 The cemeteries at Kaupang are discussed in this chapter. An overview of the different cemeteries is presented. In contrast to earlier studies, it is shown that there were several cemeteries and grave clusters at Kaupang – two extensive barrow cemeteries at Nordre Kaupang and Lamøya and a flat-grave cemetery at Bikjholberget as the major ones, plus at least five additional, lesser burial areas. There are 204 known grave-finds from a minimum of c. 700 monuments from the different cemeteries. The original number of monuments must have been considerably higher, perhaps as many as 1000.

Source-critical problems concerned in the dating of the graves are discussed. There were 116 graves which contained closely datable artefacts. The first burials seem to have taken place around AD 800. Overall, there is a slight preponderance of burials of the 10th century. The barrow cemetery at Nordre Kaupang stands out for having a clear majority of graves from late in the period under consideration. The general lack of burials with artefact-types dated to after c. 950 probably indicates that the cemeteries at Kaupang stopped being used regularly for burials somewhat before this time. Thus the apparently equal numbers of 9th- and 10th-century graves really conceal a much higher burial frequency in the later period.

When it comes to population size, different estimates are proposed here, based on the total number of graves. It is estimated that a minimum of about 200 people were living at Kaupang on average, but that the number may have been as high as about 500. In the early 10th century, the number may have been as high as about 800. As for the gender-specific burials, the female ones constitute 58% of the gendered graves in the 9th century but only 24% in the 10th. Both these numbers exceed the numbers for Vestfold as a whole, but it is argued that this in part reflects the greater number of professionally excavated graves at Kaupang. Since most of the graves at Kaupang have not been sex-attributed, it is difficult to compare what are in fact gendered graves at Kaupang (and in SE Norway) with sexed graves from southern Scandinavian cemeteries. Furthermore, it is suggested that the apparent decrease in female gendered burials from the 9th to the 10th century might in part be a reflection of changes in women's costume. Looking at the gendered male graves, there is a general increase in the number of weapons that accompany each burial from the 9th to the 10th century. When it comes to imported objects in the graves, a pattern seems to emerge whereby imports from the Continent are predominant in the 9th-century graves, with Insular and Eastern objects falling behind, while Insular, Eastern, and Continental imports are of equal importance in the 10th century.

Settlement finds in the area covered by the Hagejordet cemetery show that this burial ground was established some time during the lifespan of the settlement, but not at the beginning. The same may be true for the southernmost part of the Nordre Kaupang cemetery, where ploughmarks were observed below a cremation layer excavated in 1965. It seems likely that four very large, but undated barrows at Nordre Kaupang are among the earliest in this cemetery, since this cluster of large barrows was obviously built at a time when a large open space was available in the cemetery. Besides, they seem to have acted as a focal point for a number of less substantial barrows around them. At Lamøya, too, the occurrence of ploughmarks below one of the barrows in the SE area of the cemetery indicates that this part of the cemetery post-dates the establishment of the settlement. At Lamøya, it seems that the main cemetery originally consisted of several distinct grave clusters which grew together into one more or less continuous cemetery during the lifetime of the settlement.

Moving on to grave-types, a total of 62 burials in 46 different boats have been excavated at Kaupang. Other interesting grave-types include one possible chamber grave, a burial in a storage chest, two burials in

toboggans or trough-sleds, and two burials in log coffins. The most spectacular burial structure at Kaupang is a triple boat grave from Bikjholberget, where three adult individuals, two women and a man, were inhumed in a boat nearly 9 m long. An iron staff was associated with the woman in the stern which, together with some other special objects, suggests that she might have been a sorceress.

Finally, the question is posed concerning whether there are any parallels to the cemetery complex at Kaupang elsewhere in Scandinavia. The Kaupang cemeteries cover a wide spectrum of the myriad of rituals that we associate with Viking-age burial in Scandinavia, but the characteristic mixture of practices that produced the boat graves, chamber graves and coffin graves in one cemetery at Kaupang, namely at Bikjholberget, is hard to match. Only at Birka, or to a lesser degree at Hedeby, do we have the same mixture of rites: boat graves, chamber graves, and coffin graves, as well as relatively balanced numbers of cremations and inhumations.

To avoid the confusion resulting from the many different numbering systems that different excavators applied to the Kaupang graves, a new series of numbers has been given in the attached complete catalogue of excavated graves at Kaupang. This catalogue provides references to all earlier numbering systems.

Figure 5.1 *Excavation work at Bikjholberget in 1951. Photo, C. Blindheim.*

Figure 5.2 *Cemeteries in the Kaupang area. Green shaded areas represent the suggested, former extent of the various cemeteries mentioned in the text. Excavated barrows with a known location are white, while non-excavated ones are black-coloured. The numbers refer to grave numbers (Ka.) in the catalogue at the end of this chapter. Map, Anne Engesveen.*








Approaching Kaupang from the north, over land, a traveller would have to pass through a veritable “city of the dead” – the extensive barrow cemetery at Nordre Kaupang. Likewise, anyone arriving by ship would have had to pass the barrows at Søndre Kaupang on the south-western outskirts of the town, the substantial cemeteries on the islet of Lamøya, the lesser clusters of graves at Bjønnes, or even the flat graves in Bikjholberget, marked with low stone settings or perhaps wooden posts and with the stems of the buried boats visible above ground. In the 9th and 10th centuries the Kaupang cemeteries were an integral part of the Viking-age town. Since the 1830s, the burials have played an important part, in a long-term perspective no doubt the most important part, in the quest to tease out some of the secrets of this very first town-like settlement in what is now Norway.

In the present article, the Kaupang cemeteries are presented and discussed. One may ask why, since all of the graves were published by Charlotte Blindheim and Birgitte Heyerdahl-Larsen from 1981 onwards (Fig. 5.1; Blindheim et al. 1981, 1995, 1999). The reasons are twofold. Firstly, there is some deficiency of system and order in previous publications, making it difficult to take full advantage of them. There are a few instances where references to the same set of data contradict one another. In a small number of cases, the information supplied is misleading. Secondly and more importantly, however, I believe that the material still has much to offer. When used carefully, the burials may supply us with important information about the communities that buried their dead in the Kaupang cemeteries. In some respects, the conclusions in this article differ from those reached by earlier authors; however, this is so mostly because of the types of questions asked in this article.

In what follows, an overview of the Kaupang cemeteries is presented. The number of burials in each of them is estimated and the dating of the ceme-





-  Excavated area
-  Non-excavated barrow
-  Excavated barrow
-  Cemetery
-  Settlement area







teries considered. Gender and population size are investigated, as are mortuary customs and horizontal stratigraphy in the cemeteries. In every case, the material is compared not only with material from other early towns and emporia, but also with the whole corpus from Vestfold and, indeed, south-eastern Norway (in the latter cases, where references are lacking, the comparisons are based on my own, as yet unpublished studies). Some particularly interesting graves are described in more detail. *To avoid the confusion resulting from the many different numbering systems that different excavators applied to the Kaupang graves, a new series of numbers has been given in the attached complete catalogue of excavated graves at Kaupang. This catalogue provides references to all earlier numbering systems.*

There are – or rather were – a number of cemeteries in the Kaupang area (Fig. 5.2). The northernmost

of these, aligned upon the road leading to Kaupang from the main “Ra road” further north (i.e. the old transport corridor located on the Late-Glacial Ra moraine and leading through Vestfold from Borre on the Oslofjord in the east to the River Lågen in the west), was the most extensive one (Skre, this vol. Ch. 1:Fig. 1.1). A little further south was another cemetery. The flat graves at Bikjholberget, a hilly outcrop that in the Viking Age would in fact have been a headland stretching out into the town’s harbour, constituted the southernmost part of this other cemetery. At Lamøya, then a small island situated in the Viksfjord immediately to the east of the settlement area, there was another extensive cemetery, including both barrows and flat graves. Yet more graves were to be found on another small islet, the aptly named Vikingholmene (a recent place-name). There were several barrows at Søndre Kaupang, as well as a substantial number of flat graves; these burials probably constituted one large cemetery before they were destroyed as a result of agricultural improvements in the 19th and 20th centuries. Smaller cemeteries were located at Bjønnes on the northern side of the northern inlet.

### 5.1 The cemeteries

The first artefacts from the Kaupang cemeteries are known to have reached a museum in 1842, in this case the museum in Arendal (catalogue nos. 406–407 = Ka. 406–407). The first professional excavations of the Kaupang cemeteries took place in 1867. This campaign was directed by the antiquarian Nicolay Nicolaysen (Nicolaysen 1868; Blindheim 1977). Later campaigns were led by the archaeologists Gabriel Gustafson in 1902 (Petersen 1920:182; Blindheim et al. 1981: 61–3) and Charlotte Blindheim in 1950–1957 (Blindheim 1951, 1960, 1969; Blindheim et al. 1981, 1995, 1999; Skre, this vol. Ch. 2). In addition several finds made during cultivation and construction work over the years have been brought to the museum in Oslo.



Figure 5.3 *The horseman's grave Ka. 157. Photo, Eirik Irgens Johnsen, KHM.*

Figure 5.4 *Aerial photograph of Søndre Kaupang showing a crop-mark from a ploughed out barrow in the middle of the picture. The barrows excavated by Nicolaysen at Søndre Kaupang were on average considerably smaller than the ones at Nordre Kaupang. As this one is larger than the ones Nicolaysen recorded in 1867, the pictured barrow was probably destroyed before Nicolaysen performed his excavations. Photo, Vestfold County Council.*

### Søndre Kaupang (Ka. 150–166)

Nicolaysen noted 20 barrows at Søndre Kaupang during a short visit in 1859 (Nicolaysen 1862–1866:200). Eight barrows, probably belonging to the group of 20, were excavated in 1867 (Nicolaysen 1868). Five of these were round, while three were long barrows.

The largest barrow, Nicolaysen's barrow 6, housing a cremated equestrian grave (Ka. 157; Fig. 5.3; see Ch. 5.7:93–5), perhaps in a boat, was 9.5 m across and 1.25 m high. The smaller barrows (Nicolaysen's barrows 7–9) were about 5 m in diameter and just over 50 cm high. In Blindheim's (re-)publication of the cemetery, she misunderstood Nicolaysen's measurements, believing that his *feet* (31.3 cm) were actually *ells* (62.8 cm), and thus mistakenly going on to claim that the Søndre Kaupang barrows were substantially bigger than those at Nordre Kaupang (Blindheim et al. 1981:75; cf. Fig. 5.4).

Another group of barrows was at one time located to the south of Nicolaysen's barrows, and there is also information about a substantial flat-grave cemetery in the area (Blindheim et al. 1981:60). Now, just eight barrows remain at Søndre Kaupang (Kristensen 2005:23–4).

Other graves have been discovered by chance over the years and finds from them have reached the museum in Oslo, so that in total 17 grave-finds are known from Søndre Kaupang. All of these graves are cremation burials. This probably reflects the find-circumstances, i.e. the graves' being discovered during the removal of barrows rather than during the excavation of a complete section of the cemetery. There is little information to reveal the presence of dug-down inhumation burials in this area (see below). Likewise, there is no way to determine whether the graves at Søndre Kaupang originally constituted one extensive cemetery or several smaller grave clusters.

### Nordre Kaupang (Ka. 1–73)

This is the most extensive of the Kaupang cemeteries. Nicolaysen noted "hundreds of barrows" here in 1859 (Nicolaysen 1862–1866:200, my translation). According to him, the cemeteries at Kaupang and Lamøya "count without doubt among the largest in the whole of our country" (Nicolaysen 1861:35, my translation). Earlier sources reveal that there were also other kinds of monuments in this cemetery, for instance a small ship-setting (Skre, this vol. Ch. 16:371, Fig. 16.5). In 1867, Nicolaysen counted 111 barrows at Nordre Kaupang – 25 long barrows, the rest of them round. That same year he excavated 71 barrows, 63 of which contained layers or concentrations of charcoal. Cremated bone was observed in only 39 of the 63, and in 36 of those, artefacts were also recovered. Eight barrows yielded no artefacts, cremation remains or charcoal.

The largest barrows, Nicolaysen's Barrows 53 and 66 (the numbers refer to Christie's plan, made in 1866 and published as an appendix to Nicolaysen 1868; Skre, this vol. Ch. 16:Fig. 16.1), were c. 25 m in diameter; the former was 2.7, the latter 2.2 m high. Nos. 50 and 51 were c. 23 m in diameter. Ten barrows were only 4–4.5 m across, while the smallest one, number 61, was only about 3 m across and 30 cm high.

In 1965 another grave was excavated at Nordre Kaupang (Ka. 37). Together with some stray finds, this brings the total number of recorded grave-finds from the main cemetery at Nordre Kaupang to 74.

