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Ceramics in medieval and early 16th century wrecks in the northern Gulf of Finland

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Beginning from around 1960, there was a fifty-year period in Finnish maritime archaeology, when medieval ship finds were being excavated. In this article, I will discuss some of them and will show that they have much to offer to the research of the Middle Ages.¹ The ship finds are the Egelskär wreck (ca. 1280–1300), Lapuri (ca. 1300), Esselholm, Metskär and Gråharuna (all dated to ca. 1560–1580s). What combines them, is that they have carried various ceramic dishes. In most cases, the ceramics have clearly been on board as trade goods. However, apart from a few preliminary articles presenting the fieldwork and finds, there has been no discussion of the meaning of the maritime archaeological assemblages or how the ships can be tied to the contemporary historical situation and environment. On the other hand, it is now easier to attempt a more comprehensive view into the past, as historical and archaeological research has progressed significantly since the 20th century.

Especially the archaeological excavations and surveys concentrated on the abandoned village settlement sites in western Uusimaa have brought new insights into the medieval life and shown that it had its roots in the Iron Age as well as that the organisation of the province of Uusimaa began in the 13th century.² One group of finds that sheds light into the medieval life are the ceramics. The ceramic finds from Uusimaa are treated as parallel to the ship ceramics.

The purpose of this article is to give an introductory discussion into the evidence on the trade in ceramics based on what we know from historical sources and the archaeological evidence, including these ships. A shipwreck is often a closed archaeological assemblage, where all the finds belong to the same period and offer an insight into a single occurrence in history.

Some of the questions that can be asked of the maritime archaeological material are the origin or provenience of the ships themselves as well as the finds on board. It is also possible to make speculations on the destination. Zooming out of the immediate questions concerning the archaeological context, there are also larger questions that can be looked at, such as the ceramic trade in the Baltic Sea trade, the regional distribution systems and international contacts. It is these problems that I am going to open to discussion and further research.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL CERAMICS

Ceramics are a typical find group on medieval settlement sites of all kinds. They are also useful finds in surveys and are typically used

to establish a date for a site or feature. In the Middle Ages in Finland, ceramic dishes were used in towns and villages all over the country, but especially in the coastal areas. They are often manufactured somewhere abroad, although the indigenous production of ceramics probably never ceased after the Iron Age.³ The subject of indigenous pottery production in medieval Finland has not been researched very widely, but the first written records of potters in Turku date to the 16th century.⁴

The various clays, firing and decoration styles that were used, were relatively short-lived. Therefore, ceramics can be effectively used to give a relative date to a site based on typologies. Since researchers began to find and investigating medieval rural villages and settlement sites in Uusimaa⁵, the number of ceramic finds has multiplied very quickly.

The ceramic manufacture in the counties of Lower Saxony and Rhineland in today's Germany was in its time almost industrial. It was a seasonal livelihood, which nonetheless produced ceramic drinking- and cooking wares by the thousands, first for regional domestic trade from the 12th century, but quite soon for export. This industry owed its success to kaolinitic clay that is only found in German soil in Europe. It also exists in China and from the 17th century onwards, porcelain was manufactured and traded to Europe. Kaolinitic clay can be moulded and shaped to very thin walled vessels, which can stand very high temperatures in the kiln. In Germany, kiln technology progressed in the late 13th and early 14th century so that ceramic vessels could be fired in temperatures up to 1,300°C. This resulted in the development of stoneware, which were very thin walled, slender and smooth surfaced jugs, cups, beakers and storage jugs. The early stonewares were made especially in the village of Siegburg in Rhineland, from where the manufacture was copied elsewhere, for example in Lower Saxony. The Siegburg producers were, however,

always at the front of their trade. The export trade of stoneware began almost immediately after the refinement of stoneware to what is called "near-stoneware"⁶ from the late 12th century onwards.⁷

Late 13th and 14th century ceramics in Egelskär and Lapuri

The earliest example of the trade of stonewares to Finland comes from a ship find in the archipelago of Nauvo, next to the little islet of Egelskär. Sometime in the last decades of the 13th century, a ship sank carrying around a hundred stoneware drinking- and serving ceramics. These originated from the manufacturing centre of Fredelsloh-Bengerode in the Solling mountains in Lower Saxony.⁸

Other finds from the shipwreck were pre-formed whetstones, limestone, a barrel full of iron bars, bronze cauldrons and a Romanesque style church bell.⁹ It is likely, that the cargo included salt and/or grain, but any evidence of this has been dissolved into the sea over the centuries. The goods on board the ship, excluding the church bell, were not especially expensive or "high status" items, but represented a cargo of everyday utensils that was typical at the time in the northern Baltic Sea. The cargo indicates that the ship originated from abroad and was probably delivering the church bell to its buyer. Possible destinations include Reval or even Turku.

