

Department of archaeology and classical studies, Stockholm University

The Becoming of Boats

Craft Practices in Southern Norwegian Boat Building (1050-1700 CE).

Ph.D. thesis, final seminar (80 %).

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The absence/presence table will be provided in the Appendix. 112 shipwrecks systematised using 64 properties. In addition, date and provenance, length

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Abstract for the final seminar 29th of May 2024

Tori Falck, PhD-candidate

The thesis contains six chapters of varying lengths. At the time of writing this abstract, it was approximately 80.000 words. I reckon the final length will be roughly 90.000 words. I have no intentions of writing much longer than this, depending on the comments I get on the seminar.

While none of the chapters are entirely finished, two have much work left: Chapters 4 and 6.

Chapter 1. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES.

This chapter is meant as a point of departure.

I start with this citation from the influential maritime archaeologist Thijs Maarleveld:

The study of technical detail in shipbuilding is not at all parochial, but provides us with an exceptional opportunity to understand past thinking, concepts and decisions. This opportunity should be exploited more widely in archaeological reasoning, rather than remain the preserve of specialists. (Maarleveld 1995, 4).

This explains why the thesis will elaborate on technical details concerning shipwrecks. It also points out why this focus is somewhat problematic, as the sub-discipline of maritime archaeology is often claimed to engage too little in the general debate within archaeology and too much in technology.

Further, I define the period (1050-1700 CE) and the region of investigation. I define the area of investigation as the extended Viken region, with the Oslofjord and Agder Counties in Norway and the Bohuslän region to the Göta River on the Swedish side of the modern border.

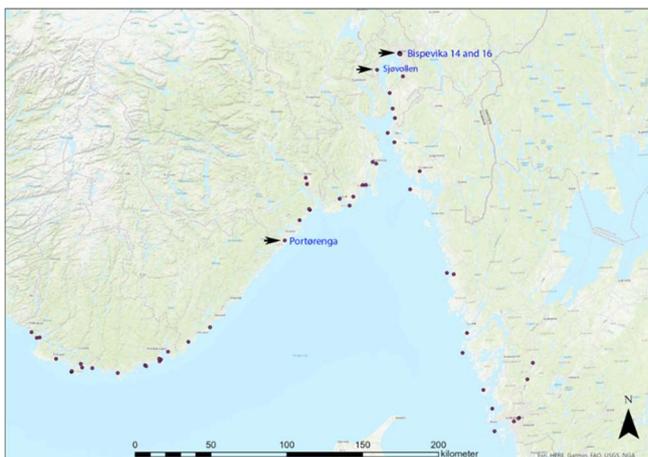


Figure 1 Map of the area of investigation with the 112 shipwrecks marked. Main case studies are marked with names. Map: M. Reitan.



Figure 2 Map of shipwrecks in Oslo. The map only shows wrecks in the dataset, with Bispevika 14 and 16 marked. Map: M. Reitan.

Much of the available material, primarily small to medium-sized lapstrake-built (clinker-built) vessels, tends to be ignored in historical (and archaeological) accounts, leading me to refrain from prioritising written sources. Additionally, written sources often present a narrative disconnected from (vernacular) craft practices, making them largely irrelevant in addressing related questions. Within this thesis, the practice of making (and re-making) underpins the shipwreck's fundamental nature as objects, or rather things, around which other reflections revolve.

This leads to main aims and objectives on two levels:

Level 1

- The thesis aims to fill a knowledge gap concerning the archaeological ships and boats found in Southern Norway (extended Viken region)
- It will do this from the perspective of primarily lapstrake-built vessels (vernacular building).
- A systematisation of the vessel's technical attributes provides a base for further evaluation of the material.
- A statistical approach is applied and discussed as a possible method to identify the main changes in building techniques during the investigation period.
- The statistics are applied to choose cases for more detailed investigation.
- Does the material reveal any meaningful patterns of regional and even local building techniques? Can change over time be detected?

Level 2

- Can the material be used to further explore the relationships between humans, materials and things on a theoretical level?
- In what aspects can the particular strand of maritime archaeology on ships and boats add to the theoretical debate within archaeology? This last point is made as an effort to write maritime archaeology that communicates beyond the limitations of the sub-discipline.

Chapter 2 RESEARCH ON SHIPWRECKS. BOATS AND SHIPS AS ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBJECTS will delve further into the distinct characteristics of ships and boats as archaeological objects. This

The chapter is not finished. In some respects, it diverges from the methodology, making it evident that the thesis balances a quantitative approach to data collection and processing with a qualitative interpretation and theoretical discussion. It aims to release the material from the rigid confines of objectification imposed by the method and portray it as dynamic entities in complex relations.

Chapter 5, TECHNIQUES IN BUILDING, RE-BUILDING AND MAINTAINING BOATS, is an empirical exploration grounded in both method and theory. It highlights four selected vessels to underscore the significance of the perspective on crafts and making within archaeology. Additionally, other vessels within the dataset are examined and contextualised alongside the principal cases to enhance the discussions. This is also done to utilise the full breadth of knowledge gained from the process of systematisation. The four cases exemplify shifts in craft practices over time but also represent variations in size and function. Furthermore, they possess qualities that contribute to the theoretical discussions introduced in the preceding chapters, particularly Chapter 4.

Chapter 6 is mainly a conclusion and summary of the results. It will also delve into broader reflections beyond maritime archaeology's confines, contemplating the results' implications in a broader context. The chapter will be written at the end to ensure I build on the methodological discussion, theoretical perspectives, and case studies.

Chapter 7 provides a summary of the content of the thesis in Swedish.