One problem, that of representativity, needs to be considered regarding Nicolaysen's excavation of 1867. Thirty-nine of the barrows at Nordre Kaupang contained cremation burials. Almost as many (32) revealed no evidence of a burial at all. Eight of the latter were completely empty, while 24 contained only layers or patches of charcoal. Barrows containing layers of charcoal but which were otherwise empty have been documented elsewhere in Vestfold (cf. Gansum 2004:242–5; Gansum and Østigård 1999). It has re-





cently been argued that these “empty” barrows were never meant to be burial mounds; rather, the monumentality of the barrows and the transformative character of charcoal in ritual contexts might have led to the building of barrows during periods of social stress (Gansum 2004:242–5).

However, layers of charcoal sometimes occur in barrows containing inhumation graves (Opedal 1998: 43–4). One has to ask therefore whether some of Nicolaysen’s “empty” barrows had really been erected over sub-surface inhumation graves. In fact, the majority of excavated inhumation graves from the Viking Age in Vestfold were in grave-pits beneath barrows (Sjøvold 1944:66). Richly furnished graves of this type, a number of which have yielded artefacts with clear affinities to the Kaupang finds, have been excavated both in Hedrum and at Gulli, a fact that calls for some caution (Stylegar 2005a; Gjerpe 2005c). In the latter case, a cemetery consisting of some 25 barrows was discovered by aerial photography in 1993. Nicolaysen noted a barrow cemetery at Gulli but did not excavate it (Nicolaysen 1862–1866:181). No artefacts reached any museum following the destruction of the barrows. Twenty-six circular quarry ditches – all that remained of the barrows – were excavated on the site in 2003–2004. In 15 of these, inhumation grave-pits from the 9th and 10th centuries were found (Gjerpe 2005c).

It is noteworthy that Barrows 50, 51, 53 and 56, by far the largest in the Nordre Kaupang cemetery and also larger than the barrows at Søndre Kaupang and Lamøya, were amongst the “empty” barrows. Were these four giants in the southern part of the cemetery built to cover sub-surface inhumation burials, or were they erected by people intending to put down roots in this area by such ritual means? These questions are difficult to answer without new excavations in the area where Nicolaysen’s barrows were located (but see Skre, this vol. Ch. 16:380–1, 19:434–5).

A total of 140 barrows can be shown to have existed at Nordre Kaupang (Skre, this vol. Ch. 16:Tab. 16.1). The extent of the main cemetery is considered elsewhere in this volume (*ibid.*). Several barrows were destroyed prior to 1866. Of the 111 barrows documented by Nicolaysen in 1867, none remains today.

#### Hagejordet (Ka. 125–134)

This cemetery was treated as the southernmost part of the Nordre Kaupang cemetery by Blindheim (e.g. Blindheim et al. 1981:47–56). On Christie’s 1866 map, four barrows (nos. 1–4) are located some 200 ells (125 m) to the south of the main cemetery. In the vicinity of barrows 1–4, and also in the area between these barrows and the cemetery at Nordre Kaupang to the north but separated from the latter by c. 85 m, a number of other finds have been made, some of them pos-

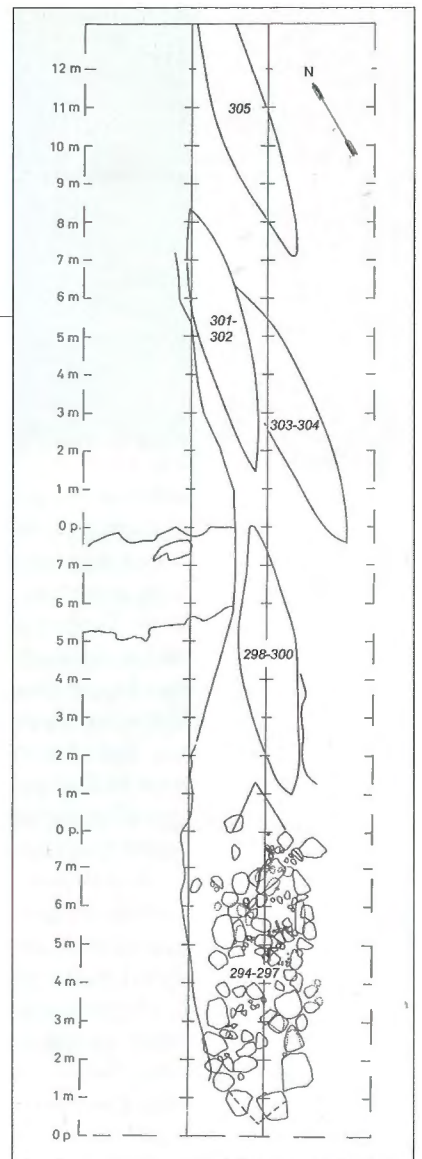
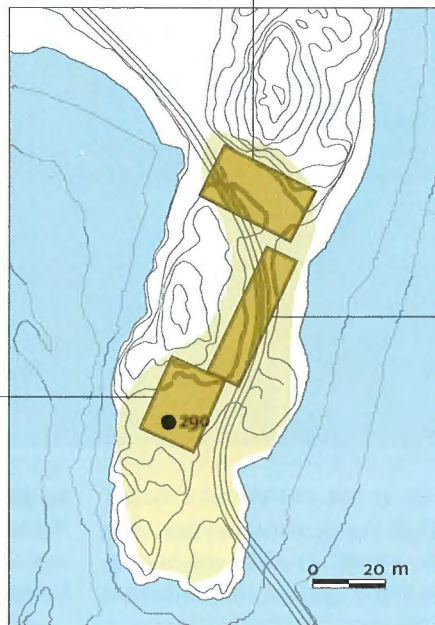
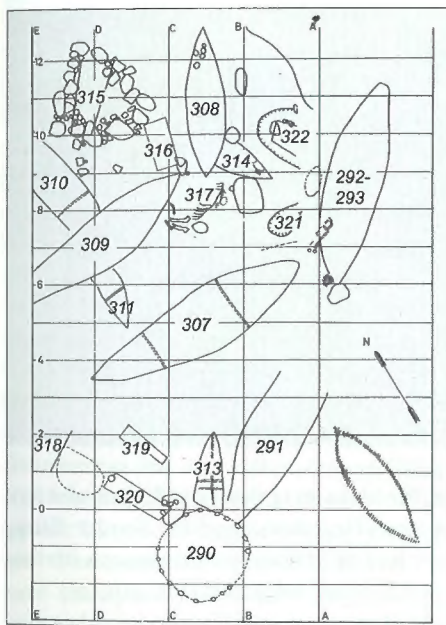
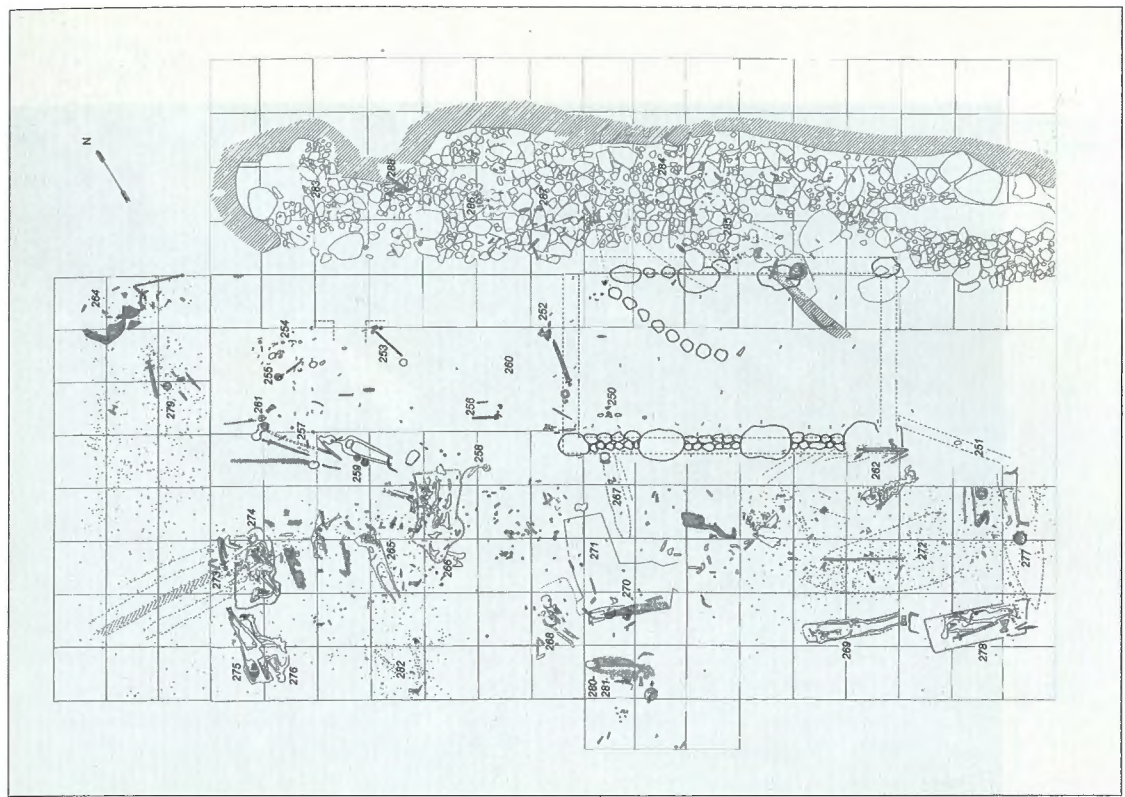


Figure 5.5 Excavations at Bikjholberget in 1955, with the boat grave Ka. 308 clearly visible in the centre of the picture. Photo, Bertil Almgren, KHM.

Figure 5.6 Excavated structures at Bikjholberget (adapted from Blindheim et al. 1995). Illustration compiled by Anne Engesveen and Julie K. Øhre Askjem.





sibly stemming from flat graves, and at least a couple of them possibly marked by a horizontal stone slab. Viking-age flat graves covered by slabs are known from elsewhere in southern Vestfold (Sjøvold 1944: 55–6). Furthermore, one grave-find from this area is said to derive from a barrow (Ka. 125). One of the sketches of Kaupang made by the artist Johannes Flintoe in the 1830s (printed in Blindheim et al. 1999: 154; Skre, this vol. Ch. 16:Fig. 16.3), shows a vertical stone in this same area, although the legend explicitly states that the cemetery, by which the artist must have meant the barrows, begins further to the north.

It is therefore most likely that the barrows and possible flat graves at Hagejordet constitute a cemetery separate from the one at Nordre Kaupang (see also Skre, this vol. Ch. 16:368–9).

Between 1999 and 2003 a number of cultural resource management trenches were excavated in this area (Pilø, this vol. Chs. 7:154 and 8:169–72, Fig 8.14). Viking-age settlement deposits were recovered from

several trenches, indicating that both Hagejordet and the area between Hagejordet and the Nordre Kaupang cemetery had been used for settlement activities before a cemetery was established at Hagejordet.

Nicolaysen's barrows 1 and 2, which he did not excavate, were excavated by Blindheim in 1974 (Ka. 126 and 127). Another grave was excavated in 1958 (Ka. 130).

#### **Bikjholberget (Ka. 250–323)**

Adjoining the Hagejordet cemetery is the hilly outcrop of Bikjholberget to the south. Seventy-four graves were excavated by Blindheim in 1950–57 at two separate sites at Bikjholberget (Fig. 5.5). These two sites at Bikjholberget are part of one continuous cemetery (Fig. 5.6).

The graves at the southern site of Bikjholberget seem to have been undisturbed at the time of excavation, unlike the graves at the northern site. Apart from two low barrows (Ka. 290 and 292) and one



Figure 5.7 The coffin graves Ka. 315 and 316 during excavation. In the latter grave, a chest of Oseberg type was used as a coffin. Photo, Bertil Almgren, KHM.

Figure 5.8 Zeuthen's 1845 plan of the northern part of the Lamøya cemetery. Original in the National Museum (Nationalmuseet), Copenhagen.