The Lapuri ship is situated in the strait between the Lapuri island and Siikasaari in Virolahti. It has been dated to the late 13th century.¹⁰ There were two stoneware jugs associated with the ship, one from Siegburg and the other from Lower Saxony. They mirror the find categories on land sites in the 14th century, where these two are the typical origins of the ceramics.¹¹ In this case, the ceramics were not cargo, based on the one hand on the low number of finds and on the other that the ship seemed to be abandoned on site (not ac-



Stoneware clay ceramics found in the medieval wreck in Egelskär are on display in the Maritime Museum of Finland in Kotka. Photo: Riikka Tevali.

cidentally sunk). However, an interesting feature of the site to the investigation of medieval ceramic trade, are the dozens of sherds of grey earthenware ceramics, which are similar to the so called Baltic ware and which Johanna Enqvist has called Karelian ware.¹² These are coarse, low fired sherds from cooking pots with a sandy texture and a grey/light brown colour.

The excavators of the Lapuri wreck found the sherds scattered in the underwater strait between the Lapuri island and Siikasaari. So far, the eastern dimensions of the trade or regional distribution of ceramics, has largely gone without research, but similar archaeological finds have been made all over the southern coastal zone in Finland. They probably partly represent also indigenous ceramic production, but their manufacture, distribution as well as accurate dating are research questions, which are waiting to be answered. The ceramics have parallels in Estonia and north-eastern Russia, for example, in Novgorod and Pskov.¹³

13th and 14th century ceramics on land sites

The ceramics that are found in the coastal rural settlement sites in western Uusimaa are stoneware drinking jugs from Lower Saxony and Rhineland and are relatively rare in our archaeological record. With the drinking and serving jugs, also bronze cauldrons and whetstones have been found.

Late 13th century stonewares from Siegburg and Lower Saxony have been discovered in archaeological excavations and surveys in the Uusimaa coastal zone for example, in Slottsmalmen, which is adjacent to the Raseborg castle and in some village sites, for example in Gunnarsängen (Hanko), Snappertuna (Raseborg) and Kauklahti (Espoo) although their number is not great.¹⁴ Outside Uusimaa, the largest quantity of finds have been made in the excavations of medieval Turku.¹⁵ The distribution of these earliest ceramics shows places, where excavations have been made and medieval sites researched more thoroughly and it could be that the image of the distribu-

tion will change with further research. However, it can be said that the earliest stoneware is present in sites with a direct vicinity to the sea.

The number of the ceramic finds grows in the 14th century, when stonewares have been discovered in several archaeological excavations of village sites.¹⁶ Interestingly, in the same sites with late 13th and 14th century stonewares, there are also sherds of greyware, ceramics that are unglazed, made either by hand or slow wheel and hardened in low temperatures. Some of them are similar to the Lapuri finds. There are different types of greywares and there are now quite large assemblages of these sherds from settlement sites all over the southern coastal zone in Finland to form a synthesis of them. However, it would seem that prior to the imported stonewares and red earthenware, the low-fired greyware of various types were used as cooking pots, possibly as storage jars along with wooden vessels.

16th century ceramics in Metskär, Esselholm and Gråharuna

Stoneware drinking and serving ceramics are visible in the rural archaeological assemblages through the centuries, along with cooking ceramics, but their number remains modest. From the 16th century there is a visible change in the material culture and along with the stoneware, ceramic cooking ware become more common.¹⁷ Globular pots and pans of red earthenware with tripod feet originating from north-west Germany and the Netherlands coincide with more elaborate stoneware drinking tankards and round bellied bartmann jugs that are highly decorated and probably more expensive than their predecessors.

There are no maritime archaeological ship finds that date to the 15th century at the time of writing this article, which is probably a bias in our archaeological record and has more to do with the limited number of maritime archaeological surveys than with historical reality. All medieval ship finds that we have, have been found by accident. Still, it is accurate to say that the three ship finds all dated to the late 16th century represent an actual shift in trading

contacts and frequency in the Finnish waters. The historical climate of the time combined with new discoveries and developments in shipbuilding are all factors that served to increase trade and connections around the Baltic Sea area.

The Gråharuna ship is situated in the archipelago of Parainen, next to an island that gives the wreck its name and is the only one of the ship finds that has not been excavated. It is protected with a no diving and anchoring zone specified by the local regional office of the Finnish Ministry of Environment. The bulk of the remaining cargo visible on site consists of around 200 earthenware cooking ceramics: tripod pipkins, pans and pots. Other forms are also present and three large shallow bowls or plates have been lifted from the site, one of them a bolus-decorated redware plate and two whiteware plates with greenish lead glaze on the inside. The cooking ware is manufactured in the Werra-Weser potteries in today's north-western Germany while the whiteware probably originate from the Netherlands. There is no comprehensive research of the wreck, but other finds that have been recognised on site, are stoneware crucibles from Hesse and some sheets of so called Waldglas, green glass that was also produced in north-western Germany.¹⁸

