

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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CONTENT:

CHAPTER 1. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES. 3

From symbols to making things	4
Ships without names: A text-free zone?	6
Identifying nameless ships – levels of provenance	7
Time and space: demarcations	9
The structure of the thesis	12

CHAPTER 2. RESEARCH ON SHIPWRECKS. BOATS AND SHIPS AS ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBJECTS 13

Premises	13
Type or technique?	14
Boats and ships as archaeological objects	16
Situating my research objectives and practice	25

CHAPTER 3. MATERIAL AND METHOD 27

Definitions of the properties selected for systematisation 27

Introduction	27
Main building method	27
Techniques of conversion	32
Joining of strakes	34
Waterproofing	38
Plank joints, scarfs	41
Decorative mouldings	45
Framing distance	48
Transverse strengthening techniques	48
Longitudinal strengthening techniques	53
Stem and stern shapes	57
Techniques for joining timbers	60
Summary	61

Creating order or revealing disorder? Doing statistics with multiple correspondence tools (MCA) 62

Why use statistics?	62
Some remarks on the working process	63
Choice of software	63
MCA: ‘Collect, project, interpret’	64
The NAs. Missing values	65
Interpretation of plots: Order or disorder?	68
Comparing the Norwegian and the Danish charts – traditional vs. modern?	74
Conclusion and comments on further investigation	76

CHAPTER 4. THE BECOMING OF BOATS. FROM OBJECTS TO THINGS 78

The time of the thing	78
From objects to things	80
From type of objects to making things	80
Against the hylomorphic model of making: The becoming of boats.	81

CHAPTER 5. TECHNIQUES IN BUILDING, RE-BUILDING AND MAINTAINING BOATS. 82

Introduction to the choice of vessels	82
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The Sjøvollen ship (1280 CE)	84
The Sjøvollen ship in the statistics	84
Excavation, documentation, and reconstruction	85
Technical description of the ship and main proportions	93
Evidence of building phases and repairs	95
Bispevika 16 (a. 1600 CE)	97
Bispevika 16 in the statistics	97
Excavation, documentation, and reconstruction	97
Technical description of the ship and main proportions	104
Evidence of building phases and repairs	105
Bispevika 14 (1532-1544 CE) and the Portør boat (a. 1660 CE)	117
Bispevika 14 and the Portør boat in the statistics	118
Bispevika 14: Excavation, documentation, and reconstruction	119
The Portør boat: Excavation, documentation, and reconstruction	127
Comparing the two vessels	136
Vessels in Viken. Four examples of building techniques in a changing society.	138

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION 139

CHAPTER 7 SAMMANFATNING (SVENSK) 139

APPENDIX 139

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

LIST OF FIGURES 140

LIST OF TABLES 143

BIBLIOGRAPHY 144

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.

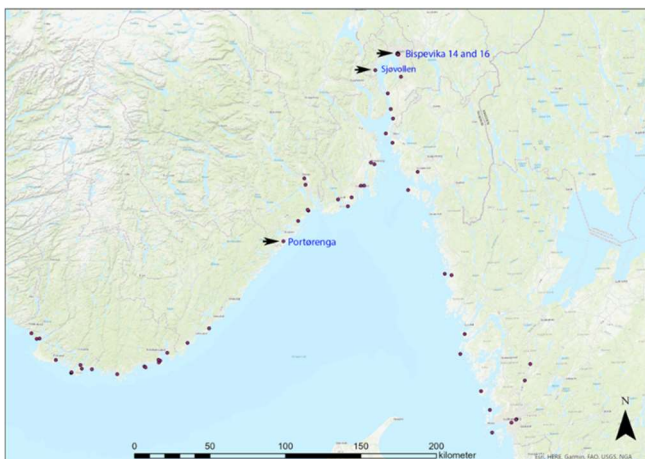


Figure 1 Map of the area of investigation with the 112 shipwrecks marked. Main case studies are marked with names. Map: M. Reitan.

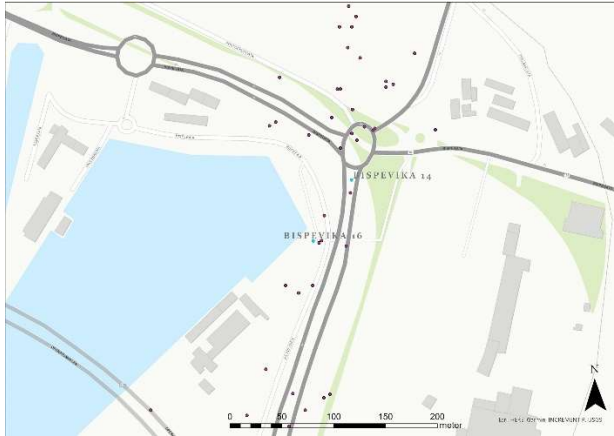


Figure 2 Map of shipwrecks in Oslo. The map only shows wrecks in the dataset, with Bispevika 14 and 16 marked. Map: M. Reitan.