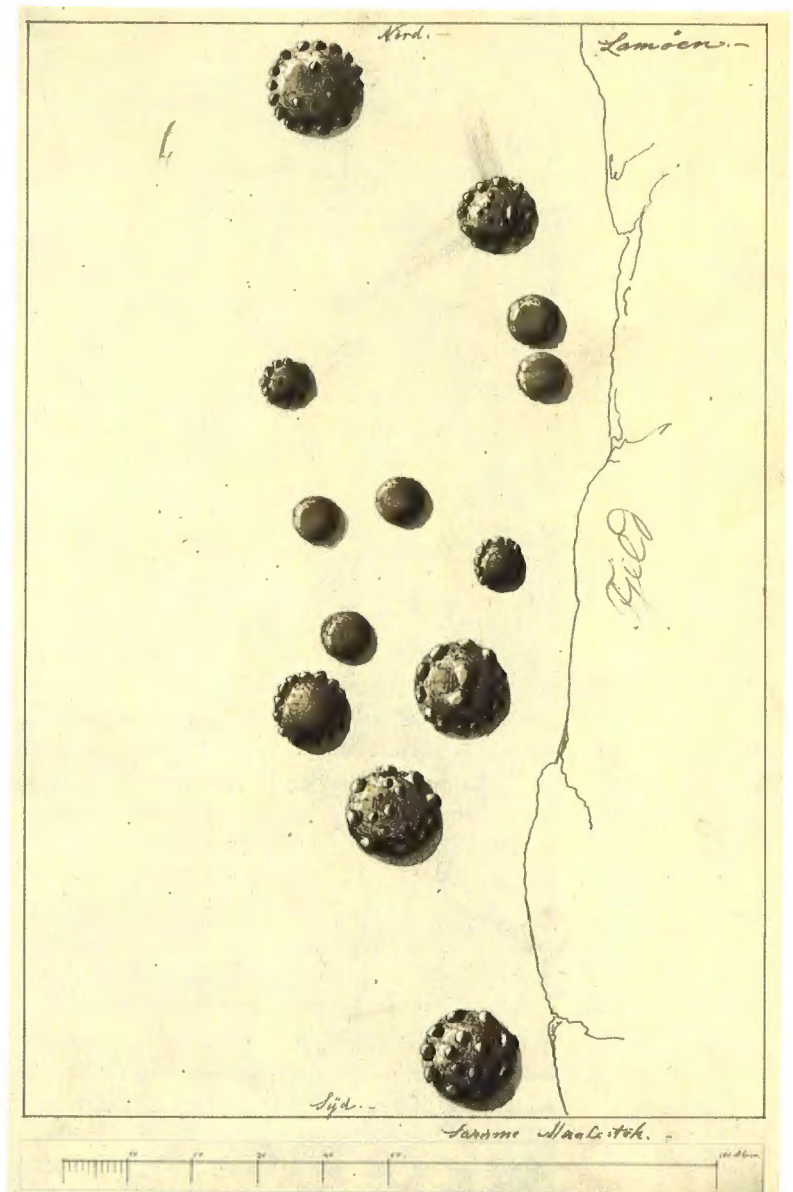
four-sided stone setting (Ka. 294), all 34 individual graves from the southern site of Bikjholberget were flat graves covered by stone packings.

One of the two low barrows contained a stone cist (Ka. 290). In the flat graves, 12 boats were discovered with a total of 20 burials (Ka. 291 and 292, 294–296 and 298–312). In one of the boat graves (Ka. 307), the deceased had been placed in a wooden coffin or chamber (see below). Furthermore, in the lower-lying part of the site there were five burials in wooden coffins (Ka. 315 and 318–322), one in a chest of Oseberg type (Ka. 316), and two in toboggans or troughs (Ka. 313 and 314) (Fig. 5.7).

The graves at Nordre Bikjholberget were partly destroyed by modern disturbances before the excavations began. In total 40 individual graves are known from this part of the Bikjholberget cemetery, but due to the difficult excavating conditions caused by prior disturbances and a complex stratigraphy, not all the artefacts and skeletal remains could be ascribed to specific burials. Consequently, the excavators noted that there were very probably several burials that went unobserved at Nordre Bikjholberget (Blindheim et al. 1995:55).

There are no barrows in Nordre Bikjholberget, and all known burials are flat graves. As in southern Bikjholberget, they were covered by stone packings. Different grave-types were used for the flat graves. Twenty-one(?) boats contained a total of 28 burials (Ka. 250–259, 262–268, 272 and 273, 277, 279, 282–287 and 289). There was one burial in a wooden coffin (Ka. 271) and two in log coffins (Ka. 269 and 278). One grave was a chamber grave (Ka. 270). Three burials did not reveal any grave structure (Ka. 274–276), while five of the flat graves did not reveal any grave structure (Ka. 260 and 261, 280 and 281 and 288).

The cemetery at Bikjholberget has certainly not been fully excavated. The southern part extends further in all directions (Blindheim et al. 1995:16). Pos-



sible boat graves have been discovered at a couple of spots on the northern slope, close by the cemetery at Hagejordet (Blindheim et al. 1981:56, 1995:60; Kristensen 2005:39–40).

It is possible to estimate the number of graves remaining at Bikjholberget. In total, an area covering 540 sq m was excavated by Blindheim in 1950–1957; thus there were 140 graves per 1,000 sq m. The remaining area covers c. 1,200 sq m, approximately half of which would have been suitable for burial. It can thus be estimated that around 85 graves still await excavation at Bikjholberget.

All the known burials at Bikjholberget are inhumations, which gives us a representative view of the burial custom there, as Blindheim conducted a total excavation of the graves which she encountered, not a partial trenching as Nicolaysen did at Nordre Kaugang.

---

Figure 5.9 Broch's 1811 map, the so called Larvik County map (Grevskapskartet), showing Søndre Kaupang with fences and recent "intakes", indicating that the transformation of the traditional cultural landscape was fully under way at that time. National Map Office (Statens Kartverk), Hønefoss (Grevskapskart 9B9 blad 7).

---

### Lamøya (Ka. 200–230)

The Lamøya of today is a peninsula, but it was surrounded by the sea in the Viking Age. There are now 94 barrows and three stone settings at Lamøya (Gansum 1995; Kristensen 2005). Three barrows are long, the remaining 91 circular. Of the stone settings, two are round, while the third is possibly boat-shaped.

A plan made by C. O. Zeuthen in 1845 (see Skre, this vol. Ch. 16:370–1, Fig. 16.5; Skre 2005) shows 13 barrows at Lamøya. These can be correlated with the two southernmost of the four still existing barrows that are located to the north of the present farm buildings (Fig. 5.8). Other sources testify that there were once also barrows in the area between Zeuthen's barrows and the main cluster of barrows to the south of the Lamøya farm, as well as in the area covered by today's farm buildings (sketch by Gustafson, in Blindheim et al. 1981:62). If, for this area, we assume a density of barrows comparable to that in the main cluster further south, the number of barrows destroyed can be estimated at around 50. In the vicinity of Kongehaugen (the largest of the remaining barrows at Kaupang, with a diameter of c. 15 m, and smaller only than Nicolaysen's Barrows 50, 51, 53 and 56), there used to be "many barrows", according to one informant (Blindheim et al. 1981:65). These must be the "more than 20 barrows" noted by Nicolaysen "in the woods to the west of the farm houses" (Nicolaysen 1868:91; cf. Blindheim et al. 1981:64). On Broch's 1811 map, the so called Larvik County map (*Grevskapskartet*), only Kongehaugen is shown in this area, but it seems to be located in the NW corner of a cultivated area. Before cultivation therefore, there might have been more monuments to the south and east of Kongehaugen. There is also evidence of destroyed barrows in the vicinity of the possible flat grave Ka. 206 (Blindheim et al. 1981:64). Thus, in total c. 200 barrows are likely for Lamøya.

Gabriel Gustafson excavated three or four bar-

rows at Lamøya in 1902 (Ka. 203–205, 230). Simultaneously with the excavations at Bikjholberget, two barrows (Ka. 217 and 218) and one flat grave (Ka. 219) were excavated at Lamøya in 1956. Ka. 217 was completely empty (Blindheim et al. 1995:51–2).

Apart from the barrows, there is a cluster of flat graves at Guristranda, and the majority of the 23 recorded finds from Lamøya (Ka. 200–222) are in fact either from flat graves or, more likely, are from destroyed barrows. The latter case does not, however, seem likely for the graves Ka. 201–202 and 207–210, for reasons that have to do with local topography, and is certainly not so for the professionally excavated Ka. 219.

Both cremations and inhumations are known from Lamøya. One of the barrows excavated by Gustafson contained two boats (Ka. 203–204) – in one of them, Ka. 204, a male individual had been interred with a collection of cremated animal bones (*bos*, *ovis*? and *sus* – Blindheim et al. 1981:85).

The graves at Lamøya lie in a number of more or less distinct clusters. It is difficult to decide to what degree this reflects the original situation. But at least the cluster that includes Kongehaugen must have been distinct in the Viking Age too (although see Kristensen 2005:57). This cluster is separated by about 100 m from the nearest barrow to the southwest. It is a matter of definition whether we count the Kongehaugen complex as a grave cluster or as a separate cemetery.

### Bjønnes

Nicolaysen noted five barrows at Bjønnes, just opposite the main cemetery at Nordre Kaupang. He did not excavate any of these barrows, which are no longer preserved, and we do not have any reported grave-finds from Bjønnes. Further south there is a circular stone setting. It is most likely the stone setting that Nicolaysen mentioned in 1893 (1894a:177).





Close by is a cemetery with four or five small, boat-shaped stone settings. There are 13 known barrows left at Bjonnes, including a cluster of five to the north of the present farm buildings.

As they are clearly open to the northern inlet to the harbour, these graves must belong to the Kaupang complex.

#### Vikingholmen

At this site – in the Viking Age a small islet just off the Kaupang settlement – there is one comparatively large barrow and seven smaller ones, all showing clear signs of having been excavated. There are, however, no known finds from any of these barrows.

#### 5.2 Number of burials

A total number of 204 graves and stray finds that probably derive from graves are known from the Kaupang cemeteries. If one counts the empty graves, and the graves containing nothing but layers or patches of charcoal, the number is 237. But how many burials were there originally? Based on the number of graves and unexcavated burial mounds, the following minimum figures for each cemetery can be inferred:

- At *Søndre Kaupang*, about 36 barrows and a couple of additional finds that cannot be attributed to any of these graves. Total: 38. (Ka. 150–167 = 18 recovered finds.)



N

- No dating
- 9th century
- 10th century
- Cemetery
- Settlement area



0 200 m



Figure 5.10 *The dated mound burials at Kaupang (Bikjholberget excluded). Map, Anne Engesveen.*

- At *Nordre Kaupang*, 111 barrows, including the “empty” ones excavated by Nicolaysen. Skre’s archival studies have proved the existence of another 29 barrows, bringing the number to 140. Skre estimates that there were a total of 263 barrows here. Total: c. 263. (Ka. 1–73)
- At *Hagejordet*, five barrows and five finds that may derive from graves. Total: 11. (Ka. 125–134)
- At *Bikjholberget*, two barrows and 72 flat graves. A further 85 as yet unexcavated graves inferred. Total: c. 160. (Ka. 250–323)
- At *Lamøya*, 108 barrows and at least 29 finds that derive either from flat graves or destroyed barrows (some of the latter finds may derive from any of the 13 barrows recorded by Zeuthen in 1845; these barrows are nonetheless included in the total number of barrows known at Lamøya). Also the more than 20 barrows noted by Nicolaysen, and around 50 destroyed barrows. Total: c. 200. (Ka. 200–228)
- At *Bjønnes*, 18 barrows, one circular stone setting and four or five boat-shaped stone settings. Total: 23. No finds.
- At *Vikingholmen*, eight barrows. No finds.

This yields a minimum of 407 documented graves (buried individuals), and 700 estimated ones. However, there is no doubt that this number is still an underestimate. Many flat graves are probably still undetected, and a large number of graves have been removed over the centuries without any finds from them having been brought to any museum. One also has to add the graves in the flat-grave cemetery at Søndre Kaupang, the extent of which we simply do not know (above). In respect of the barrow cemeteries at Søndre Kaupang, Hagejordet and Bjønnes, there is no available information on the original number of monuments. Even with the well-studied cemetery at Nordre Kaupang there is little informa-

tion as to how many individuals may have been buried in each barrow. Based on the available sources, 700 graves is simply as close as one can get.

Blindheim suggested that there could have been as many as 1,000 graves in the area (Blindheim et al. 1981:65, cf. 1999:153–4). This calculation incorporates a large number of barrows believed to have been destroyed before 1867. The difference between Nicolaysen’s reference to “hundreds of barrows” in 1859 (or indeed his suggestion referred to above, that the Kaupang cemeteries were amongst the very largest in Norway), and his counting of only 115 barrows eight years later, would seem to imply that a considerable number of graves were destroyed in the period 1859–1867. (Munthe’s statement in 1838, that there were “an almost innumerable number of barrows” at Kaupang, seems to imply this too; see Munthe in Sturluson [1838–1839]:I:35 and Skre, this vol. Chs. 2:29–31, 16:363–5.) The earliest information we have about barrows being destroyed at Kaupang dates to 1842, when Ka. 406–407 reached the museum in Arendal. P. A. Munch visited Kaupang in 1850, and could later reveal – probably he had been given this information by the farmers – that swords, glass beads and boat remains had been found in the barrows (Skre, this vol. Ch. 2:32).

According to Skre’s calculations, the number of barrows at Nordre Kaupang declined from 140 to 111 in the decades before 1866.

One reason for this massive destruction was that the tenants at Kaupang became freeholders in this period and began cultivating their new holdings. At Søndre Kaupang they bought their farms in 1858, and seem to have begun cultivating immediately; consequently, the first known grave-finds from a barrow in this area (Ka. 150–151) reached the museum in Christiania (Oslo) the following year. Destruction had begun even earlier at Nordre Kaupang, where the tenants had become freeholders during the 17th century.