The ship that sunk ca. 10 kilometres due south from the Raseborg castle, called the Esselholm wreck, was carrying at least 28 earthenware cooking pots. Other finds included the remains of two glass vessels, one of which had a pewter stopper. Remains of a pewter tankard and a bronze cauldron were also found on the site.¹⁹ There were indications that some contemporary salvage had been made at the time of the accident, as the ship sank in relatively low water and the rear part of the ship was missing. The ceramics mostly consisted of white earthenware frying pans with green lead glaze on the inside as well as redware tripod cooking cauldrons with brown lead glaze on

the inside. Other forms included tripod cooking cauldrons with single handles that have a green lead glaze on the outside and a brown glaze on the inside. A porringer with a single handle, two deep tripod skillets with brown lead glaze on the inside and three stoneware bartmann jugs, one of which is completely undecorated and the other two with acanthus leaves and other motifs.²⁰ Again, the redware is of the north German type, while the green glazed ware originated in the Netherlands.

The ship find that is situated next to the Metskär island in the Hiittinen archipelago differs from the other two already discussed. The nature of the ceramic finds is similar, but it is smaller in number. A stoneware bartmann jug from Köln or Frechen, a little stoneware jug for oil or ointment and ten or so red earthenware cooking cauldrons. A very rare find was also made prior to the excavations on the site, namely a tall stoneware drinking tankard originating from Siegburg that originally also had a hinged pewter lid. The tankard is decorated with three large motifs. Two of them depict the coat of arms of the county Jülich-Kleve-Berg and one the coat of arms of the kingdom of Denmark.²¹ The cooking ware include two-handed tripod cauldrons of the north German type and smaller tripod pots with wide mouths. They have a brown lead glaze on the inside and around the shoulder.

WRITTEN EVIDENCE ON TRADE IN THE NORTHERN BALTIC SEA

The traditional image of a Finnish rural population without contacts to foreign parts is partly due to the lack of written sources from the Middle Ages. Archaeological and historical research is currently changing this image. However, sources to the Finnish medieval trade can be found for example, in the published collection of Finnish medieval archival material, the *Finlands medeltida urkunder* that can now be

found online through the National Archives webservice *Diplomatarium Fennicum*²². Additional material can be found in the Tallinn and Dorpat city archives, the Stockholm city and castle archives (for example, *Stockholms Tankeböcker*) as well as the city archives of various Hansa towns on the southern coast of the Baltic Sea. The Sound Toll register has been often used as a primary source to the study of the Baltic Sea trade. However, it has its limitations, such as the limited coverage of taxed items and ships.

The closest Hansa town to the southern Finnish coast was Reval. Rural trade mostly consisted of bartering fish and surplus farming produce to goods that were not available back home or that were needed in times of bad harvest. Contacts to Stockholm existed as well, but were not as close in the Uusimaa area as in



A tall tankard, a so-called Schnelle, found in the Esselholm wreck. The imagery on the tankard points to the Kingdom of Denmark. The item is on display in the National Museum of Finland. Photo: Riikka Tevali.

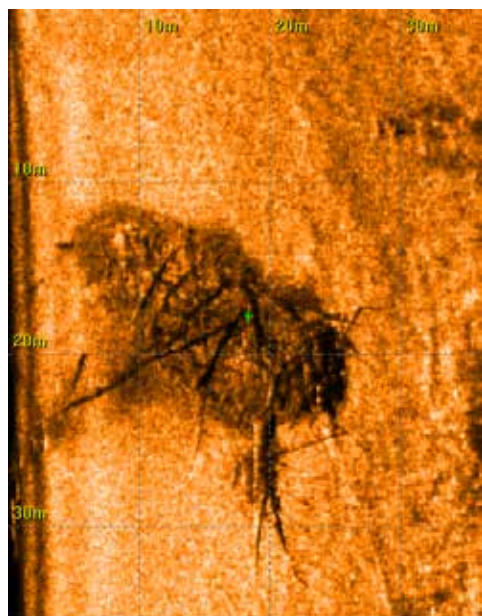
Finland proper, mostly due to greater distance and tradition.²³

The organisation of trade and distribution of goods that had been in place since the Iron Age began to change with the arrival of German merchants to the northern Baltic and around when Reval was granted the Lübeck town laws in 1248. In the last decades of the 13th century, the establishment of Turku marked this new era in foreign relations. Trade was being organised and centralized there, in part by the foreign merchants that began to solidify their hold of the east-west-trade over the Baltic Sea. Regional distribution from Turku to its hinterland was organised in time, but this did not mean the extinction of more rural centres, their markets and contact places. On the contrary, from these goods were still available to people living further away. In the 14th

century, Uusimaa was more Reval's economic hinterland, where foreign merchants visited the seasonal markets.

A system established itself in the trade conducted in the Finnish archipelago and coasts. In regional markets or known trading places, the farmers came to barter butter, fish and skins/fur with the merchants, who brought salt, grain and finished goods.²⁴ Merchants from Reval had rights to trade in the Finnish archipelago – a situation that was reinforced already in 1326, which means that the custom had already been in place for some time.²⁵ The mentions of contacts between the Finnish coasts and Reval are continuous through the 14th century.²⁶ It is not known, how farmers living in the Finnish archipelago and coasts separated between for example, Gotland's, Reval's (Danish?) and German merchants.

