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HUNTING IDENTITIES: INTERSECTIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON VIKING AGE MORTUARY EXPRESSIONS

Abstract

This article explores how an application of an intersectional perspective can open up new avenues of enquiry and potential understandings when applied to well-known data sets and empirical material. Through adopting a framework where social identity is seen as a complex and conglomerate entity, we seek to question whether such a starting point can give new perspectives on familiar categories and through this, on established interpretations of Viking Age social identity. Acknowledging the complicated nature of the relationship between a deceased person and the things with which they are buried, we nevertheless work from the assumption that grave goods offer in part a reflection of identity. From this, we seek to explore what the wider implications of the presence of arrowheads, usually categorised as a typically male object, in a number of female graves in selected areas may be. The article is not intended to offer any concrete answers, but rather to demonstrate the potential which an intersectional approach to identities offers.

Keywords: burials, hunting, hybridisation, intersectionality, social identity, Viking Age

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INTRODUCTION

In the following, we will explore some of the social connotations linked with hunting through a discussion of selected Late Iron Age grave finds containing arrows from eastern Norway and southern Sweden, seen in their wider social contexts. The main aim is not to present a detailed analysis of hunting as such, but rather to demonstrate how an intersectional approach to the material can help open up more nuanced interpretations of social identities.

In Scandinavia, the Viking Age is the period with the largest degree of variation in burial customs, to the degree where it can almost be claimed that no two burials are similar (Price 2008; Lund 2013). Though the material does

show some regional tendencies (Svanberg 2003), there are few absolute rules that can be laid down. It is not uncommon to find cemeteries where cremations are found alongside inhumations, flat graves next to barrows, and richly furnished graves next to ones with no grave goods (Price 2008; Lund 2013). This high level of expected variation is of relevance in the overall exploration of multifaceted identities, where we propose an interpretation where this is manifest of the complexity of social roles and expectations.

Any study of burial customs of the past may take its starting point in acknowledging that the deceased did not bury themselves and that consequently, there is never a direct and uncomplicated relationship between the grave goods and

the social identity of the deceased (Halsall 1995; Parker Pearson 1999; Schülke 1999). In short, we cannot know if the objects found in any given grave were the belongings of the person buried in the grave. We can however, assume that the relationship between the body and the artefacts is not completely arbitrary.

Traditionally, grave goods in Late Iron Age burials have been interpreted as expressions of the identity of the person (see e.g. Price 2002; Solberg 2003; Glørstad 2010; Stylegar 2010; Pantman 2014). Though the link is not always explicitly stated, these studies link groups of artefacts with the social status and identity of the deceased. Other studies of burial assemblages have focused on the manner in which artefacts were utilised to produce or fragment notions of personhood (see e.g. Fowler 2004; 2010; Jones 2007). In addition, the spatial location of particular objects within the grave, as well as the arrangement of the individual artefacts, have been interpreted variously as articulations of the relationship between the deceased and the bereaved (see e.g. Brück 2006; Ekengren 2006), or as the material remains of actions performed during the burial practice (see Price 2010; 2014 for examples within Viking Age archaeology). Thus, in a study of social identity, the content and combination of grave goods, the spatial location of the artefacts in the grave, the treatment of the bodies of humans, animals and artefacts deposited during the burial, all hold the potential of providing insights into questions of identity in past societies. Nevertheless, a shared aspect in these diverging ways of approaching mortuary remains is the notion that when it comes to objects which were deposited as part of the burial rites there is a link of some kind between the deceased and the objects, independently of what that link entails.

Within Viking Age studies there remains a strong propensity to interpret the grave goods as personal possessions and to link particular artefacts to specific profession and gender, as will be further explored below. We propose however, that these straightforward equations often

overlook other, contrasting occurrences of grave goods that could offer nuance to our understanding of social identities. Hence, the purpose of this article is to examine these links further by addressing a number of burials containing arrowheads in order to explore the wider implication of these finds in relation to gender, identity, burial customs and economy. As stated above, this article does not set out to discuss hunting as a main focus, but rather to use the activity of hunting as a tool in a discussion of identities from an intersectional stance.

A NOTE ON THE MATERIAL AND APPROACH

Recognising that we are using a limited sample of material in this exploration, we wish to draw attention to that the intended purpose here is not to draw overarching conclusions about Viking Age identities as a whole. Rather, we wish to use a selected sample, which we know well from previous research, to show how a deeper delve into the composite nature of grave goods can offer more nuanced ideas of the creation and maintenance of social identities.