However, there is reason to believe that the destruction of the cemeteries at Søndre Kaupang may have begun many years before 1858. Two related circumstances indicate this. Firstly, agricultural improvement started in Tjølling by the late 18th century. Between 1750 and 1814 the arable land used for grain alone in this area increased by 125 acres (Krohn-Holm 1974:255–7). Secondly and most significantly, although it has been estimated by one source that nobody in Tjølling planted more than half a barrel of potatoes per season around 1800, in 1812 an average family harvested 20 barrels of potatoes. In these years, too, the draining of land by means of ditches and the building of stone walls began. The initiative for many of these changes came from the Count of Laurvigen. Søndre Kaupang was part of the comital estate, and the Count's tenants were bound by their leasing contracts to build stone walls, amongst other things. This is, for example, shown very clearly at Søndre Kaupang in particular where Broch's cadastral map of 1811 shows a number of walls, garden plots, and what seems to be a current process of transforming grassland into arable land. Thus we are reminded that this excellent and detailed map does not provide us with a glimpse of a cultural landscape untouched by modern improvements (Fig. 5.9). It is highly likely that the building of walls, the increase in arable land and the establishment of potato fields in the outlands, led to the destruction of burial barrows long before 1858.

However, it is difficult (to say the least) to estimate just how many graves might have been destroyed before survey work began at Kaupang. The actual number of graves within the Kaupang complex could have been about a thousand, as suggested by Blindheim. By comparison, Birka has about 2,300–3,400 graves (Gräslund 1980:4, 82; Holmquist Olausson 1993), while Hedeby has about 7,000–12,000 (Jankuhn 1986:108; Eisenschmidt 1994:99).

### 5.3 The dated burials

Of the 204 burials from Kaupang, 116 contain closely datable artefacts, as opposed to burials that can only generally be dated to either the Late Iron Age (c. AD 550–1050) or even the Iron Age in general (c. 500 BC–AD 1050) (Fig. 5.10). Regrettably, no charcoal from the barrows excavated by Nicolaysen is preserved, ruling out any radiocarbon dating.

Dating the graves is not without inherent problems. Petersen (1919) established a typology for swords and other types of weaponry which, with several minor amendments (Paulsen 1956; Müller-Wille 1972; Solberg 1984; Geibig 1991; Moberg 1992), is still essentially unchanged. He likewise established a chronology for artefacts commonly found in men's graves. On the basis of both weapon-finds and women's jewellery, Petersen (1919, 1928) divided the Viking Age into three sequential phases: the Early Viking Age (9th century), the Middle Viking Age

(10th century), and the Late Viking Age (11th century).

In the case of swords, this tripartite scheme was followed by Müller-Wille (1972). For other artefactgroups, however, more refined divisions have been suggested (beads: Callmer 1977; pennanular brooches: Carlsson 1988). With reference to the oval (tortoise) brooches from Birka, Jansson (1985) argued that Petersen's chronology was in need of revision. Jansson (1985:181) suggested that the location of the transition between the Early and the Middle Viking Age (in his terminology the Early and Late Birka Period) to c. AD 900 is often based on little more than Petersen's denominations "9th century" and "10th century" as conventional labels for what are basically periods in a relative chronology. Jansson's work indicated that the transition from Early to Late "Birka Period" actually fell sometime during the second half of the 9th century (cf. Maixner 2004). More recently, the whole edifice of Viking Age chronology has been refined through the work of Skibsted Klæsøe (1999). Based on jewellery and art styles, this revised chronology brings a number of recent dendrochronological datings (Christensen and Krog 1987; Andersen 1991; Bonde 1994; Bonde and Christensen 1993b; Schou Jørgensen 1998; see also Müller-Wille 2001) into the picture. Skibsted Klæsøe (1999) divides the Viking Age into three major periods – per. 1 (AD 750/775–825/830); per. 2 (AD 825/830–960); and per. 3 (AD 960–1050/1066), with per. 2 further subdivided into three shorter phases (2a1: 825/830–860; 2a2: 860–900/910; and 2b: 900/910–960).

The revisions being made by Jansson and Skibsted Klæsøe have implicit consequences for the weapon chronology too. Although Petersen's typological system probably covers most of the material in a satisfactory way, his chronology no longer holds. The weapon chronology has to be correlated with the chronology based on art styles and jewellery (for the earliest part of the period, this problem is discussed by Rundkvist 2003:68–9). Until this work has been done, there are effectively two chronologies available – one for men's graves and one for women's graves. The former is to a large extent a relative chronology. Nevertheless, stylistic evidence and coin datings from Danish burials indicate that the tentative relative weapon chronology is not completely erroneous. In a relative sense, however, the "10th century" may begin slightly earlier than 900 as an absolute date.

This procedural problem must be kept in mind when comparisons are made between early and late graves at Kaupang (below). The division into "early" and "late" graves is real, but it is not so certain that all the "early" graves belong to the 9th century and all the "late" graves to the 10th. The same applies when comparing the chronological distribution of female graves and male graves.



Figure 5.11 Tjølling and neighbouring districts in southern Vestfold, with the pre-1960s boundaries. Map, Anne Engesveen.

### The problematic 8th century

The Kaupang cemeteries include a couple of graves that have been interpreted as dating to the 8th century (Gudesen 1980:217). The most important finds in question are:

- *Ka. 150–151*: A badly preserved grave-find from a small cairn at Søndre Kaupang, recovered in 1859 or earlier (C2270–80). The find is obviously mixed, and it has tentatively been assigned two different graves by the present author – *Ka. 150–151* (cf. Blindheim et al. 1981:152–4). The latter belongs to the 10th century, while *Ka. 150* exhibits some weapon-types supposed by Gudesen and Blindheim (Gudesen 1980:42 and 53; Blindheim et al. 1981:153) to pre-date the Viking Age.
- *Ka. 403*: A single-edged sword without hilt and guard, found beneath a flat stone at some distance above the farm Nordre Kaupang. This find was not archaeologically investigated. Nicolaysen brought it to the museum in Christiania in 1867.

The pre-800 date for the find complex *Ka. 150–151* rests upon a single-edged sword, a shield-boss and an artefact that has been interpreted as a weapon knife or sax (Blindheim et al. 1981:153).

The sword has a type H hilt. Jan Petersen's type H hilt is the most common of his types, represented by no less than 213 specimens at the time of publication in 1919; of these, 27% occurred on single-edged swords (Petersen 1919:74). This hilt-type is in need of chronological re-assessment. In northern Germany, the type is known from the late 8th century (Stein 1967). However, it is probably significant that, in her study of the Scandinavian weapon graves, Anne Nørgård Jørgensen was unable to find type H hilts in her Nordic Phase VI (c. 800–830/840), while it does occur in her Phase VII (c. 830/840–c. 900) (Nørgård Jørgensen 1999:190). Thus the sword from *Ka. 150–151* probably belongs to the mid- or late 9th century.



The shield-boss is of the Galgenberg type, Nørgård Jørgensen's type SBD (cf. Nørgård Jørgensen 1999:86). While these bosses mostly occur in graves from the late 7th and 8th centuries on the Continent, they are also known from pictorial sources from the 9th century, for instance in the picture of Louis the Pious in the poem *Laus Sanctae Crucis* from Fulda (dated to 826) where the emperor holds a shield with a Galgenberg-type boss. Further examples are found in the Stuttgarter Bilderpsalter, made in Saint-Germain-des-Prés near Paris in the same period (Nørgård Jørgensen 1999:87). The date-range of this type must therefore be extended into the early decades of the 9th century.

The single-edged sax or weapon knife is badly preserved. What is left is a 12-cm long piece with the upper part of the blade and the lower part of the grip. Its greatest width is c. 3.5 cm. Blindheim (et al. 1981:153) compared this artefact to an undated single find of a sax from Gran, Vang, Hedmark (C33979).



The Gran knife is reminiscent of a single-edged sword from Torsdal, Bamble, Telemark (C4516; Gjessing 1934:pl. XI b), although it is much smaller and has, like the specimen from Kaupang, a "broken" or angled back blade-shape (the Torsdal sword, of type SAX3, dates from c. 680 right through the 8th century: cf. Nørgård Jørgensen 1999:135, fig. 116). Helgen (1975:4) dates the Gran knife to the Late Migration/Early Merovingian Periods, i.e. the late 6th and early 7th centuries, and Blindheim (et al. 1981:153) argues for a similar date for the knife from Kaupang. The basis for Helgen's suggested dating is the general observation that saxes shorter than c. 50 cm are older than the longer, single-edged swords (Helgen 1975:4).

The angled back blade-shape is the really distinctive feature of these two knives, however. In the Norwegian material, there is only one other example of a sax with a similar blade-shape. This somewhat longer specimen (blade length: 38 cm) of type R496 from Myklebost, Fjaler, Sogn og Fjordane (B7678) is from a grave-find dated by Nørgård Jørgensen (1999:227) to her Nordic Phase VII, c. 830/840–c. 900. Nørgård Jørgensen (1999:62–3) includes the Myklebost sword in her SAX5-group. This particular weapon is presumably an Anglo-Saxon import, however, which is probably the reason that it seems to stand apart from Nørgård Jørgensen's other SAX5 specimens (Gjessing 1934:100; cf. Grieg 1923:34, who argues for Anglo-Saxon influences behind the whole group of R496 swords).

The blade-shape indicates that an Anglo-Saxon origin cannot be ruled out for the Kaupang knife, either. The principal distinctive characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon weapon knife or *sax* is its angled-back blade. The average blade-length of these weapons is around 15–25 cm, although single specimens can range from 7.5 to 75 cm. The *sax* is divided into two general size-ranges, and the Kaupang specimen would seem to sit well with the smaller size range, 7.5–35 cm (Underwood 1999:68–70). In England, the *sax* was still in use in the late 10th century (Gjessing 1934:85). The badly preserved Kaupang knife is difficult to date precisely. But it cannot be ruled out that the object reached Kaupang as part of the wave of Western imports of the 9th or early 10th century (cf. Blindheim et al. 1999:55).

As for the single-edged sword in Ka. 403, it is of type SAX8, a type peculiar to Norway. Nørgård Jørgensen's (1999:190) dating of SAX8-swords is to the Early Viking Age, i.e. her Nordic Phase VII, c. 830/840–c. 900.

Blindheim's dating of the other graves to the period preceding c. AD 800 is even less convincing. They consist either of single artefacts (or the dating rests on single artefacts), or they derive from disturbed graves (Ka. 400, Ka. 283, Ka. 293, Ka. 302 and Ka. 322). Among the latter, the most promising candidate for a grave pre-dating AD 800 seems to be Ka. 293, where

both the spearhead and the arrowheads suggest an early date. But altogether, there is no grave from Kaupang with a definite 8th-century date.

In Vestfold, cemeteries established in the Viking Age are very rare, if they occur at all (Gulli in Sem/Tønsberg might be an exception: see Gjerpe 2005c). Viking-age burials are regularly found in cemeteries already established in the Late Roman and Migration Periods (c. AD 200–550). The fact that none of the cemeteries at Kaupang seems to have roots in the pre-Viking period strongly suggests that all of them are indeed intimately connected with the establishment of the town around AD 800.

Even if there were earlier burials, as at other sites, it would have to be asked whether they constitute evidence of continuity over a long time-span. Overlap between Iron-age and Viking-age cemeteries is seen elsewhere in Scandinavia, for instance in Denmark. Direct continuity, however, is less certain, and one may speculate on whether the overlap reflects the coincidental choice of a similar topographical situation or a return to a site "known" to be the cemetery of ancient ancestors or holding other significance (see also Gjerpe 2005c).

#### The 9th and 10th centuries

Of the 116 datable burials, 98 of them can with more or less certainty (and subject to the qualifications outlined above, respecting relative versus absolute chronology and the correlation of the chronologies for dress-accessories and weaponry), be dated to either the 9th or the 10th century – 43 to the 9th and 55 to the 10th. The remaining 18 graves cannot be dated to either of these periods because many of them contain only one datable object with a suggested dating to 850–950 (for instance shield-bosses of type R562) or a dating based purely on style (for example metalwork with symmetric animal style, or Borre Style, from <850–950).

In ten cases the dating to the 10th century rests partly or mainly upon the occurrence of soapstone vessels in the grave in question. This calls for an explanation. Jan Petersen showed that the bowl-shaped vessels belonged mainly to the 10th and 11th centuries. He knew of 157 more closely datable finds, 132 of which he dated to this period. Only 16% belonged to the 9th century (Petersen 1951:362). As for the material from Vestfold (except Kaupang), there are 57 graves with soapstone vessels, 26 of which can be dated to the 10th century, and only 3 to the 9th (10%). At Kaupang, soapstone vessels have been found in 35 graves. On the basis of other artefacts in the graves, 16 of those can be dated to the 10th century and four to the 9th. The four earliest examples are mainly from graves with uncertain datings. Well-dated 9th-century burials do not have soapstone vessels (even if soapstone vessels are plentiful in the settlement area from the early 9th century: see Baug, in



prep.). On this basis, the remaining ten graves with no datable artefacts, other than a soapstone vessel, have been dated to the 10th century (for a discussion of the chronology of Viking-age soapstone vessels, see also Risbøl 1994:121–3).