The area around the Raseborg castle seems to have been one of the places where Reval merchants have found themselves doing business and even staying for winter.²⁷ The nature of the castle as a regional administrative centre has meant, that written sources concerning its affairs have survived to some extent or that they came to exist at all. However, the excavations in the near-by Snappertuna village in 2008 revealed finds, for example sherds from glass cups and Siegburg stoneware jugs as well as bronze cauldrons. The "high status" finds and especially the larger quantity of them is suggestive of trading activities and a conglomeration of wealth that is not typical to a 14th century village.²⁸ This part of the archaeological assemblage in Snappertuna as well as the written sources concerning trading activities in Raseborg date to the late 14th and the first half of the 15th century. Perhaps after this, it was no longer possible for the merchants to stay in the Snappertuna settlement due to the documented unrest and dangerous sailing circumstances in the middle of the 15th century. Or the nature of trade had altered, and the foreign merchants were gathering into towns.



A side-scan sonar image of the Gråharuna wreck. The mast of the vessel is in the centre, pointing left, and the foremast is pointing to the front of the image. The wreck is protected by a diving and anchoring restriction enforced by the Border Guard. Photo: Immi Wallin.

However, trading in the Raseborgs archipelago did not end all together. In a letter, dated 17.10.1481 Raseborgs castle bailiff discusses a Reval merchant, who was trading in Raseborgs archipelago with the town's council.²⁹

Possibly as a consequence of these early relations, the distributive trade of rural goods is organised differently as we enter the 15th and 16th centuries, and the farmers themselves visit Reval in a more regular basis. An aspect of this development is undoubtedly the progress made in rural shipbuilding, which made it possible for the farmers to sail larger quantities of goods and people over the Baltic Sea. The development of rural shipbuilding in Finland is not known, but it was probably first developed through seeing foreign ships and taking part in their maintenance and repairs.

The indigenous trade conducted by the farmers of the Finnish rural countryside is not especially visible in the historical sources, but does appear in context with trade conducted with foreign merchants or in connection with fines for illegal trading activities. Occasional references of contact between for example, Reval and Raseborg continue regularly through the centuries in the written sources. These can be found in the Tallinn archives beginning from the early 16th century.³⁰ People visiting Reval from the province are mentioned 104 times in *Finlands medeltida urkunder*. These occur from the beginning of the 14th century to AD 1530.³¹

The regional trade system in southern Finland/ Uusimaa

The trade with Reval by the rural farmers became an ire for the Swedish king in the 16th century, who actively sought to develop the economy by focusing foreign trade into towns and centralizing administration. The prohibitions on rural trade were a part of an effort to tie Finland more closely to the Swedish realm and to intensify the regional administration

and bring more taxes to the crown. A part of this plan was to focus Finland's trade to Turku and especially to Stockholm. The prohibitions were in turn enforced and slackened depending on the complaints of the rural farmers and town burghers as well as the state of the political climate. The centralized administration created by Gustav I (Vasa) marked a definite change in trade relations and the traditional way of conducting trade across the Baltic Sea.

Already in 1529, Gustav I was in correspondence with the rural farmers in Raseborg and his councillor Erik Fleming questioning why the former are complaining and why there is defiance against his prohibition of trade with Reval.³² Sailing to Stockholm was enforced and sailing to Reval or other Hansa towns brought fines of 40 marks for illegal trading. This sailing prohibition was enforced in 1541–1552 and from this time, there are some mentions of merchants and farmers, who were fined.³³

This overview of the development of rural trade through the Middle Ages in the written historical sources can be examined with emphasis on other aspects of trading economy. The development of trading and contact ties was dependent on part with the developments in shipbuilding technology and in the rise of centralized power across Europe and the Baltic. In Sweden, Gustav I managed to unify the nobles under the *Tre Kronor* flag, in England Henry VIII forced his own ideas of monarchy and state, in the Low Countries, the movement ending up in the birth of the Republic were taking place. These new orders were pushing Hansa out of their way, which ruled the Baltic Sea trade with treaties and personal privileges, backed up by considerable force that was based in the vast size and number of partner towns. Gustav I began his reign as dependent on loans and ships from Lübeck, and was forced to grant large privileges for Hansa merchants in the 1520s. However, their predominance came to an end with the alliance of Denmark, Holland and Sweden against the

Hansa in 1534–1536. Gustav I began actively favour Dutch merchants and sought alliances with them. The emerging republic needed Swedish iron to fuel its increasing weapons- and shipbuilding industries. Especially the Dutch shipbuilding grew to a sizable industry, which produced faster, manoeuvrable and roomier ships cheaply and in short time. The new ship types were unparalleled and copied by all the developing nations in the 16th century.³⁴ Under these new political realities, the Hansa was unable to hold on to its upper hand in the Baltic Sea.