The following is a qualitative analysis, and in a qualitative analysis, it is the qualities and char-

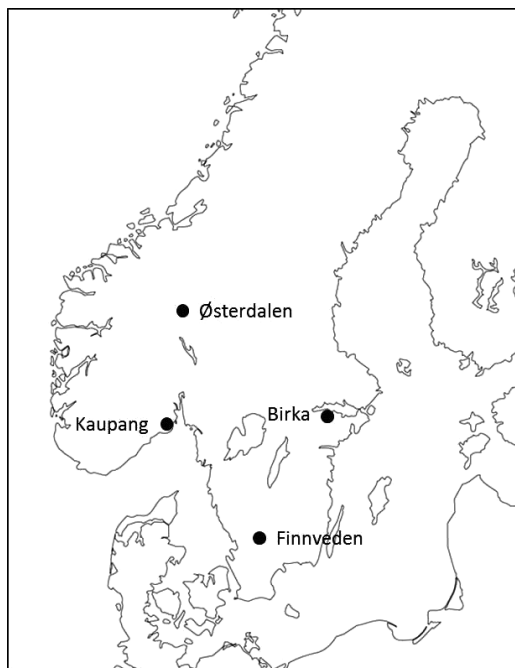


Fig. 1. Map of the locations mentioned in the text. Illustration: J. Lund & M. Moen.

acteristics of a phenomenon that are being explored, not its quantitative expression. Such an approach is necessitated by the more or less accidental selection of mortuary material; namely the ones preserved or rediscovered and available in the present day. Furthermore, the total number of graves with arrowheads in Scandinavia is unknown, and thus unsuited for statistically significant quantitative analysis. As such, the body of preserved material cannot be assumed to be a statistically representative sample. This does not render the material invalid for research, but means that it requires a nuanced, qualitative approach that respects the social changes the material potentially represents within the discreet categories. Thus, this is not offered as an exhaustive analysis of Scandinavian Viking Age graves with arrowheads. It is an exploration from an intersectional perspective of a number of phenomena within certain groups of Viking Age graves, which may have wider implications for the overall comprehension of how these graves functioned in relation to the expression of social identities.

INTERSECTIONAL PERSPECTIVES OF SOCIAL IDENTITIES

The use of intersectional perspectives in archaeology has seen a marked rise in the last few years (Villa 2011; Arwill-Nordbladh 2012; Danielsson & Thedéen 2012; Fahlander 2012; Thedéen 2012). The term itself dates back to the late 1980s (Crenshaw 2011[1989]), and was coined to describe the intersecting lines of oppression which forms a person's experience, specifically as originating in black feminism. Within archaeological theory its application is often somewhat broader, referring more to intersecting lines of experience which contribute to the creation of identity, both in terms of oppression and opportunity (see e.g. Gilchrist 1999), and it is in this sense we have employed the perspective.

The archaeological interpretation of identity based on mortuary evidence often focuses on certain selected items, rather than reviewing the complete assemblages (as discussed e.g. in Danielsson 2007). In this way, the interpretations of burials with full weapon sets are often presented as warrior graves (Hedenstierna-Jonson et al. 2017; Price et al. 2019). Burials containing

blacksmiths tools become smith's graves, and those containing woodworking tools become defined through the set of tools (Blindheim 1963; Barndon 2005; Samdal 2005; Glørstad 2009; Pedersen 2011). Oval brooches denominate a woman's grave, as does textile working tools (for a discussion of the identification of gendered identities in Viking Age burials, see Arwill-Nordbladh 1998; Moen 2019). These links are often made with less attention brought to the remaining artefacts in the burial assemblage. Thus, a burial containing a complex and varied set of objects can become reduced to being associated with only a fraction of the complete facets of identities expressed through the grave goods. When a tradesperson is defined through the presence of scales in a burial, this exclusionary focus neglects to factor in the potential meaning of other items such as cooking vessels, jewellery or tools. We tend to classify graves in such ways, without necessarily attempting to understand that they may express composite identities where people fulfilled multiple social functions.

Further, assumed female identities are often founded upon the presence of textile working equipment, keys and domestic utensils. It is however, worth pointing out that many female gendered burials also contain horses and horse related items, common tools such as knives, hones and sickles, vessels and in some cases tools of trade or even weapons. If one does accept that identity can to some extent be traced through grave goods, then a legitimate question is what these other items contribute to the creation and maintenance of social identity. One answer is that we need to consider that identities are composed in part by navigating several overlapping allegiances and groups. A person is always more than their gender, age or religious persuasion, and it is in the interplay of these identities that we can see how social cohesion and belonging is navigated.