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

investigation will entail an examination of the changing shipwreck research. Rather than presenting a comprehensive history of this research, the aim is to highlight discussions that create a context and background for the perspectives presented in this thesis.

Chapter 3, MATERIAL AND METHOD, primarily focuses on the methodology of systematically organising the archaeological material. Here, vessels are approached as objects, and shipwrecks are objectified through categorisation, grouping, and (re)presentation in statistical plots. This chapter comprises two main sections. The first section outlines the technical properties selected for the systematic organisation of the material. This is crucial for enabling readers to understand the basis of projections depicting similarities and differences within the material. Moreover, it facilitates the application of the same methodology to different materials, thereby increasing the possibility of broadening the analysis in alignment with new research questions and objectives. The second section explains and discusses utilising Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA), accompanied by presenting and examining primary results derived from the systematic organisation.

MCA - biplot: individuals. Coded according to date and type.

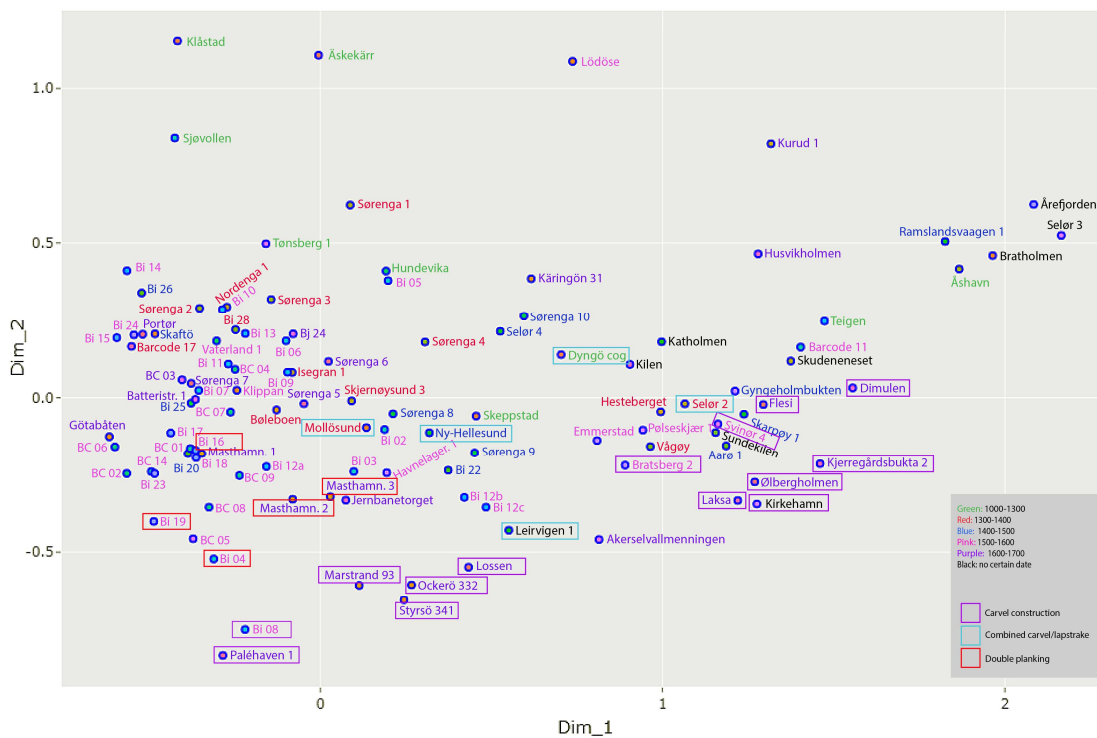


Figure 3 Biplot showing individuals with names. The names are colour-coded: green is vessels from 1000-1300, red from 1300-1400, blue from 1400-1500, pink from 1500-1600, and purple from 1600-1700. Vessels with no specific date are written in black. Carvel-constructed vessels are marked with purple rectangles, combined carvel-lapstrake construction with turquoise rectangles, and lapstrake vessels showing a second layer of planking (carvel or lapstrake) are marked with red rectangles. The rest is lapstrake-built.

Chapter 4, THE BECOMING OF BOATS. FROM OBJECTS TO THINGS. This is a theoretical discussion of the dynamic character of boats and ships as things. It will start with discussing the concept of time (concerning things), which can be seen as a continuation and elaboration of my dealing with written sources and historical research in Chapter 1, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES. Via a discussion on the specific perspective on the importance of making things (craft), I will consider why it is of particular interest to look at ships and boats as not finished objects but things in the constant process of making (or becoming). Tim Ingold has debated this as a critique of hylomorphism, which I lean on.

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.