Indications for a redistribution system of trade goods inside the rural coastal zones are not easy to find, but some deductions can be made. For example, in the 16th century accounts for fines issued in Uusimaa as well as in the ledgers of Tallinn archives, there are skippers, farmer merchants and tradesmen (*landsköpmän*), who have been fined a sum of 40 marks for illegal trading. Such men are mentioned living in Inkoo (1543–1561), Espoo (1517–1557), Helsing (1509–1556), Porvoo (1557), Sipoo (1557), Pernaja (1557) and Kymmene (1557).³⁵

A system of rural trade reaching over the archipelago in the Gulf of Finland has been described by Gunvor Kerkkonen³⁶ and more recently by Tapio Salminen for the medieval Vantaa/Helsing parish.³⁷ Kerkkonen has compiled information from the 16th century Reval merchant Helmich Ficke's account books, which show that Ficke had a network of trusted men scattered in the archipelago from Koivisto to Åland. They act as middle men, sometimes introducing new clients to Ficke and vouching for loans and/or purchases and gathered surplus goods from their communities and bartered them on behalf of others. These men appear also regularly in Reval with their goods settling debts. These trusted men have a higher social standing in their communities than "regular" farmers.³⁸ Ficke himself seems to be a merchant, who traded

with the inhabitants of the southern coasts and archipelago of Finland and did not differentiate between rural farmers and town burghers (his business network included also towns in Finland and Sweden). The system necessitated travel on his part and the fact that he sometimes made these journeys in person describes the system and network of trust that is based on personal connections. Furthermore, Ficke did not trade luxury goods or expensive items in the archipelago, but mostly supplied salt as well as the odd *kittel* (kettle/pot. Probably metal).³⁹ It is noteworthy that although salt is the most typical good bartered between the farmers and Ficke, the kettles or pots are mentioned often as well.

Such systems of trusted men and networks have also been researched in the southern part of the Gulf of Bothnia, where contacts naturally mostly lie in Stockholm.⁴⁰ Also, for the western Uusimaa, Korppoo and Hiittinen, Stockholm was the main port of call and skippers could serve as freighters carrying goods between Reval and Stockholm.⁴¹

From this it is evident that the rural inhabitants of the coastal zone in Finland were frequent visitors in the northern Baltic Sea's towns. They were acquainted with foreign tradesmen and in their own social spheres, such tradesmen were not unusual.

CERAMIC DISHES AS TRADE GOODS

Most available written records do not mention ceramics as traded goods.⁴² However, some sources can be found, and ceramics appear especially in the records at their sources, in the accounts of the manufacturers, their transit harbours and in the archives of the Hansa towns. Most often the sources on ceramic trade come out as a by-product of trade research in archives that has been conducted especially in Germany. An important source to the Baltic Sea trade, the Sound Toll regis-

ter, gives only six references to ceramics in the years 1557–1657, which has probably affected the value modern research has placed on ceramics as trade goods.⁴³

The archives of the Hansa towns, for example, the *Hansischen Urkundenbüchern* ca. 1350–1500 include catalogues of trade goods and their amounts. The entries separate between various forms of drinking- and serving dishes, but often do not say whether the dishes in question are ceramics, wooden or even metalware. The different materials can be distinguished by comparison of their value. The wooden dishes are cheap, ceramics somewhere in the middle and metalware the most expensive. It would seem that glassware was always distinguished from other types and forms of dishes. The ceramics are often mentioned in bulk attributes, such as *Kisten*, *Tunne* or *Vat*. Some attributes seem to be especially dedicated for dishes. For example, *Schock* = 60 pieces or *Dutzend* = 12 pieces. Sometimes also very large total amounts are given, for example *Fuder* = 13 *Wall*, where 1 *Wall* = 80 pieces.⁴⁴ Small amounts of non-luxury goods were free of toll.

Ceramics were always a bulk good and were not traded in small amounts from the source to the transit point. They were easy to sell and were considered a risk-free type of trade item.⁴⁵ In the Reval archives, ceramics are mentioned in the same connection with oil, metals, cauldrons, wine, salt and hops that were imported into the town.⁴⁶ In the years 1428–1430, ceramics are mentioned six times as trade items in the Reval archives. During this period, for example nine barrels of jugs and 19 *sten kruken* are mentioned as imports to Reval by sea.⁴⁷

It is especially Lübeck, Rostock, Stettin and Danzig that come out as harbours from which ceramics were exported elsewhere to the Baltic. For example, in 1492 and 1495 Lübeck merchants brought to Stockholm 6 barrels *potten und krosen* together with hides

and glass. In 1492 Lübeck merchants exported to Riga with skipper Hans Frese 3 *travetunne*, 2 *fatken*, *hierin erden potte, glas, flasschen*. In the Kalmar toll accounts, it is marked under the year 1547 that skipper Niels Johannson brought from Rostock 6 *Schock Pötte* and skipper Joakim Bobbeljin from Stettin 2 *Schock Pötte*.⁴⁸ In 1400 a ship left Lübeck to Malmö with a cargo of 6,5 lest salt, 10 lest of barrels, 1 lest beer and 3 *cistae olla*, where the *Olla* refers to pottery.⁴⁹