An intersectionally informed outlook would try to reach an understanding of a composite identity founded on multiple influences, rather than focus on a more narrow range of expected objects. In practice, this means accepting that identities can be formed across lines, and that any social identity will be dependent on more than just simple gender. The material presented in the following pages will be approached through an

intersectionally informed perspective, inasmuch as this means viewing identity as composite and multidimensional, created through the conglomeration of intersecting and diverging traits, skills and situations. Thus, expressed identity is believed to reflect a multifaceted reality, wherein different components create a complex whole.

As we will see below, arrows appear in a wide range of graves, with no identifiable recurring pattern. We propose that this is because they can belong to multiple different identities, rather than being a simple signifier of one set type of person. We also suggest that similar studies could be done on a number of other types of finds, with similar results.

HUNTING, ECONOMY, AND CREOLISATION?

The archaeological material from Late Iron Age eastern Norway has been utilised in a general discussion of the dichotomy between communities with an agrarian economy and people living mainly through hunting. Studies have divided these two social groups mostly through burial sites, using respectively mainly burial mounds and hunting ground graves. The burial mounds may be identified in significant locations in the landscape in connection with arable land, whilst the hunting ground graves are typically found in the inland areas of Norway and Sweden, often in forested areas and on peninsulas in lakes (Gollwitzer 1997; Prescott 1999; Bergstøl 2004; 2008). The divergence between burials in connection to areas with agriculture and hunting ground graves on higher locations near hunting pit systems and in more marginal farming land has been used in debates of social identity of potentially Old Norse and South Sámi ethnic identities (Zachrisson 1997; Bergstøl 2004; 2008).

Most scholars appear to agree that the two grave types may relate to people making a living in the main out of farming and hunting respectively. Jostein Bergstøl interprets the hunting ground graves as traces of a creolised social group, who had found their own position in-between an Old Norse agrarian population and a Sámi identity (Bergstøl 2004; see also Nielsen & Wickler 2011 for a parallel discussion of hybrid positions in-between Old Norse and Sámi identity). Whereas the Sámi scree graves of northern

Scandinavia are inhumation graves which may contain bone arrowheads, the hunting ground graves are often cremation graves in cairns and typically contain hunting equipment, in particular large numbers of iron arrowheads (Gollwitzer 1997; Bergstøl 2008). Based on Thomas Hylland Eriksen's concept of creolisation, Bergstøl underlines the construction of new cultural features created as connections to former context are broken, through their melting into other cultural elements which are constructed as new units (Eriksen 1994; Bergstøl 2004). However, such concepts of creolisation, may still be bound to the idea of syncretism in the sense that they presuppose essentialist units that are being mixed and thus turned into the in-between position, *the creols*. By using the concept of *hybridity*, we acknowledge that all cultural expressions consist of elements from various contexts. In this sense, they were all hybrids, though this hybridity may have been more strongly emphasised in specific contexts (Bhabha 1994; Jones 1997). Further, intersectionality reminds us that a person's identity possesses a multitude of layers, so that some parts of a person's identity may be played out, emphasised, hidden, diminished or ignored more and less depending on the social situations, even in relation to each other (thus, in some cases focusing more on i.e. age and less on gender divisions). Drawing on this, the appearance of arrowheads in burial assemblages may relate to hunting activities even when hunting should not be seen as the primary aspect of identity that is being expressed. For this article we will not enter into the discussion on ethnicity, but focus on potential socioeconomic aspects of the differences between the two grave types.

Leaving the question of ethnicity aside, it is noticeable that though arrowheads are a dominating feature in the hunting ground graves, they are by no means lacking in burials which have been interpreted as belonging to the population with a predominantly agricultural economy. If we for instance turn to the Late Iron Age burial from Dælisætra, Østerdalen, presented by Bergstøl as part of the Old Norse agricultural population, it contained swords, a spear, various agricultural tools, but also eight iron arrowheads. Similarly, a grave from Lonasetra, Østerdalen, contained a sword, an axe, two knives, and no less than four arrowheads (Bergstøl 2008: 69;

Fig. 1). In other words, if we are to stick to the term hybridity, the performance of the identity of these people through the burial rituals are also very much focusing on a hybrid identity,¹ not only warrior, peasant or craftsman, but also hunter. In Hylland Eriksen's phrasing the buried individuals could be categorised as creolised peasants. However, a more fruitful way to grasp this type of material is perhaps to change the focus from ethnicity towards economy. If our aim is to understand the role of hunting in the creation of identities, we may ask which role hunting had in the economy and how economies and the construction of identities may have been played out in the burial rites in the Late Iron Age.