Over all, there seems to be a slight preponderance of burials dating to the 10th century at Kaupang. There are, however, discrepancies between the different cemeteries. At Bikjholberget, 28 burials date to the 9th century, and an equal number to the 10th. At Søndre Kaupang there are three 9th-century graves and three 10th-century graves, while at Hagejordet there are three graves dating to the 9th century and two dating to the 10th. However, for Nordre Kaupang the numbers are three and 13, and for Lamøya they are four and 9 for the 9th and 10th century, respectively. If, for the sake of argument, we exclude the graves dated only by the occurrence of soapstone vessels, the picture is only slightly different, i.e. the 10th century is still predominant at both Nordre Kaupang and Lamøya, but less markedly so. At Bikjholberget, as mentioned above, the 9th and 10th century burials are equal in number. These differences between the cemeteries at Kaupang are striking, with Lamøya and Nordre Kaupang in particular standing out from the others in the sense that these two cemeteries have a clear predominance of 10th-century graves. In the case of Lamøya, an explanation could be that this erstwhile island was not regularly used for burial until the later phase of the Kaupang settlement's existence, as seems to have been the case with the Hagejordet cemetery further north too (see below, on horizontal stratigraphy). As for Nordre Kaupang, this particular cemetery may only have been indirectly connected to the settlement (see Skre, this vol. Ch. 16:377–83), although a gradual expansion from a rather modest beginning in the 9th century is a reasonable hypothesis in this case too.

The main point, however, is that there are almost as many Early- as Middle-Viking-age graves at Kaupang, but with a slight preponderance of 10th-century graves (noting, however, that the 116 datable burials amount to only about 20% of the estimated number of burials).

This relationship between Early- and Middle-Viking-age graves at Kaupang is similar to what Thorleif Sjøvold (1944:83) found for Vestfold as a whole. However, there are major contrasts between different districts of Vestfold. By and large, the coastal districts have a clear majority of Early-Viking-age graves. For Tjølling (except Kaupang) the ratio is 14:5, while for the neighbouring districts of Brunlanes and Sandeherred the ratios are 15:4 and 24:13, respectively. We find the opposite pattern in some of the inland districts in Vestfold. Thus, Andebu has no graves dating to the 9th century, and six dating to the 10th. The numbers for Lardal are five and fourteen, respectively. Only Hedrum (38:44) and Stokke (13:15) fit the pat-

tern of a slight preponderance of 10th-century graves proposed by Sjøvold, as does Kaupang (Fig. 5.11).

The difference between Kaupang and the surrounding district of Tjølling is quite remarkable, and it underlines the fact that Kaupang was no ordinary settlement in the Viking Age. In respect of the mortuary customs too, it differed from the farming areas nearby.

The large percentage of recorded graves dating to the 10th century at Kaupang cannot, therefore, be explained as being simply the result of a general increase in the number of (archaeologically recognizable) burials in the region in the 10th century. Considering also the fact that the finds from the settlement seem to indicate that it was abandoned sometime between 950 and 1000, one is struck even more by the difference. We have more graves from what might amount to not much more than the first half of the 10th century than from the whole of the 9th century. It is hard to avoid the inference that this was caused by more people living at Kaupang in its late phase than in its early phase. This inference is supported by the fact that the gender ratio in the graves changes radically during this period as well (below).

#### The late 10th century

Viking-period graves securely dated to the period after c. 950 are rare in Vestfold, with only 16 examples outside Kaupang (and none of them from Tjølling). At the recently excavated cemetery at Gulli, for instance, none of the graves seems to post-date c. 950 (Gjerpe 2005c). A maximum of four Vestfold graves can be dated to the 11th century (three of which are single finds of one axehead). Seven of the 16 graves post-dating 950 are from the inland district of Hedrum, illustrating a more general pattern for eastern Norway, i.e. that the latest furnished Viking-age graves are to be found in the interior (Larsen 1984; Stylegar 2005c).

Two of the graves from Kaupang seem to date to the period post-dating c. 950 (not counting the undatable graves Ka. 319–320 in wooden coffins, which could be late). Ka. 211 from Lamøya contained an axehead of Petersen's type L (M), dating from c. 950 into the 11th century. In the other grave, Ka. 277 from Bikjholberget, a shield-boss of type R563 implies a date after c. 950.

Neither of these datings is beyond question, however, since we owe both chronologies (axeheads and shield-bosses) to Petersen's 1919 work, and both are probably inexact in respect of absolute date. Furthermore, single axeheads are often considered unreliable for precise dating (Blindheim et al. 1999:103). Also to be considered are the 20 graves that can only be dated to the 10th century in general. Any of those graves could, of course, belong to the period 950–1000, so that the real number of graves apparently post-dating c. 950 could be higher.

Percentage of female graves in	the 9th century	the 10th century
Kaupang	58	24
Hedrum	47	13
Sem	39	13
Stokke	38	24
Brunlanes	38	25
Sandar	20	11
Lardal/Hof	31	5
Borre/Botne/Våle/ Ramnes/Andebu	25	20

Figure 5.12 Table of the gender ratio in the Kaupang cemeteries as compared with other areas of Vestfold.

Nevertheless, the general lack of burials having artefact-types with a definitive dating to after c. 950 probably indicates that the cemeteries at Kaupang stopped being used regularly for burials around this time. In this, the Kaupang cemeteries are not very different from the majority of cemeteries in the coastal districts in Vestfold. In this light, Blindheim's suggested end-date for the cemeteries of around c. 950 seems reasonable (Blindheim et al. 1999:162). One must bear in mind, however, that she based (1999:153) this on the axehead found at Lamøya, and suggested an end-date for Bikjholberget of c. 930/940 – despite the late shield-boss there.

#### 5.4 The dead

##### The gendered burials

Ellen Højgård Hofseth (1999) has drawn attention to the relatively high number of female graves at Kaupang. Indeed, at first sight, the proportion of female graves at Kaupang seems extraordinary compared to that in most regions of Norway; however, there are some chronological and interpretative issues worth exploring.

In Vestfold as a whole, female graves account for a quarter of the gendered graves – similar to many other coastal districts (cf. Dommasnes 1982; Hofseth 1999). But female graves are much more common in the region in the 9th century than in the 10th – 34% of the total number of gendered graves against 13%, respectively. This pattern is repeated in a number of other coastal districts (Dommasnes 1982:81–2).

The numbers for Kaupang exceed these figures in both the 9th and the 10th centuries. Of the 41 datable female graves, 22 can be dated to the 9th century, and 12 to the 10th. As for the 62 datable male graves from the Kaupang cemeteries, there are 16 from the 9th century and 38 from the 10th. Thus, the female graves comprise 58% (22 of 38) of the gendered graves in the 9th century, against 24% (12 of 50) in the 10th (the

graves dated to the period 850–950 cannot account for the difference; of the 15 graves in question, eight are male and seven are female). Even if these are median values for all the Kaupang cemeteries, at Bikjholberget, the only cemetery with a significant number of datable, gendered graves seem to conform to this pattern. Thus, of 53 gendered and datable graves at Bikjholberget, female graves comprise 50% of the graves in the 9th century, and 25% in the 10th century. It is clear from this that the Kaupang cemeteries seem to have a substantially higher proportion of female burials both in the 9th and the 10th century than cemeteries in the rest of Vestfold, although there are considerable local differences in this respect, and some areas show a rather similar pattern as Kaupang (Fig. 5.12).

How can one account for these differences? There are really four different questions to be answered. First, why is it that male burials apparently outnumber female ones in the Vestfold material – and even more so in the Norwegian material as a whole – even though Vestfold and the coastal districts of Østfold, just across the Oslofjord, have a higher proportion of female graves than the rest of the country throughout the Viking Age? Second, where are the women? Third, why is it that the number of female graves relative to male graves decreases from the 9th century to the 10th? Fourth and finally, why are there more female graves at Kaupang than in the rest of Vestfold?

The gender ratios from Kaupang and Vestfold are at odds with results from other areas of Scandinavia. Starting with Birka, Gräslund (1980:82) finds that 58% of the inhumations are female, against 61% of the cremations, although she suggests that the real distribution might be closer to 50:50. Of 113 10th- and 11th-century graves at Barshalder in Gotland, 37% were female, 49% male and 14% gender neutral (Rundkvist 2003:79). A study of a sample of 76 sexed skeletons from Hedeby concluded that 62% were male (Sellevold et al. 1984:214). Other southern Scandinavian cemeteries also show a predominance of men: Stengade II (53%), Kaagaarden (63%) and Bogø-vej (61%), while there are relatively more women at Lejre (61%) and Hesselbjerg (58%) (Sellevold et al. 1984:214–15; Bennike 1994:169). With the exception of Birka and Barshalder, these studies are based on skeletal material – what we have here, therefore, are *sexed* burials, not gendered ones. Not just the Kaupang material and the rest of the material from Vestfold, but all the Norwegian material – based as it is on the presence of gender-specific artefacts in the graves – is biased relative to the southern Scandinavian evidence, and therefore the two cannot really be compared on equal terms. It is a telling fact that Per Holck's physical anthropological analysis of Late Iron-age cremations in south-eastern Norway, although it could ascribe only 42 burials from the period to either sex, concluded that 62% of the cremation burials were actually female (Holck 1986:catalogue).



At Kaupang, the gendered burials account for only some of the dated burials, while, more importantly, the dated burials themselves account only for a minor part of the total number of burials. Thus, the gendered burials form a rather small exclusive category, and therefore one must be careful when assuming that gendered burials are the same as sexed graves. Herein lies the answer to the first and third questions asked above. In principle, one would expect a more or less equal distribution of male and female sexed graves. The reason we do not find an equal distribution in Vestfold probably has to do with the difference between sexed and gendered graves, i.e. more males than females were buried with gender-specific artefacts, or, more likely, more males than females were buried with gender-specific artefacts that are preserved and can be recovered by archaeologists.

There is a clear correlation between areas with a substantial number of professionally excavated graves and those with a relatively high proportion of graves gendered (identified) as graves of females. This is evident in those parts of Vestfold where only a few professional excavations have taken place, and the proportion of male graves is very high. A corroded sword or axe is easier to notice when ploughing than the remains of an copper-alloy oval brooch or a few beads. So, when we find that 58% (9th century) and 24% (10th century), respectively, of the dated graves at Kaupang are graves of females, these relatively high figures are due mainly to the substantial number of graves archaeologically investigated at Kaupang. As for the relative decrease in the gendered female graves in the 10th century, it would be tempting to attribute this to an influx of males at Kaupang in the late period. However, the decrease can be matched in Vestfold as a whole, as indeed in most of Norway (Dommasnes 1982:81–3). A more likely explanation would seem to be either a real decrease in gendered female burials compared to male, or a change in the way female graves were gendered; the latter could result, for instance, from the partial and gradual abandonment of oval brooches as part of the female dress in the 10th century, under influence from Frankish and/or Byzantine single-brooch costumes (Hedeager Krag 1994; cf. Ingstad 1999:243–4). It is also a distinct possibility that, at any point through the Viking Age, female dress customs were rather more varied than is often assumed (Martens 1969:88; see also Blindheim 1947:117–18). A survey of the Viking-age evidence from Denmark indicates that the poorest and the richest women, as implied by their grave furnishings, did not wear oval brooches (Hedeager Madsen 1990:104).

### Weapon combinations

The weapon combinations show some interesting patterns. A total of 79 graves at Kaupang contained weapons (hereafter referred to as weapon graves). Of

these graves, 55 could be dated, 17 (31%) to the 9th century and 38 (69%) to the 10th; the remaining 24 graves could not with any certainty be dated to either of these two periods. In other words, 69% of the dated weapon graves at Kaupang date to the 10th century. The percentages for the rest of Vestfold are very different; of 240 datable weapon graves in the rest of Vestfold, 121 (50.4%) date to the 9th century and 119 (49.6%) to the 10th, virtually an equal distribution between the two periods.

In the 9th-century weapon graves from Kaupang, granted that the number (17) is low, there is an apparently even distribution of the various weapon combinations. The full combination sword/spear/axe occurs in four (23.5%) graves. Another four graves contain a spear only, while three (17.6%) graves contain the sword/spear combination. Two (11.7%) graves contain the sword/axe combination, and one (5.9%) grave contains the spear/axe combination.

The situation of the 38 weapon graves dated to the 10th century is very different; a total of 13 (34%) of these weapon graves contained the full range of offensive weapons. The other combinations range from three to six instances. On the other hand, a total of nine (24%) of the 9th century weapon graves contained the full weapon combination. Both these numbers (24% and 34%) are above the average for Vestfold (12 and 24%, respectively), but the 10th century percentage more so. In fact, the relative number of graves with the three types of offensive weapons at Kaupang in the 10th century is, to the best of my knowledge, unsurpassed in Norway. The single axe, so common in most of Norway, barely registers in the Kaupang cemeteries (Stylegar 2005b). This is a trait (or rather a lack thereof) found in other areas bordering at the Oslofjord too. Ka. 6 from Nordre Kaupang has three shield-bosses (Grieg 1947:20), but we cannot exclude the possibility that more than one cremated individual was buried in this barrow. Nevertheless, the 10th-century male Kaupang graves are extremely rich in weaponry.