Some references also exist in the Finnish historical sources from the early 16th century that mention the Finnish trade of wooden dishes to the cities in Germany and Denmark. The constable of Vehmaa, Bertil Larsson (from Vinkkilä) sailed in the spring of 1591 to Germany with seven other persons to sell wooden dishes. The tax records show that in the same spring, 16 *skutor* sailed with 96 people to Germany and Denmark with wooden dishes.⁵⁰ The manufacture of wooden dishes in Finland proper has been documented⁵¹, but was a limited means of income and it is not known how regular the trade was. However, the information demonstrates the everyday nature of dishes of all kinds as trading goods and as products of high demand all over the Baltic Sea.

For the ceramic trade, it was the Hansa towns around the Baltic Sea, which had a decisive role in the distribution of pottery. Ceramics were both an independent commodity and an important part of European trade. Gunnar Möller has separated five distinct groups in the archival sources, who traded in ceramics: the wholesalers in the form of subcontracting, specialized small merchants, ship's crews, potters themselves and unspecified other professional groups, who did not have a permit to trade.⁵² However, it is difficult to assess the economic value of the ceramic trade compared to other commodities. It is evident that compared to primary trade goods, such as salt, grain and hides, pottery had a secondary importance.⁵³

THE TRADE SHIPS IN THE FINNISH ARCHIPELAGO

The rural network of trade evolved in the Gulf of Finland from the late 13th to the 16th century from the hands of foreign merchants to the control of town burghers. However, a redistributive system upheld by farmers living in the coastal villages was also developed. The archipelago acted as a zone of interaction that was in easy reach from all over the Swedish realm or Reval (for example, Sandham, Jussarö and Koivisto are mentioned in the sources). In this article, I have not tackled the large-scale trade conducted by, for example Turku burghers or those members of the elite living in castles and manors such as bailiffs, bishops, priests and other rulers, whose trade is visible and can be followed in the archival material.⁵⁴ Their trade activities were important and encouraged by the crown and the administrative system, which wished to focus foreign trade into towns. It is clearly visible, however, that the administrative efforts to curb rural trade were not effective and in the countryside lived rich merchants, who were perhaps farmers only in name and whose social standing was very different compared to peasants.⁵⁵ The archaeological assemblages in the villages of the rural coastal zones testify that for example stoneware had spread to the rural population as early as in the turn of the 13th/ 14th centuries.⁵⁶

How then, do the five ship finds fit into the overall picture of the trade in ceramics? To begin from the 13th and 14th centuries, the Egelskär wreck in Nauvo and the Lapuri in Virolahti are situated at the opposite ends of the Gulf of Finland. The over a hundred stoneware jugs in the Egelskär ship originated in Lower Saxony in northwest Germany and are dated to ca. 1280.⁵⁷ The Egelskär ship was probably a cog that had developed in Germany especially for the Hansa traders to carry bulk trade over the Baltic Sea.⁵⁸ It was a new ship type in the

13th and 14th century, which made it possible to sail around the Sound, which was a difficult route to navigate. Before the development of the cog, the merchants dominantly sailed to markets within easy reach, on the Swedish coast, in Pomerania and Livland. Novgorod was typically reached over land routes from Livland.

The nature of the Egelskär ship's cargo originating from various ports around the Baltic Sea suggests that it took on freight from more than one harbour during its journey.⁵⁹ Only one item in the cargo was special and expensive, the church bell. These were manufactured in central Europe in the 13th century (although there are no markings in the bell to verify its provenance). It would perhaps be plausible to think that the ship started its voyage to deliver the bell to a new church being erected in Finland. For the journey it was also filled with other merchandise that was easily sold everywhere in the Baltic Sea region. Along with the whetstones and iron, the stoneware jugs were just such a merchandise. They were light, easy to pack and the crew could be sure to sell them all. The Finnish archipelago and the northern Baltic Sea in general, was open to competition in the late 13th and early 14th century. For example, the merchants in Reval, who had family ties to the Hansa towns in northern Germany, could spread word of new possibilities and an open market niche for staple goods among the population in the Finnish coast.

The two stoneware jugs associated with the Lapuri wreck were a Siegburg proto-stoneware jug dated to 1265–1300⁶⁰ and a near-stoneware jug from Lower Saxony that is similar to the ones in the Egelskär find. In the most recent evaluation of the wreck, its date was placed in the last quarter of the 13th century.⁶¹ The provenance of the Lapuri wreck is difficult to ascertain, but based on its remaining timbers and structure, it was a Scandinavian type of ship, that belonged to an older building tradi-

tion.⁶² Near the Lapuri wreck, there are also dozens of sherds of greyware that are medieval in date. These ship finds clearly support a picture that already in the late 13th century, stonewares from the manufacture centres of north-western Germany had reached the people living in the rural coastal zones of the Gulf of Finland. The question on the distribution of the various greyware pots requires more research, but it seems that the southern coast of Finland was a crossroad, where objects from two opposite cultural spheres could meet and were evidently in demand by the local population.