A large number of trapping systems were constructed, and some of them maintained, in the Late Iron Age in the highlands of eastern Norway (Bergstøl 2008; Amundsen 2017: 189–90). Structures of large-scale hunting pits dug and/or built for catching elks and wild reindeer have been identified several places in mountainous parts of eastern Norway. They are difficult to date, but appear to have been actively used in the Late Iron Age and medieval period. Ice patch finds including arrows and arrow shafts, fences for hunting and scaring sticks indicate that reindeer hunting reached a peak during the Viking Age (Nesje et al. 2012; Amundsen & Os 2015; Amundsen 2017; Pilø et al. 2018). Studies of reindeer antlers found in Ribe in south-west Denmark, but originating from the Scandinavian Peninsula, demonstrates that this hunting was an integrated part of the interregional trade of Viking Age Scandinavia (Ashby et al. 2015). In other words, Viking Age hunting was not per se an activity for an isolated, less economically progressive social group, or for a group with less leeway and flexibility. As Eva Svensson has pointed out, the social economy of agriculture on the more marginal soils in the Viking Age may have been a lifestyle that combined agriculture, pastoralism with shieling, iron and tar production, and hunting activities (Svensson 2005).

ARROWS FOR WARFARE OR ARROWS FOR HUNTING?

Arrows can be interpreted both as weapons used for warfare and interpersonal violence, and for hunting. In some cases, the context of the burial

may help decide which interpretation is the most likely, such as the quiver of arrows found in the generally warlike burial Bj581 at Birka (Hedenstierna-Jonson et al. 2017), or in burials interpreted as hunting ground graves (Bergstøl 2004: 206). In other contexts however, the question is left more open.

Considering the role that hunting may have played in long-distance trade for example (Sindbæk 2008: 152; Skre 2008: 91), it is possible that arrows found in burials from urban contexts may relate to the economic importance of commodities gained from hunting in trade networks (Stylegar 2007). Likewise in rural contexts, arrowheads may be related to violence. Hunting for subsistence as well as hunting for trade are equally likely avenues of interpretation, though it may be worth noting that indicators of trade do not appear as frequently in these graves as they do in more urban contexts (Moen 2019).

In other words, the link between an arrowhead and the deceased with which it is buried is not straightforward. The best approach will be to analyse individual burials separately in order to consider the wider context in each case. In the case of the material discussed here, a link with hunting is a reasonable conjecture for the arrows found, and we have chosen to pursue this route of enquiry. Other avenues may however also be worthy of further study, which we leave open for future pursuit.

HUNTING MASCULINITY

When it comes to gendered identities, hunting has in general been linked to male activities. This link between male gendered identities and hunting is based in part on written evidence, notably *Grágás* which mentions hunting as a male activity, and *Rigstula*, which also ties hunting to high status men (as discussed in Kupiec & Milek 2015: 114; for a discussion on the Old Norse written sources in relation to Viking Age archaeology, see Price 2002; and for the implications of this use in studies of gender in the Viking Age, see Moen 2019). The association between men and hunting has in one example coloured the interpretation of traces of wild fowl at shielings as a possible indicator of male presence in an otherwise female arena (Kupiec & Milek 2015: 114). In other words, based only on the presence of



Fig. 2. Illustration of a Sámi hunting group, after Olaus Magnus (2010[1555]).

wild fowl, it is implied in this interpretation that men must have been working on the shieling, as hunting is a male activity. This is striking, considering that this link between male identity and hunting may be difficult to document in the archaeological record: The total number of Icelandic individuals buried with arrowheads are only two (KT-37 from Kaldárhöfpi, a double grave containing one adult and one child; Pétursdóttir 2007: 41–2; 2012). Using the common method of linking grave goods with gendered activities in other words, the link between male identity and hunting in the Icelandic archaeological record is tenuous at best.

The mention of hunting as a male activity is also found in a few other written sources, including *Sturlunga Saga* (Sigurðsson 2008: 159). The veracity of these sources with regards to Viking Age realities is not the point for discussion here, but it is of potential interest that written sources can be interpreted to support a less strictly gendered interpretation of activities such as hunting for the upper classes (Riisøy & Moen forthcoming). Another association which can be drawn from the written sources is the strong link between hunting and Sámi identity. This includes a link to female gender in the goddess Skadi who is described as skiing and hunting with a bow and arrow, in the *manner of a Sámi woman* (Zachrisson 2008: 36). It may be fruitful in other words to think outside of strictly gendered lines when it comes to whom the hunter could be (Fig. 2).

