant warming effect on the soil and could lead to permafrost thaw and degradation of currently frozen archaeological remains. Here we present a four year monitoring and research project taking place at Qajaa in the Disko Bay area in West Greenland. Qajaa is a large kitchen midden, containing permafrozen remains from 4500 years of inhabitation, from the first Palaeo-Eskimos entered Greenland, until the site was abandoned in the 18th century. The purpose of the project is to investigate current preservation conditions through field and laboratory measurements, to evaluate future conditions by using computer models, and if necessary to propose remediation actions that ensure future preservation. It is discussed how the experiences from Qajaa can be used on a larger scale to evaluate the current and future preservation conditions at other arctic sites.