The distribution of stonewares to the Finnish coast, especially from Lower Saxony, is evident in the material from an archaeological excavation of a medieval settlement in Hanko, where among other ceramics, mostly pieces of Lower Saxon stonewares were discovered, dating to the late 13th – early 14th century. One sherd of Siegburg stoneware was also discovered.⁶³ In this early period, towns have not yet been organised as the focal points for trade. Merchants visiting the rural harbours and markets in the Finnish archipelago evidently bring ceramic drinking- and serving dishes along with other staple goods, but as organic goods such as salt and grain do not typically preserve for us to discover archaeologically, it is instead these “cargo space filler goods” that remain in the soil. The presence of stonewares testify of a rural population, who not only have the means, but are also willing to barter items that can be categorized into goods that were not integral to the survival of the society, such as sustenance. They indicate that the rural population (at least some of them) considered the stonewares desirable or appreciated the technologically advanced features (for example, the non-porous stoneware was easier to keep clean). It is not known whether the inhabitants in the coastal zone attached further values to the stonewares, which went beyond their usefulness as containers for

liquid. For example, if they considered the foreign merchants as having a socially elevated position, or if this value was attached to the stoneware dishes. An aspect that has not been considered, is that the late 13th century stonewares could also belong to a rural household, where someone was already involved with the foreign trade – perhaps as a nodal point in the redistributive system.

In the 16th century, the Baltic Sea was a vastly different area for trade compared to the 14th century and before. Regions were forming into kingdoms with centralized administration and the Catholic Church was losing its grip on the state formation processes. Hansa developed from an agreement between merchants, to a trade monopoly between towns, and included members from all over the Baltic and North Seas. Slowly it too, was losing market areas to competing forces.

The three ships dated to the late 16th century that are situated in the southern Finnish archipelago, from Kemiönsaari to Raseborg, are similar in the sense that the ceramics that they carry all share the same features.

The Gråharuna wreck in the outer archipelago near Utö still holds many surprises and new information for archaeologists. The ceramic cargo mainly consists of red earthenware cooking pots and pans, originating from the Werra-Weser area in north-western Germany. There are also some Dutch green-glazed white earthenware bowls and stonewares that consist of triangle-shaped crucibles from Grossalmerode in Hesse.⁶⁴ The Metskär and the Esselholm ship finds have been compared to each other in the literature, perhaps owing to their research by the same archaeologists in a rather short time period in the 1970s and 1980s.⁶⁵ It is indeed true, that the ceramic finds excavated from the wrecks have similarities. Both were carrying mostly earthenware cooking cauldrons from the Werra-Weser manufacturing area as well as some stoneware jugs of German origin.

The combination of Rhenish stoneware and Dutch earthenware in the cargoes of these ships is indicative of an intermediate trade especially connecting the north-western Germany and in the Netherlands area. Stoneware from Siegburg, Frechen and Raeren in the Rhineland were delivered to the ports in the Netherlands via the River Rhine and its tributaries, where they were taken aboard by traders along with the local earthenware and exported further to the Baltic Sea lands.⁶⁶

Based on the provenience of the discernible ceramic items on board, the ships had two possible departure ports that can be speculated upon, the Gråharuna ship from Bremen and the Esselholm and Metskär ships from a

Netherlandish port. However, making these kind of deductions based solely on the cargo, and only a part of the cargo at that, is purely conjecture at this time.

CONCLUSIONS

The medieval ship finds along the Gulf of Finland can be used to shed light into the trading system that was in use in the Middle Ages in the northern Baltic Sea area. In this, especially the ceramics are useful, most of all because of their durable nature and secondly as a part of them are imported goods from the European mainland. Therefore, their presence in the shipwrecks in large numbers suggests that they were carried as cargo and not simply used by the people on board. It must also be significant that all the medieval ship finds in our waters have been associated with ceramics and can be connected with the trade in ceramics. Overall, the ships and cargoes offer leads for the investigation of ceramic trade and to the trading activity itself. It would be interesting to be able to use these finds to trace the redistributive system in the regional level that was in place and managed by the Finnish farmer merchants themselves, which we see in the 16th century sources.⁶⁷ Compiled together these ships, their cargo and the written sources form a multifaceted view into the trade. A comprehensive account of the ships' place in the historical framework demands a discussion also on the ships themselves and a maritime archaeological investigation of their structure to trace their origin. As maritime archaeological finds, the ships and their cargo offer answers to questions on the political situation in the Gulf of Finland, the trade in ceramics and other goods as well as possibly to the people that were sailing or owned the ships or cargo.