ARROWHEADS IN FEMALE GENDERED GRAVES

The presence of arrowheads in a number of female gendered burials becomes significant when seen in the light of the established tendency to gender weapons and hunting equipment as male. In the context of identities and grave goods, a relevant point is what exactly determines a *gendered* grave. As those familiar with gender determination of burials will be well aware this is usually done either by assessing the skeletal remains (osteological sexing), or by assessing the grave goods (archaeological gendering). Both of these approaches have certain inherent challenges, and the ideal situation would allow for full use of aDNA combined with osteological sexing and archaeological gendering. However, this is very rarely the case, as preservation and funding both play a part in what can be done in terms of analysis. Further, even where we are able to identify the sex of the deceased through aDNA, the social connotations of this sex are not automatically defined through their biology (Butler 1990). The cultural meaning of the gender of *any* individual identified in the past cannot be identified through aDNA. More acutely, to what a degree gender was a free choice or a prefix aspect of identity in a prehistoric society needs a more nuanced perspective in order to be assessed.

In cases where only the archaeological assemblage has been gendered, we cannot know whether or not the skeletal remains would have

corresponded with the assigned gender. This has become more topical in recent years, with the publication of studies which show that the expected expressions of gender in the Viking Age do not always correspond with biological sex. A case in point is the now famous Birka weapons, grave Bj581, which shows what is usually understood as a traditionally male assemblage buried with a biological female body (Hedenstierna-Jonson et al. 2017; Price et al. 2019; for other examples of female gendered weapon burials, see also Gardela 2017). However, in many cases, as with the Norwegian material presented below, the preservation of skeletal material is too poor to allow for osteological sexing. This means that one dimension of any potential discussion is lost. Nevertheless, the main argument of the connection of grave goods to identity remains intact, and this material is therefore still relevant in a discussion of the creation and maintenance of identity. Further, the archaeological gendering of burial assemblages is widespread, and indeed has become part of the foundations on which we have built ideas of gender in the Viking Age (for a discussion of archaeological gendering in general, see Gilchrist 1999; for a discussion focused in Viking Age material, see Moen 2019)

As was made clear in the note on the material used above, the material presented here is not intended as an exhaustive review of all Viking Age burials in Scandinavia containing arrowheads, nor are they presented as directly comparable with each other. Rather, it presents two separate areas which each demonstrate different patterns. Whilst the first area, Kaupang in Vestfold, is differentiated by being an urban context, the second, from Finnveden in Småland, Sweden, contains more scattered cemeteries and rural contexts. The Kaupang material is drawn from a single site, inasmuch as all the burials are connected with the settlement at Kaupang and falls within the lifespan of the town (Stylegar 2007). The Finnveden material however, originates from several different sites of a more rural nature, and is thus potentially drawn from a less homogenous population spread over a wider geographical area. The material represents areas with different subsistence strategies, and expected different social patterns, but by this thus represents a wider sample testifying to the diversity of social expressions which we ought to expect.

This also matches Anitra Fossum's study of women and hunting in eastern Norway, which maps out female burials with arrowheads in an area where hunting has been an important activity for both subsistence and economy (Fossum 1996: 78–91), which further supports the interpretation of who the hunter was into a nuanced, intersectional framework.

THE KAUPANG CASES: SINGLE ARROWHEADS IN AN URBAN CONTEXT

In total, five female gendered burials from the Kaupang material contain arrowheads, out of a total of 21 burials there with arrowhead, giving a not-inconsiderable 24%. Four of these are found at the flat grave cemetery known as Bikjholberget, whilst the fifth is from the barrow cemetery of Nordre Kaupang. Both cemeteries were in use during the lifespan of the town, from approximately AD 800 until AD 950 (Stylegar 2007: 78).

Bikjholberget occupies a small promontory overlooking the town. The site has not been fully excavated, but is at the present time known to contain over 70 individuals, though many are found in multiple graves (Blindheim & Heyerdahl-Larsen 1995; Stylegar 2007: 72–3). It is conjectured the full site will have been about twice the extent of the currently known cemetery (Stylegar 2007: 73). The site is rightly known for its complex nature: not only are multiple burials very common, but the shallow depth of the graves has resulted in disturbances of the contexts.

Out of the four burials from Bikjholberget, three are from single, female inhumation burials, whilst the fourth is from a double female inhumation. The burials are listed in Table 1, demonstrating a degree of variation between the burials that make it clear there are no obvious patterns in terms of compilations and combinations of grave goods.

