

Towns and Commerce in Viking-Age Scandinavia

The Viking Age, from c.750 to 1050 CE, was an era of major social change in Scandinavia. By the end of this period of sweeping transformation, Scandinavia, once a pagan periphery, had been firmly integrated into occidental Europe. Archaeological remains offer evidence of this process, which included and intertwined with Christianisation, state formation and the dawn of urbanisation in Scandinavia. In this volume, Sven Kalmring offers an interdisciplinary and geographically wide-ranging approach to understanding the emergence of towns and commerce in Viking-age Scandinavia and their eventual demise by the end of the period. Using the towns of Hedeby, Birka, Kaupang and Ribe as case studies, he also tracks the diverging characteristics of these urban communities against the background of traditional social structures in the Viking world. Instead of tracing the results of Viking-age urbanisation, or mapping that process by establishing economic networks, Kalmring focusses on the very reasons behind the emergence of towns and their eventual decline.

SVEN KALMRING is a scholar of Viking-age archaeology who specialises in maritime archaeology and early medieval urbanisation. A former researcher at the Centre for Baltic and Scandinavian Archaeology in Schleswig, Germany, and docent at Stockholm University, Sweden, he serves on the board of the Medieval Europe Research Community and is a delegate to the Viking Congress. Today, he works as a senior curator of Late Iron Age and Viking Age collections at the Swedish National Historical Museums.

Cover image: Hedeby, present-day northern Germany. Hoard from Hedeby harbour 1980, dated to *c.* 825 (inventory no. KSD 652.1–8; © Museum für Archäologie, Stiftung Schleswig-Holsteinische Landesmuseen Schloss Gottorf, Schleswig). The hoard comprised 598 blue and white monochrome beads, six KG 3 Hedeby coins and one Carolingian Christiana-Religio-denarius of Louis the Pious from 822/23–840.

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Harbour, n. A place where ships taking shelter from storms are exposed to the fury of the customs.

Ambrose Bierce (1842–1914), The Devil's Dictionary.

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This volume is an attempt to synthesise my many years of scholarly work on Viking-age towns in a pan-European perspective, endeavouring to gather comprehensive insights from Scandinavia to the Caliphate and from Anglo-Saxon England to the Byzantine Empire. Although the specialist literature on the individual sites literally fills entire libraries on almost all aspects, as a student only a few comparable syntheses were available. Also, despite all the scholarly discussion on this particular topic, the central question of the causes and reasons for the emergence of this urban phenomenon in northern Europe precisely during the Viking Age remained largely unanswered. The book at hand is an attempt to fill that gap.

My personal interest in the topic began when I was primary-school age, when I visited the Viking-age town of Hedeby for the first time with my parents and my younger brother. At a time when there were no reconstructed 'Wikinger Häuser Haithabu' at the monument, I still had to walk the entire semicircle rampart, to the astonishment of my parents. Many years later, after a term abroad in Lund and as a doctoral student in pre- and proto-history at Kiel University, I found myself at the portal of Gottorf Castle, the seat of the Archaeological State Museum, studying the harbour of Hedeby. For the support of my academic teacher Michael Müller-Wille (+) and my doctoral supervisor Claus von Carnap-Bornheim, as well as for the trust placed in me by the excavator Kurt Schietzel when assigning the topic, I am very grateful.

Almost immediately after completing my doctorate, and thanks to my director Claus von Carnap-Bornheim, I was given the unique opportunity to join the newly founded Centre for Baltic and Scandinavian Archaeology (ZBSA). The doctoral thesis led not only to the successful application of the priority programme Harbours from the Roman Period to the Middle Ages (von Carnap-Bornheim and Kalmring 2011) of the German Research Foundation (DFG) but also to the insight that

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Even after returning to the Centre for Baltic and Scandinavian Archaeology in Schleswig, I remained a visiting researcher at Stockholm University. During my year as a lecturer at Aarhus University in 2016, I had the pleasure, among other things, of giving a joint seminar with Søren Sindbæk entitled 'Urbanisation and Networks', deepening the discussions on this topic and adding a Danish perspective. The subsequent heading of the excavation in the inhumation burial ground of Hedeby, carried out with German and Danish students, brought me back to my intellectual starting point once again. At the same time, I also had the privilege of continuing to accompany various training excavations of the Archaeological Research Laboratory in Birka. Thanks to the support of Kerstin Lidén and the benevolent reviews of Birgitta Hårdh and Anders Andréén, I became an associate professor at Stockholm University and,

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Abbreviations

Dan.	Danish
Dut.	Dutch
Fre.	French
Ger.	German
Nrw.	Norwegian
OEng.	Old English
OI	Old Irish
OldWN	Old West Norse
ON	Old Norse
OSwd.	Old Swedish
Swd.	Swedish



MAP I Places in Anglo-Saxon England and Continental Europe mentioned in the text. (S. Kalmring).



MAP I (cont.)