The total number of burials is too low to draw any conclusions regarding possible differences between the cemeteries at Kaupang, but my impression is that the general observations made above hold true for each of the cemeteries. This is certainly the case for the three cemeteries with the vast majority of the weapon graves, i.e. Nordre Kaupang, Søndre Kaupang and Bikjholberget.

The increase in the number of weapons that accompany each burial from the 9th to the 10th century cannot be ascribed to a general increase in the volume of grave furnishings. The NAT (Number of Artefact-types), at least, is the same for the two periods: with a median value of seven.

Single weapons were found in a number of female gendered graves as well. Four of Nicolaysen's graves at Nordre Kaupang contained an axehead combined

Figure 5.13 *Artefacts from Ka. 254, perhaps representing the costume of a woman of Eastern origins. Photo, Eirik Irgens Johnsen, KHM.*

with oval brooches. This is also the case with five graves in Bikjholberget. While the former cremations might be double graves, the latter are certainly women's graves. Furthermore, at least two gendered female graves each contained a spear, and in two instances a shield-boss was found. The axes might of course have a double function as weapons and everyday tools, and the latter may account for their presence in female graves. For the spearheads and shield-bosses in female graves, an interpretation along the line suggested by Guttman, i.e. a connection with Valkyrie symbolism, seems possible (Guttman 2004). One grave from south-eastern Norway may be mentioned in this respect: C22541 from Åsnes, Hedmark – a sexed female grave with a “full” range of weapons (Hernæs and Holck 1984). In western Norway a small number of otherwise female gendered graves contain “male” artefacts (Dommasnes 1982:77), and the same phenomenon is known from other areas too (see, e.g., Rygh 1910:16–18).

#### **The chronology of the imported finds**

Chronological aspects of the imported finds in the Kaupang graves, especially the Insular artefacts, were dealt with at length by the original excavators (Blindheim 1976a; Blindheim et al. 1981:175–80, 1999:47–57).

In total, objects with a western Continental (including Ribe) provenance have been found in 27 datable graves (Ka. 4, 14, 37, 125, 126, 150, 157, 203, 210, 254–255, 257, 259, 277, 283–284, 287, 290, 293, 301, 304–306, 310, 316, 322, 400). Insular objects have been found in 18 datable graves (Ka. 6, 8, 157, 210, 219, 250, 253, 263, 264, 268, 279, 283, 295, 298, 300–301, 304, 306), and Eastern (i.e. including Finnish and Slavonic) in 14 datable graves (Ka. 4, 5, 6, 8, 126, 203, 254, 277, 280, 282, 286, 290, 299, 301, 307). In earlier publications, the importance and quantity of the Insular imports in the graves was sometimes overstated, as pointed

out by Blindheim (et al. 1999:57). The fact is that Continental objects dominate the range of imported material in the graves, followed by Insular and Eastern objects. The numerical differences seem significant.

Thirty-eight finds with foreign objects can be dated to the 9th century. They derive from altogether 29 graves. The numbers for the 10th century are 21 items in 16 graves. The chronology of the graves is not precise enough to study the chronological distribution of the imported finds in any great detail. It is, for instance, difficult to establish whether there was an increase in imports between the early and later phase of the settlement's life-span. This could be the case, given that the 10th-century graves cover a much shorter time span than the 9th-century ones. The possible increase in imports deposited in the graves in the 10th century in comparison with the 9th cannot be attributed to a general increase in the number of objects deposited in the graves, as the NAT is constant over time (above).

However, the origin of the imported finds seems to change over time, and this fact is significant in that it reflects chronological variation in the external contacts of the settlement. The dominance of Continental finds is actually a 9th-century phenomenon. Twenty-one of the Continental imports were in 9th-century graves, as against seven of the Eastern objects and 10 Insular. In the 10th-century graves, the numbers are six, seven, and eight. A pattern seems to emerge, with imports from the Continent being predominant in the 9th-century graves, with Insular and Eastern objects falling some way behind, while Insular, Eastern, and Continental imports are of equal importance in the 10th century.

Objects made of amber are not considered in these numbers. The raw material for these objects is definitely from the Baltic area, but it is not clear from exactly where. It could be present-day Denmark or it





could be areas further east. There are 12 graves with objects of amber in them (beads in all cases but one: the spindle-whorl in Ka. 285). The amber finds are equally distributed between the 9th and the 10th centuries.

Only in a few cases do we have any indication that individuals buried at Kaupang were of foreign origin. This might be the case with the gendered female graves Ka. 126, 259 and 280, as none of those contained a pair of oval brooches (Blindheim et al. 1999:45–6). But the absence of oval brooches is no sure sign of “foreignness” in these parts. As noted above, oval brooches were not necessarily worn by all: for instance, some 25% of the gendered female graves in southern Vestfold have *beads* as the only pieces of jewellery (Stylegar, in prep. a). These three graves, however, do stand out from the Vestfold material generally in terms of their furnishings, and may well represent foreigners. This holds for Ka. 254 as well, as this grave has a quite obvious Eastern character, but does include a pair of oval brooches too (Fig. 5.13).

#### Population estimate

How many people might have lived at Kaupang in the Viking Age? The formula  $P = a \times b/c$ , alternatively  $P = (a \times b/c) \times 1.1$ , where  $a$  is total the number of graves,  $b$  is the average life expectancy at birth, and  $c$  is the number of years the cemetery was used (Acsádi and

Nemeskéri 1957, 1970), has recently been put to use in Scandinavian archaeology to estimate the size of the population burying their dead in particular cemeteries (Ravn 2003:48–49; Rundkvist 2003:79–80). Similar calculations have been made for Birka (Gräslund 1980:82–83) and Hedeby (Randsborg 1980:80).

A particular difficulty encountered when trying to estimate the population of Kaupang and other early towns is the question of seasonal variation (Gräslund 1980:83). Gräslund is probably right to argue that what she refers to as “casual visitors” are actually under-represented in the burial archaeology. Thus, the cemeteries at Kaupang to all practical purposes reflect the permanent population in the town, and there can be no satisfactory basis for an estimate of Kaupang’s population during its primary season.

However, the churchyard with about a thousand burials, of which almost half have been excavated at the seasonal trading site of Sebbesund, might inspire considerable caution, even if this might have been a churchyard for a parish of unknown size, and not (only) a cemetery for people visiting the market (Christensen and Johansen 1992; Birkedahl and Johansen 1995:161). But there really is a question whether seasonal market-places had cemeteries at all in the Viking Age proper. Sebbesund apparently did not; while the site seems to gain a regional significance from about AD 700, there are no known graves

pre-dating the establishment of the Christian churchyard around AD 1000 (Christensen and Johansen 1992). No cemetery has been discovered at Åhus in Skåne, nor at the non-urban trading site of Löddeköpinge, or at Paviken in Gotland (Clarke and Ambrosiani 1995:54, 64 and 85). Only Fröjel and some of the other harbours in Gotland with limited craft and trade activity in the Viking Age seem to have had cemeteries (Clarke and Ambrosiani 1995:85).

A problem specific to Kaupang is that no precise total number of graves is known. There are 407 documented graves, while estimates for the original number of graves range from c. 700 to c. 1,000 (above). Furthermore, while the total life-span of the cemeteries is c. AD 800–950, there is arguably some room for alternative possibilities in this respect, and the real answer may be a few years before or after 800 and a few years before or after 950, perhaps as early as 930/940 (above). Still, it is useful to make some estimates based on these numbers. A third problem springs from the fact that we cannot know for certain if all the cemeteries were used exclusively – or at all – by the people living in the settlement. Doubt has for instance been cast on whether the major barrow cemetery at Nordre Kaupang “belonged” to the settlement in a strict sense (Skre, this vol. Ch. 16:377–83; cf. Ambrosiani 1986). I would argue that similar considerations apply to other Early Viking-age urban settlements, as well – they are not specific to Kaupang. Since no one has really doubted the connection between the Nordre Kaupang cemetery and the Kaupang complex as such (Skre, this vol. Ch. 19:432–5), it seems reasonable to include all the cemeteries in the population estimates.

Working from a minimum estimate of a total of c. 700 graves, an average life-expectancy of 30 years, and a life-span of the cemeteries that equals 150 years, we get a population of c. 155 persons living at Kaupang.

To this, however, we must add an estimated number of “missing” children’s graves. Nine graves of a total of 74 at Bikjholberget were either children’s graves or double graves with a child (Ka. 262, 269, 272, 294, 298, 315, 316, 321, 322). This means that only 12% of the excavated graves at Bikjholberget contained children. This number is probably much too low as a representation of child mortality, although by no means unprecedented in the Scandinavian material. Thus, Holck only lists three children (0–14 years old) in his catalogue of Iron-age cremation burials from south-eastern Norway, while stating that children’s graves of 0–7-year-olds alone ought to comprise at least 35% of the material (Holck 1986:108–9, catalogue). At Birka, Gräslund (1980:82) notes 17% children’s graves amongst the inhumations. Acsádi and Nemeskéri (1970:236–51) find that children comprised 40% of the population in the period, on the basis of skeletal material from European cemeteries from the Iron Age and Middle Ages. Since children

are underrepresented at the Danish cemetery of Hjemsted, Mads Ravn adds 40% to the calculated population in his study (2003:49). Martin Rundkvist (2003:79–80) assumes a child mortality of 45%, and so adds 45% to the number of dead (adult) individuals in his calculation for Barshalder in Gotland.

Following up on our minimum proposal, then, let us add 30% to our 700 graves/dead individuals. This gives us c. 200 people living at Kaupang. Holck’s analysis (1986:104), however, indicates that the average life-expectancy actually was closer to 40 years, i.e. 37.2 for men and 33.5 for women. Using 35 years, the estimated minimum population increases to c. 235.

The number could be considerably higher. A thousand graves, a life-expectancy of 40 years, and a 130-year life-span for the cemeteries give us c. 440 people, and this retains the modest estimate of child mortality at 30%. If child mortality was at 45%, the population estimate rises to c. 490 people. But the number of 10th-century graves compared with the number of graves from the whole of the preceding century calls for some caution in this respect, even if there are some unresolved matters regarding absolute chronology (above). If we apply the parameters of the earlier calculations to the 10th century alone (an average life-expectancy of 35 years and child mortality at 30%), and assume that the total number of graves belonging to the first three decades of the 10th century is 500, we get a total population in the heyday of Kaupang of c. 830 people. Again, this does not seem an improbable figure.

Under any circumstances, the population at Kaupang seems to have been considerably larger in the early 10th century (i.e. in the Middle Viking Age) than a century before. It is probably not too wild a guess that the number of people staying at Kaupang in the early 10th century could at times reach over a thousand.

Furthermore, there is every reason to believe that a substantial proportion of the adult population were unfree individuals, who were probably not given any burial at all (cf. Skre 1998b:228–30; Rundkvist 2003:80). To the town’s total free population should thus, very probably, be added a considerable number of slaves.

### 5.5 Horizontal stratigraphy

There is little to say about the horizontal stratigraphy of the cemeteries – in the case of the cemetery at Søndre Kaupang, nothing at all, in fact. Concerning the cemetery at Hagejordet, the only certain thing one can say is that it was not established at the beginning of the settlement; the dated burials there, however, do not indicate precisely when it was established, but it was probably during the 9th century. A number of observations can be made in respect of the other three cemeteries, however.

At Nordre Kaupang, only three of the datable



graves from Nicolaysen's campaign derive from the 9th century; all the others from his campaign are from the 10th (Fig. 5.10). Two of the three 9th-century graves are located in the middle part of the cemetery (Ka. 5 and 14). Another grave (Ka. 37) was excavated in 1965 and dates to the second half of the 9th century. This is the southernmost grave in the cemetery. When it was excavated in 1965, ploughmarks were observed below the cremation layer (Blindheim et al. 1981:54, fig. 5, 55), indicating that the southernmost part of Nordre Kaupang was not established until well into the lifespan of the settlement. However, most of the excavated graves in the southern part of the cemetery cannot be precisely dated. There is a clustering of possibly late (i.e. 10th-century) graves in the northern part of the cemetery. Also, it seems likely that the four very large, but undated barrows at Nordre Kaupang, Nicolaysen's nos. 50, 51, 53 and 61, are among the oldest in the cemetery, since this cluster of large barrows was obviously built at a time when there was a large open space available in the cemetery. Several smaller barrows have been built around them. When Ka. 37 was excavated in 1965, ploughmarks were observed below the cremation layer (Blindheim et al. 1981:54, fig. 5, 55), indicating that the southernmost part of the major barrow cemetery at Nordre Kaupang was not established until well into the lifespan of the settlement.