Of special note here is burial KA 303, which contains equipment for fishing in addition to the possible link with hunting. Burial Ka 253 is also interesting, in that it contains a shield in addition to the arrowhead, making it more martial in its outlook than what is common in female gendered graves. The same can be observed regarding burial Ka 22, which contains a spear-

Cemetery	Burial	Single/ double burial	Date (AD)	Burial shape	Burial type	Body treatment	Grave goods
Bikjholberget	Ka 253	Single	800–900	Flat grave	Boat grave	Inhumation	3 oval brooches, 1 iron sword-beater, 1 hone, 2 soapstone vessels, 1 shield boss, 1 arrowhead, textiles (wool), rivets, (insular mount of gilt copper alloy)
Bikjholberget	Ka 254	Single	800–850	Flat grave	Boat grave	Inhumation	2 oval brooches, 1 copper alloy equal armed brooch (import, Birka), 1 copper alloy rectangular brooch, 5 copper alloy arm rings (bracelets), 1 copper alloy chain from necklace (import, eastern), 18 beads [glass, silver, amber (imports)], 1 sickle, 1 knife, 1 arrowhead, textiles (wool), copper alloy cord
Bikjholberget	Ka 280	Single	900–1000	Flat grave	Chamber grave	Inhumation	1 silver cruciform pendant (import), 7 beads [glass, amber (import, Sweden)], 1 silver coin (import), 1 knife, 1 arrowhead, iron object
Bikjholberget	Ka 303	Double	875–900	Flat grave	Boat grave	Inhumation	1 oval brooch, 1 equal armed brooch, 7/8 beads [glass, amber (import)], 1 spindle whorl, 1 lead sinker, 5 knives, 1 sickle, 1 hone, 1 arrowhead, 1 axe
Nordre Kaupang	Ka 22	Single	900–1000	Long barrow	Uncer- tain	Cremation	1 bead (glass), 1 iron sword-beater, 1 sickle, 1 horse bit, 1 soapstone vessel, 1 rim mount for iron cauldron, 1 escutcheon from a chest, 1 spearhead, 1 arrowhead, rivet or bolt, iron fragment, iron brace, spherical stone, iron mount

Table 1. Overview of the female gendered burials at Kaupang containing arrowheads, based on Blindheim et al. (1981), Blindheim & Heyerdahl-Larsen (1995), Stylegar (2007).

head along with the arrowhead. Though a single weapon is not uncommon in female graves in Norway, these are most often in the shape of an axe, and these two graves do therefore stand out somewhat. Further, the burial type is interesting: both boat graves and chamber graves are usually associated with high status and aristocratic graves (Stylegar 2005; Price 2008; Aannestad & Glørstad 2017)

An interesting regularity in the female gendered burials with arrowheads at Kaupang, is that these finds are single arrowheads in graves containing multiple expressions of a varied nature: from textile working tools to imported jewellery, to defensive weapons such as a shield, to fishing equipment and indicators of domestic wealth. The burial form also varies, including boat burials, a chamber grave and a barrow. It seems clear at this stage, that the arrowheads at Kaupang should be seen as an expression of a composite whole where they form part of an identity formed by many different threads.

FINNVEDEN: MULTIPLE FINDS IN A RURAL SETTING ON MARGINAL GROUNDS

The area of Finnveden in Sweden shows a concentration of female gendered burials containing arrowheads, a sample of which are presented in Table 2.

Certain traits are of special interest, such as the presence of fishing equipment in one burial, and one containing oval brooches and a spear in addition to three arrowheads. The burial from Nennesmo is an osteologically sexed female, whose grave goods are otherwise not indicative of gendered identity, and thus serves to demonstrate the potential fluidity in expressed social role and identity.

There are two considerations of special interest from these burials. Firstly, at the sites where these burials are found, there are no concurrent *male gendered* burials containing arrowheads. Though some do occur which remain ungendered, it is potentially significant that at these

cemeteries, clearly demarcated gender and arrowheads are only observable in female contexts. Secondly, a brief glance at the material outlined above suffices to demonstrate a different trend in the south Swedish material from the examples from Kaupang in Norway: though the burials in which the arrowheads occur contain strong expressions of other activities, many of the graves here have *multiple* arrowheads. Whether or not one interprets this as a stronger connection between hunting identities and the deceased, or whether or not one arrowhead is seen as being as symbolically loaded as three or four, remains a question that needs contextualising in the wider debate of the meaning in grave goods. This material is not large enough to draw conclusions on any general level of burial customs in Viking Age Scandinavia, but it does highlight interesting aspects.

Whilst it must be stated that this does not give license to say hunting was associated with women as a rule, it does open up for that it sometimes could be, and that it should not by default be assumed a male activity or indicative of male identities. Further, if we return to the above dis-

cussion on hunting, subsistence and trade, it becomes clear that a less strictly binary opposition between genders provides us with a deepened understanding of the way of life evident in the burials.

THE GENDERED ARROWS

As the material presented above serves to highlight, arrows can at times occur in female gendered burials, in widely different settings. These different settings are once again highlighted here, as they serve to underline that this was a widespread phenomenon, occurring in areas with different social frameworks and economic foundations. Thus, the presence of arrows in female burials does not signify some sort of uniform social phenomenon. Significantly, there are no recurring patterns that differentiate these burials from other female gendered burials. Rather, they appear to represent diverse and multi-layered identities, which conform well to the expectations for Viking Age burial expressions in general, which are better described as a multitude of variations rather than as a pattern (Lund 2013).