To form a justifiable opinion on the function of the ships, their provenance, destina-



A mosaic image composed of photographs of the Gråharuna wreck cargo area. The ship's cargo includes dozens of red clay pots and pans intended for everyday use. Photos: Tomi Salo and Tuomas Pensala.

tion and type, the ships need to be researched and placed in their technological and cultural origins. It is my hope, that this will be possible in the future. This would give scope to the research of medieval trade in the Finnish rural archipelago and countryside and make it possible to distinguish between different types of trade, for example direct foreign trade and regional distribution. In a time, where writ-

ten sources are far from comprehensive, each of these ships offers a unique glimpse of the society that build, ordered, sailed, used and lost them. Drawn together, the ships and the maritime archaeological evidence in them can be built into a comprehensive narrative on the everyday life, politics and trade in the northern Baltic Sea.

ENDNOTES

- 1 The term Middle Ages is used here for simplistic reasons to describe a time from the late 13th century to the end of the 16th century. In large parts of the country, the 16th century was still medieval in nature, even if it is typically referred to as the beginning of the "modern period".
- 2 Haggrén 2011; Tuovinen 2011.
- 3 Pihlman 2003, 199–201
- 4 Pihlman 1989, 104.
- 5 Länsi-Uudenmaan rannikko rautakaudella ja keskiajalla. Asutushistoria arkeologian, historian, biologian ja geologian näkökulmasta -project. The University of Helsinki 2003–2006.
- 6 Meaning that the fabric of the pot is almost vitrified, but still has some porosity.
- 7 Gaimster 1997.
- 8 Tevali 2010.
- 9 Wessman 2007, 143–144.
- 10 Mökkönen 2006.
- 11 Väisänen 2016, 156 and the references mentioned in the text.
- 12 For example, Roslund 2007; Enqvist 2006.
- 13 See Orton 2006.
- 14 Jansson et al. 2010; Haggrén et al. 2003, 27–30. I have had the opportunity to research the Snapper-tuna ceramics.
- 15 Pihlman 2003.
- 16 For example: Mankby, Kauklahti, Mäkkylä, Gubacka, Mårtensby...
- 17 Haggrén 2008.
- 18 Tevali 2017, 15.
- 19 Edgren 1978, 71.
- 20 Edgren 1978.
- 21 Edgren 1987, 88.
- 22 <http://df.narc.fi/>.
- 23 Kerkkonen 1959, 33–34, 127; Salminen 2013, 313–315.
- 24 Salminen 2013, 318.
- 25 DF 330.
- 26 For example, in 1336 (DF 443), 1340 (DF 472), 1367 (DF 764), 1395 (DF 1032).
- 27 A Reval merchant Peter van der Volme writes letters dated in Raseborg in 1405 and in 1416 (DF 1194; 1464).
- 28 I was working on the excavation and would like to thank Elina Terävä for making the finds catalogue available.
- 29 DF 3890.
- 30 Kerkkonen 1959.
- 31 Kerkkonen 1959, 61.
- 32 DF 6446, DF 6459, DF 6460.
- 33 Kerkkonen 1959, 62.
- 34 Unger 1978.
- 35 Kerkkonen 1959, 63.
- 36 Kerkkonen 1959; Kerkkonen 1985.
- 37 Salminen 2013, 332–351.
- 38 Salminen 2013; 258, 332–333.
- 39 Kerkkonen 1985, 50.
- 40 Suvanto 1987; Friberg 1983.
- 41 Friberg 1983.
- 42 See for example: Stephan 1996; Gaimster 1999.
- 43 Möller 2008, 538.
- 44 Möller 2008, 539.
- 45 Le Patourel 1983, 34–35.
- 46 Vogelsang 1992.
- 47 Vogelsang 1992; Möller 2008, 541.
- 48 Selling 1984; Möller 2008, 543.
- 49 Reisnert 1999, 499.
- 50 Orrman 1986, 151.
- 51 Vilkuna 1932.
- 52 Möller 2008, 546.
- 53 Möller 2008, 551; Verhaeghe 1999, 155.
- 54 For example: Kallioinen 2000; Leskelä 2007.
- 55 Salminen 2013; Heinonen 2015; Suvanto 1987.
- 56 Jansson et al. 2010.
- 57 Tevali 2010.
- 58 The excavation and subsequent research has not yet been reported or published by the excavator Finnish Heritage Agency. The estimate of the type

of the wreck is therefore based on my own observations during the recovery and conservation of the wreck parts as well as discussions with the excavator. However, future research is likely to bring more information to the discussion on the Egelskär ship's type and provenance.

- 59 Wessman 2007, 143–144.
- 60 Wessman 2007, 142.
- 61 Mökkönen 2006, 40–44.
- 62 Hölttä 1993.
- 63 Jansson et al. 2010, 76.
- 64 Tevali 2017.
- 65 Edgren 1978.
- 66 Möller 2008, 543.
- 67 For example, the Bondefamily in Mårtensby Lillas, Vantaa (Heinonen 2015).

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