At Bikjholberget, there seems to be a discernible horizontal stratigraphy in the more southerly of the two excavated areas, which is dominated by 10th-century graves. The exception is barrow burial Ka. 200 which may date to the 9th century. This barrow seems to have been a focal point for the more recent graves Ka. 291 and Ka. 313, as well as for the undated wooden coffin burials Ka. 319. and 320 (Blindheim et al. 1995:15, fig. 3). It seems that while the 9th-century graves are concentrated in certain areas of this part of the cemetery, the later graves are found all over the cemetery. In the excavated area to the north, there is a preponderance of 9th-century graves in the western part of the excavated area while graves dating to the 10th century are predominant in the eastern part (Blindheim et al. 1999:146). There is, however, no clear-cut distribution pattern.

At Lamøya, there is a clear preponderance of 10th-century graves. There are only three 9th century graves which were found in two different find-spots located at a considerable distance from one another. One find-spot, a barrow, contained two of these three graves. As the 10th-century graves at Lamøya clearly outnumber the 9th century graves, the pattern could very well be similar to that suggested for Bikjholberget immediately above.

Thus the limited number of cemeteries recognizable at Kaupang in modern times may originally – although this cannot yet be proven – have consisted of many smaller grave clusters that only gradually

merged into the later, continuous spread (cf. Gräslund 1980:73).

## 5.6 Mortuary customs

### The treatment of the body

As pointed out in the preceding pages, all the known burials at Bikjholberget are inhumations. At both Nordre and Søndre Kaupang, all the burials are cremations. At Hagejordet, three of the burials are cremations, against one inhumation. Of the four graves that can only be attributed to Nordre Kaupang (i.e. either Nordre Kaupang, Hagejordet, or Bikjholberget), three are inhumations. It is likely, but we cannot know for certain, that these three inhumations were recovered from either Hagejordet or Bikjholberget. At Lamøya the picture is more mixed: four of the burials are cremations, and six inhumations.

The preponderance of one type of body treatment over the other (i.e. cremation or inhumation) varies considerably between the many ritual systems of Viking-age Scandinavia (Svanberg 2003). In Vestfold, as in southern and eastern Norway as a whole, and in Sweden, cremation is clearly preponderant. For example, according to one estimate, only one in five burials in Vestfold is an inhumation (Sjøvold 1944); other researchers have suggested one in every four burials (Larsen 1982:105; see also Forseth 1993). On the other hand, further west, inhumations are as common as cremations (Schetelig 1912). In northern Norway things change again; there, inhumations are very preponderant, i.e. there are almost no cremations (Sjøvold 1974). In most of Denmark too, inhumation is almost universal, but in northern Jutland, particularly, there is a significant level of cremation (Brøndsted 1936; Ramskou 1950).

### The external structure of the graves

Barrows and flat graves are unevenly distributed at the Kaupang cemeteries. Barrows are predominant in Nordre Kaupang, and flat graves at Bikjholberget, while there is no way at this stage to decide the relative distribution of barrows and flat graves at Søndre Kaupang and Lamøya. So far, we know of no flat graves at either Vikingholmen or Bjønnes (the possible examples in Bjønnes mentioned in Blindheim et al. 1981:51 are probably cooking pits).

Amongst the barrows, the round type predominates. Of 115 barrows at Nordre Kaupang and Hagejordet in 1867, 90 were round. Three of the eight barrows excavated by Nicolaysen at Søndre Kaupang were long barrows. Three of the 94 remaining burial mounds at Lamøya are long barrows. A quite remarkable fact is that all of the excavated long barrows at Nordre Kaupang that contained gendered graves, contained *female* graves (Ka. 3, 10, 14, 16 and 22). This was the case at Søndre Kaupang as well (Ka. 155; discussed in Blindheim et al. 1981:57). The same pattern

is known from other areas in Norway in both the Viking and pre-Viking Age (Gustafson 1993).

The flat graves at Bikjholberget were covered by stone packings. The flat graves at Søndre Kaupang, and possibly some at Hagejordet, seem to have been covered by horizontal stone slabs.

There was one four-sided stone setting at southern Bikjholberget. At Lamøya two circular stone settings are known, and one at Bjønnes. As pointed out above, the latter is probably the monument mentioned by Nicolaysen in 1893 (1894a:177). As early as 1852, P. A. Munch mentioned a small stone setting "down at the harbour" in the Kaupang area (Munch 1852:382, n. 1). This could be the circular stone setting at Bjønnes, or it might have been a now lost monument or the small ship-setting documented by Zeuthen in 1845 (above). Contrary to what was once believed (Blindheim et al. 1981:91), there actually was a ship-setting at Kaupang. It was drawn by Zeuthen in 1845 but was gone when Christie made his plan of the main cemetery at Nordre Kaupang in 1866. Furthermore, there are also four or five boat-shaped stone settings (in Norwegian *båtformede steinlegninger*) at Bjønnes. A third stone setting at Lamøya could be boat-shaped, too. Of all the stone settings at Kaupang, only the four-sided one at southern Bikjholberget has been excavated. It contained a boat grave (Ka. 294–296).

Both the ship-settings and the boat-shaped stone settings in present-day Norway have a clear and strong southeasterly distribution. With only a few exceptions they are found in the districts bordering on the Oslofjord – most of them in Vestfold, where the 45 m long ship-setting at Elgesem in Sandefjord is the largest one remaining. Ship-settings are quite common in southern Scandinavia outside of Norway, as at Blomsholm in western Sweden, Lindholm Høje in Jutland, and Lejre on Sjælland (Andersen 1995; Artelius 1996). More than 2,000 examples are known (Capelle 2004). Several such monuments have been excavated at Birka (Gräslund 1980:70). In Jutland, 138 of the 589 excavated graves at Lindholm Høje were ship-settings (Ramskou 1976). They are also known from the Baltic area, for instance in the Slavonic settlement of Menzlin by the Oderhaff in Mecklenburg (Herrmann 1982:101). As for the four-sided stone settings (in Norwegian *firkantede steinlegninger*), these are not common in Norway (although not entirely absent: see Martens 1969), but quite widespread in Sweden, especially in the western parts of southern Sweden, where they tend to be associated with circular stone settings and raised stones (Burenhult 2000:256). There are several four-sided stone settings at Birka (Gräslund 1980:68).

### The alignment of the graves

Only in the inhumation cemetery at Bikjholberget, which is still being systematically excavated, is it pos-

sible to study the alignment of the graves in any detail.

The vast majority of the graves at Bikjholberget are aligned NNE–SSW or N–S. Of the 22 datable graves, this is the case with 17 (Ka. 252, 257–259, 267, 277, 282, 291, 292, 294–296, 298–300, 301 and 302, 303 and 304, 305, 308, 310 and 311, 315 and 316 – six of these are boats with more than one grave). A N–S alignment is more common in the 9th century graves amongst these (six out of nine graves), while a NNE–SSW alignment dominates in the 10th (seven out of 11 graves). Only four graves have an E.–W. orientation (Ka. 269, 270, 278, 309). Ka. 269 probably dates to the 9th century, the three others to the 10th. Among the E.–W. oriented graves there is only one "ordinary" boat grave (Ka. 309); the other graves in question are two log coffins (Ka. 269 and 278), and a possible chamber grave (Ka. 270). The boat grave, Ka. 307, which has a chamber, is also oriented E.–W.; this grave, however, is of the late 9th or the early 10th century.

An N.–S. alignment of the grave/body is found in the overwhelming majority of inhumation graves in Vestfold. Sjøvold (1944:71) does not know any oriented (E.–W.) Viking-period graves at all in the region.

There does not seem to be any system in the alignment of differently gendered burials at Bikjholberget; only a (minor) chronological difference. However, there is no obvious chronological system to the alignment of the other types of grave at Bikjholberget.

### The internal structure of the graves

The cremation burials at Kaupang belong to two types: urned and unurned. Only two graves are of the former type. In Ka. 1, a soapstone vessel served as an urn, while an oval brooch was put to the same use in Ka. 16. Both graves are from the main cemetery at Nordre Kaupang. All the other cremation burials at Kaupang, then, are unurned cremation deposits. Such cremation deposits are the most common of all the Viking-age grave-forms in Scandinavia. Urned deposits are very rare in Vestfold, as, indeed, in Norway as a whole (such burials only occur with any regularity in Østfold and Akershus: Stylegar, in prep. b). There are only three examples in Vestfold other than at Kaupang: a soapstone vessel from an equestrian grave from Skatveit, Andebu (C8877–78) and iron cauldrons from Lille Gullkronen, Sem (C22441; see Grieg 1923:5–6, 34), and Tanum, Lardal (C2708–23).

All the cremations at Kaupang are in barrows, while inhumations occur both in barrows and as flat graves. In comparison with the cremations, the inhumation burials at Kaupang exhibit much greater variation. A large number of different forms can be discerned.

### The stone cist Ka. 290

Ka. 290 was found inside a stone cist in a barrow at



Bikjholberget. Although a form first and foremost associated with Late Roman- and Migration-period graves in Vestfold, Viking-age cist burials are known in the region, but only in exceptional cases, and then only in the districts bordering on Kaupang. They are more common further west, however, and particularly in northern Norway, where in some areas burials with cists are as common as burials without (Sjøvold 1974).

#### *The wooden coffins Ka. 271, 315, 318–320 and 322*

Six wooden coffins were recovered from the excavated parts of the cemetery at Bikjholberget, one from the northern part (Ka. 271), and five from the southern part (Ka. 315, 318–320, 322). Three of these can be dated; two are of the 9th century (Ka. 315, 322), and one of the 10th (Ka. 271).

The coffins were mostly in a poor state of preservation, but it seems that rectangular coffins were predominant. One coffin may have originally been square (Ka. 322).

Four of the five coffins from Bikjholberget were found relatively close together in the southern part of the site. In exactly the same area two other rather special grave-forms were also represented (Ka. 313–314, 316, below).

#### *The chest Ka. 316*

In the case of Ka. 316 from Bikjholberget, a domestic storage chest (type Oseberg 149) was used as a coffin (Fig 16). Only two iron hinges, two iron hasps, 12 iron nails, and a lock fitting with tin-coated nails attached were left of the chest, which had had a length of 125–140 cm, a width of 65–75 cm and a height of 20–30 cm (Blindheim et al. 1999:101–2). From the shape of the hasps, the lid must have been vaulted (*ibid.*).

Ka. 316 dates to the 9th century, probably to the second half of that century. One adult, a gendered male to judge by the grave goods, was buried in the chest together with a child. Chests were used primarily as furniture for storage or for travelling throughout the Viking Age and later. In some instances they could have a secondary function as coffins. Besides Ka. 316 from Kaupang, domestic storage chests were used in this way at Fyrkat, Lejre and Forlev in Denmark (Brøndsted 1936; Roesdahl 1977:130), as well as in at least four cases at York (Richards et al. 1995). Similar instances are known from Råga Hörstad in Skåne and Oldenburg in Schleswig-Holstein (Strömberg 1968: 20; Kleiminger 1993:116).

The chests found at Lejre and Fyrkat had both been broken in order to facilitate the insertion of extended adult corpses. The body in the Forlev chest was laid out with knees bent, and this was most likely the case in Ka. 316 as well.

The horse burial Ka. 317, found in a separate pit to the south of Ka. 316, should probably be associated

with this grave. Similar offerings associated with human burials are known from Hedrum (Stylegar 2005a, 2006).

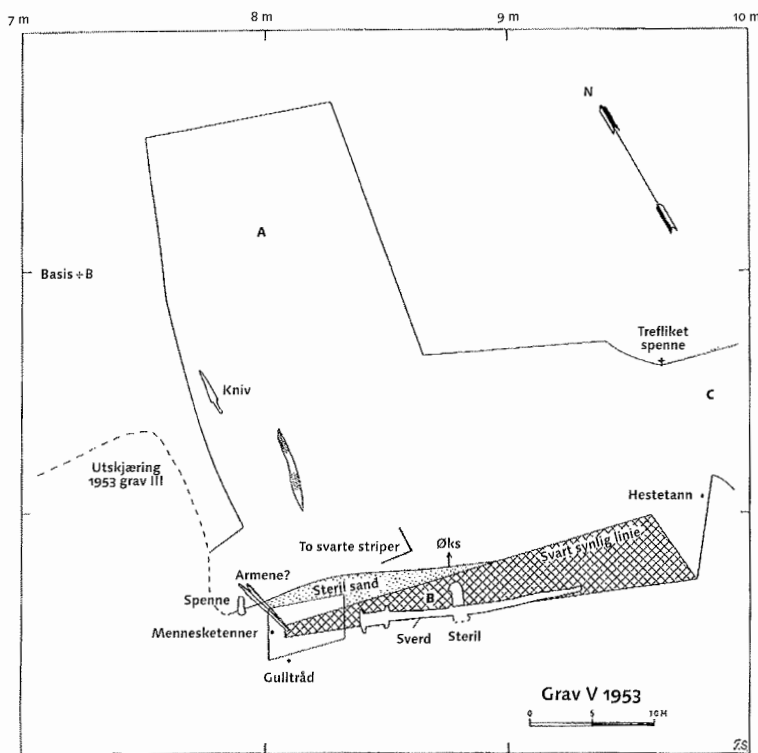
An axe was found embedded in the grave Ka. 316, chopped into the ground outside the chest. Other examples of this rite are known from Kaupang, all of them involving axes, and all from southern Bikjholberget: Ka. 298, Ka. 299 and Ka. 305. Spearheads were found embedded in the side walls of some of the inhumation graves at Birka, while in some cases a weapon had been thrust into unurned cremation patches (Gräslund 1980:30–31, 76). A phenomenon similar to the latter, and involving swords as well as spears, was observed in the cemetery at Kvarnbacken, Åland (Kivikoski 1963:68). An example involving an axe was found at Birka (Gräslund 1980:76). In Bogøvej Grave P, Langeland, a knife was found embedded in the bottom of the grave-pit (Grøn et al. 1994:15). A similar phenomenon, but involving a sword, is known from Husby-Långhundra in Sweden (Sundqvist 1993:156). It has recently been argued that embedded weapons in Viking-age graves may be the remains of a rite designed to commit the deceased to Odin, and thereby to convey him or her to a favourable existence in the Other World (Nordberg 2002).