Cemetery	Burial	Date (AD)	Burial shape	Body treatment	Grave goods
Norret, Sunnerbo, Annerstad parish	3	900–1000	Mound, 5.5 m diameter, 1 m high	Cremation	2 oval brooches, trefoil brooch, knife, clasp, fragment of clasp, tweezers with ring, strap mount, 2 small rings with remains of mounts, 4 fragments of arrowheads, whetstone
Bäck Norregård, Sunnerbo, Hamneda parish	5	800–900	Mound	Cremation	Fragments of at least 6 arrowheads, knife, fragments of 8 clinchers of iron, handle (possibly from key), angling hook, hinge, nail, needle of iron, fragment of knife, iron fragments, 2 oval brooches, fragmentary equal armed brooch, ringed pin of bronze, melted silver, bead of cornealian, 3 beads of glass
Bäck Norregård, Sunnerbo, Hamneda parish	8	750–850	Mound	Cremation	2 oval brooches, 5 fragmentary arrowheads, knife, unidentified object, iron fragment
Skeda, Västbo, Bolmsö parish	2	900–1000	Mound	Cremation	3 arrowheads, iron fragment, 2 oval brooches, spear of iron, trefoil brooch
Prästgården, Skateberg, Västbo, Bolmsö parish	4	800–1000	Mound	Cremation	Fragmentary armlet of bronze, 2 rings of bronze, 22 beads of glass, arrowhead, key of bronze
Nennesmo, Västbo, Reftele parish	4	Viking Age	Mound	Cremation	2 arrowheads, animal bones (dog and pig), handle of casket, 4 iron fragments, fragment of comb
Benestad Herrgård, Åringsås parish	30	800–900	Cairn/round stone setting	Cremation	Equal armed brooch, arrowhead, clincher, shards of 2 ceramic vessels

Table 2. Selection of burials from Finnveden containing arrowheads, based on Svanberg (2003).

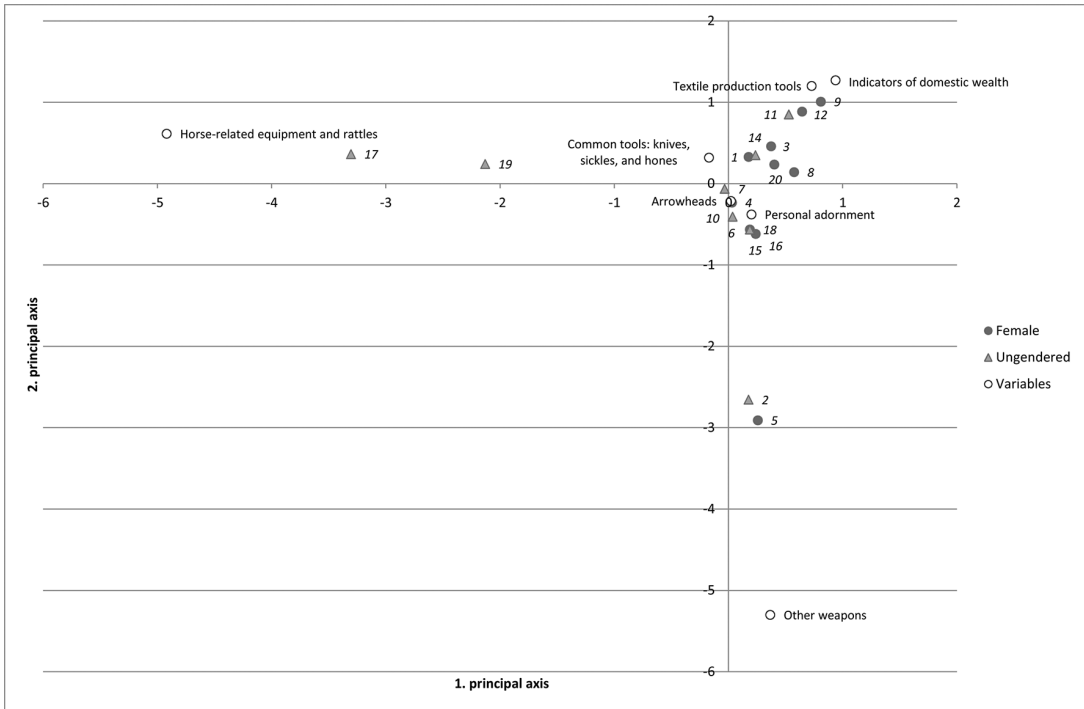


Fig. 3. Correspondence analysis of selected burials from the Vestfold area containing arrowheads (by M. Moen).

This testifies further to the complex nature of social identity, which is never anything less than multidimensional.

Drawing on the potential connection between arrowheads and hunting symbolism or activities, a selection of burials from the Vestfold area all containing arrowheads were examined with a view to common traits and patterns. Of a total of 28 burials sampled, five are the female gendered ones discussed in detail above, whilst one is indeterminate and the remaining 22 are male gendered. These burials are drawn from the material used for one of the author's PhD research (Moen 2019), and are from Kaupang (Stylegar 2007), the cemetery at Gulli (Gjerpe 2005), and the Hedrum area (Tonning 2003). It is thus not exhaustive for Vestfold, but represents a selected sample of a total of 218 burials. An overview of the burials shows that it can be difficult to pinpoint common traits outside what is the normal range of grave goods in Viking Age Vestfold in general terms (as may be noticed in Fig. 3). As was highlighted above, the range of variables in

burials from the Viking Age is great, and Vestfold is stereotypical in this regard: it is characterised by having a considerable degree of internal variation.

Overall, the burials with arrowheads from Vestfold do not betray any particular patterns in terms of composition of grave goods. This lack of recurring traits or unifying aspects was tested by running a correspondence analysis on the selected burials, which again serves to show that there are no strong patterns that can be identified as uniting these burials. A correspondence analysis creates an overview of the selected burial by showing how they relate to one another through a (fictional) average burial. In this case, the items most commonly found are common tools, weapons and horse related equipment. The presence of weapons in a set of male graves cannot in this case be seen to constitute a significant pattern however, as it is the very presence of these weapons that means that the graves have been gendered male. This can lead to a form of circular reasoning which would not contribute

anything of use to a discussion, and so must be accepted as one of the shortcomings of gendering graves based on grave goods. Further, common tools such as knives are found in the majority of burials from the date-range and region, and so cannot be said to manifest much of a pattern other than that most burials contained these items. This points towards the need to consider arrowheads as part of a composite whole in the maintenance and symbolism of identities, and as one layer out of many in a complex identity.

In other words, the assemblages represent varied compositions, though certain shared traits: one of which is arrowheads. Thus, instead of finding clear groups of graves with shared expressions, we find shared expressions across what looks like a diverse group of graves which fits well with the general impression of Viking Age mortuary customs in general. A case in point is the presence of for example equipment of trade at Kaupang, which is found in both male and female burials (Pedersen 2014). At this same site, we find female gendered burials containing arrows and indeed other weapons, but these are not clearly identifiable as different from their surrounding burials: instead they are interchangeable with nearby burials in terms of showing a wealth of different expressions, which can all be tied to the complexity of identity creation and maintenance. Rather than being ruled by single, overarching considerations, these take the appearance of shifting, negotiable and multi-layered aspects of identity.

WHO WAS THE HUNTER?

We hope to have exemplified that identity was not one-dimensional in the Viking Age. Intersectional studies underline the complexity and multidimensionality of identity, as questions of personhood and identity were negotiated in Scandinavian societies. Hunting was one aspect out of several characteristics, and hunting may have been performed by several social groups, defined by considerations such as gender, age, economy and ways of living. Rather than labelling individuals from the past as warriors, smiths or ladies of the house we wish to enhance perspectives on Viking Age society as one of variation, alignments and *manyfoldedness*.

Assuming that gender is the primary driving force in the formation of identity overlooks the many other considerations which are also of integral importance, such as age, status, social class, kin, religion, physical ability or disability and ethnicity. Thus, we must be prepared for diverse expressions of identity that reflect the varied reality of navigating multiple social spheres and boundaries. In this way, hunting can be seen as *one* aspect of identity, out of *many* potential components. The importance accredited to each aspect will have varied according to the situation, and thus we ought to promote caution in assigning simple roles and identities, and rather acknowledge that it is likely that these were made up of multiple strands in constant flux.

By acknowledging that hunting activities were not necessarily exclusively a male activity, the population of the outfields, the forest and the mountains, also changes. By perceiving hunting as part of the economy, including that of the farmers, a more nuanced understanding of ways of life and identities may potentially emerge as a result. The many new discoveries in the ice patch and in the recently examined mountainous areas with hunting pits were perhaps not exclusively used by male hunters. Indeed hunting as an activity seems to have been accentuated in areas defined by trading and production activities, such as at Kaupang, and even here it is not exclusively linked with male identities. Intersectionality can help us identify and challenge our preconceived ideas on gender, ethnicity and identity in the Viking Age, and may help revise preconceptions of the identity of the hunter.

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NOTES

¹ This was also pointed out by Professor Neil Price at the Viva of Jostein Bergstøl's thesis.

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