#### *The trough-sleds Ka. 313–314*

In two other graves from southern Bikjholberget, Ka. 313–314, what have been described as boats cut in half functioned as coffins (Blindheim et al. 1995:41–2). The boat-shaped structure in Ka. 313 was c. 2 m long (it could have been closer to 3 m), and up to 70–80 cm wide. There were traces of two ribs, but the concentration of nails at the stem characteristic of clinker-built boats is conspicuously absent. Ka. 314 was somewhat shorter than Ka. 313, and c. 65 cm wide. There was no obvious system to the distribution of nails.

Burials in half-boats are known from the Viking-age archaeological record, as at Tømmerby and Gammelby in Denmark (Müller-Wille 1970:26). However, in connexion with the “half-boats” from Birka, Anne-Sofie Gräslund (1980:25) suggests that these were in fact “single-runner sleds” or *akjas*. Blindheim considered it unlikely that anyone would have been buried in a Saami sled-type at Kaupang (Blindheim et al. 1995:98). While the latter viewpoint is probably unjustified, based, as it was, on the modern-day distribution of the Saami, it is nonetheless very probable that the boat-shaped sledge was employed by other peoples in Scandinavia besides the Saami (Berg 1935:24).

However, the absence of any obvious system to the distribution of nails in Ka. 314, and the generally small number of nails and rivets in both graves (23 in Ka. 313, 9 in Ka. 314), do point to an alternative interpretation to Blindheim’s. Indeed, the form of the structures in Ka. 313–314 is very similar to the so-called trough-sleds (Berg 1935:pl II, 1–2). This type of



sled is known from western Norway from comparatively recent times (Berg 1935:25; regarding the use of sleds for burial, see Sindbæk 2003).

#### *The log coffins Ka. 269 and 278*

In two graves at Nordre Bikjholberget, hollowed-out logs were used for coffins. The coffin in Ka. 269 measured c. 2 m x 0.3, while that in Ka. 278 was c. 1.9 m x 0.6. Four nails were found in Ka. 269. Log coffins are known from a few southern Scandinavian cemeteries – Råga Hörstad in Skåne, and Stengade in Langeland (Strömberg 1968:29; Skaarup 1976:164), to name but two. The dimensions of the coffins in Råga Hörstad are comparable to those from Kaupang: 1.7–1.8 m x 0.56–0.6 (Strömberg 1968:29). One might also refer to a small group of trough-like coffins at Sebbesund (Nielsen 2004:110).

A type of coffin very similar to the ones from Kaupang has been found at Gulli in Tønsberg, Vestfold. Like the coffin in Ka. 269, this grave contained a row of nails, and the excavator has interpreted the find as a burial in a log boat, with the nails having been used for repairs (Gjerpe 2005c:21). Log-boat coffins are otherwise very rare in the Scandinavian material; however, a couple of instances where log boats were indeed used as coffins are known from Røsta in Ås, Jämtland (Kjellmark 1906:354–5; the Røsta cemetery is possibly a Saami one, see Zachrisson 2006), and from Sala in Västmanland (Müller-Wille 1970:no. 141–2).

#### *Graves without coffins*

Three inhumations at Nordre Bikjholberget (Ka. 274–276) were without any kind of coffin – and without any furnishings. The skeletons were found in twisted positions. The bodies had been placed directly in pits, and their feet may have been tied together (Blindheim et al. 1995:130).

Comparable graves are known: for instance Grave 363 in Fjälkinge, Skåne (Svanberg 2003:303); Bogøvej Grave P on Langeland (Grøn et al. 1994:14–15), Kalmargården in Sjælland and the southern cemetery at Fröjel, Gotland (Carlsson 1999:109–10). One might compare them to the “deviant” burials of Anglo-Saxon archaeology (Geake 1992:87–9).

At least one, perhaps two, of the skeletons is that of a male (Blindheim et al. 1995:130). Blindheim (et al. 1995:130–2) suggested that the skeletons in the graves without coffins could have been thralls. It may be significant that the presumed decapitated thralls in the graves from Lejre and Stengade II both were male (Andersen 1960:26; Skaarup 1976:56–8). For Langeland, it has been suggested that the dominance of male individuals in the graves without coffins is due to the fact that these were thralls’ burials, and that the local community was importing male thralls to make up for the considerable number of men who were absent due to Viking activities (Grøn et al. 1994:151). On the other hand, Dan Carlsson suggests in the case of his material from Fröjel that the burials in the southern cemetery – which includes both burials where the dead had been placed face down in the



Figure 5.14 Blindheim's drawing of the chamber grave Ka. 270. From Blindheim et al. 1995.

Figure 5.15 Chamber graves in Vestfold. Map, Anne Engesveen.

grave, and decapitated burials – are actually indicative of this and other similar sites' judicial functions, an interpretation that would seem to fit the situation at Kaupang as well (Carlsson 1999:158). A slightly later parallel, possibly also reflecting judicial authority, is known from the Danish site of Tissø, where two decapitated individuals were buried to the south of the manor site, near a river crossing (Jørgensen 2002:244).

#### *The chamber grave Ka. 270*

Ka. 270 from Nordre Bikjholberget was described alternately as a "chamber grave" and a "coffin grave" by Blindheim, with reference to Gräslund's terminology (Blindheim et al. 1995:76, 110–11; cf. Gräslund 1980). Here, we are dealing with a rectangular, c. 2 m x 1.2 pit cut deep into the ground, i.e. c. 1.2 m (Fig. 5.14). This shaft is oriented E.–W. To the north, from the western end of the main pit, there is a rectangular extension, measuring c. 0.8 m x 1.2. Lots of rivets and nails were found at the southern end of the pit; a number of others, although fewer, were noted all over the structure. The nails indicate that the walls of the pit were originally lined with planks, as suggested by Blindheim (et al. 1995:72).

Blindheim did not know of any parallel to this grave-form (et al. 1995:110–11). However, assuming that the description of the grave is accurate, we have an obvious parallel in the material from Nordre Farmen in Hedrum, excavated by Nicolaysen in 1887 (Nicolaysen 1888; cf. Sjøvold 1944:47; Stylegar 2005a).



The latter is an undated grave with a horse skeleton. I would, however, like to suggest an alternative interpretation of Ka. 270.

Viking-age chamber graves have recently been shown to be more common in Norway than previously believed (Stylegar 2005a). Of the 40 or so recognised chamber graves in the Norwegian record, only 16 have been found outside southern Vestfold, i.e. outside the districts bordering on Kaupang (Fig. 5.15). There are 15 in Hedrum alone (op. cit.). This suggests the interesting possibility that Ka. 270 might actually be a chamber grave.

The suggested wooden wall linings (and possible roof construction) support this, as does the size of the cut. Silke Eisenschmidt draws a boundary line between large coffins and chambers at a width of 1.2 m, as in our case (Eisenschmidt 1994). Two features, however, complicate this interpretation. Along the southern end of the grave was a structure interpreted

by Blindheim as a separate "chamber", broadly rectangular and measuring 1.8 m x 0.4. It was covered by a wooden structure interpreted by Blindheim as a steering oar (Blindheim et al. 1995:72). Stratigraphically, however, it cannot be ruled out – indeed, it is likely – that this rectangular structure is actually part of the bigger chamber. It seems obvious that a body was placed in this structure with its head towards the west, as attested by the presence of textiles and furnishings. The stratigraphy in this end of the chamber suggests that there was indeed a body lying in a wooden coffin here. Chamber graves with coffins are common in Denmark and northern Germany (Eisenschmidt 1994), but are unknown not only in the large number of chamber graves from Birka, but also from the Norwegian material – with one exception, the grave from Haugen in Rolvsøy, Østfold (Stylegar 2003a:358–61).

In southern Scandinavia, the chamber graves are mostly oriented E.–W. As in our case, the head is placed to the west. In Viking-age inhumation graves in Vestfold, and in areas such as Skåne and Bornholm, the head is usually placed to the north. There is, however, one detail distinguishing the Bikjholberget chamber from the Danish ones. In the latter, the coffins are almost without exception placed in the northern part of the chamber; sometimes in the middle of it. The only other case where the coffin has been placed by the southern chamber wall is the Haugen grave. Thus, we may here have a regional feature of the Oslofjord area.

What about the rectangular extension to the north, then? In Birka, the horses were usually placed on a platform, 1 or 2 feet above the bottom of the grave, and always outside the actual grave chamber. In one case the roof of the chamber extended over the horse. The horse platforms are usually of the same length as the width of the grave: the measurements vary between 1.2 and 2.1 m. There is, however, a number of exceptions where the length of the horse platform exceeds the width of the grave, in some instances substantially so. Horse platforms occur regularly in connection with the chamber graves in Vestfold, and they are always located to the north of the chamber (Stylegar 2005a). At Bikjholberget, horse teeth were indeed found both inside the chamber and in the extension, and what we have here may be an unusual horse platform (cf. Birka graves Bj 560, 946–8: Arbman 1940–1943).

Another interpretation seems more likely, though. The artefacts inside the chamber were found at different levels, indicating disturbance prior to excavation. Furthermore, traces of what could be the gable end of another coffin were observed a short way north of the head-end of the coffin by the southern wall. I would suggest that the "extension" to the north is actually a coffin grave aligned N.–S. that cut into the chamber later.

The grave in Ka. 270 was a lavishly furnished one. A gold thread found where the head was supposed to be, indicating the presence of luxurious textiles (Ingstad 1999:240; cf. Hägg 1984:65). The burial is dated to the early 10th century.

The excavators did not exclude the possibility that there may have been other plank-lined pits that went unnoticed at Bikjholberget (Blindheim et al. 1995: 111). This could, for instance, be the case with Ka. 280 and 281.

Chamber graves seem, along with ship burials, to represent a supra-regional burial ritual of an obviously aristocratic character. That this ritual was reflected in southern Vestfold in the Viking Age should come as no surprise. Hedeby and, to some degree, Birka seem to have been centres for the introduction of the chamber-grave custom in their respective hinterlands. It is credible that Kaupang should have played a similar role in Vestfold.

#### *The boat graves*

Altogether 62 burials in 46 different boats have been excavated at Kaupang. This makes Kaupang the largest concentration of boat graves in Scandinavia. These numbers are more or less in agreement with Blindheim et al. 1981. Only one (Ka. 40) of the graves excavated by Nicolaysen, however, qualifies as a boat grave according to Müller-Wille's criteria (1970), according to which a total of 51 boat graves would be identified at Kaupang. The dubious boat graves from Nicolaysen's 1867 campaign are marked as "boat grave?" in the catalogue. Of the 62 certain or possible boat graves, 12 are cremations and 50 inhumations. Most of the boat graves are gendered – 32 male, and 23 female. There are about as many from the 9th century as from the 10th – 22 and 23, respectively; and the relative distribution of the gendered graves is similar to the graves in general. There are eight male graves dating to the 9th century, against thirteen female. In the 10th century the situation is reversed and we have seventeen male graves against only six female.

The boats in the graves at Kaupang were from 4–5 to 12 m long. Wood fibres from five of the boats in southern Bikjholberget show that the vessels were made of oak (Blindheim et al. 1995:95).

Double burials occur in about 7% of the boat graves in Norway (Müller-Wille 1970:78). It is all the more remarkable that 10 of the 46 boats (i.e. more than 21%) at Kaupang contained more than one individual. In four of the cases, three adult individuals had been buried in the same boat (Ka. 294–296, Ka. 298–300, Ka. 257–259, Ka. 285–287). Moreover, Ka. 294 and 298 contained two individuals, one of them an infant in both cases. The only parallels to these graves are a boat grave at Sebbesund, where a 3.8 m long boat contained three buried individuals, other ones at Scar, Orkney and at Olavsklosteret/Tønsberg, Vestfold, also with three individuals, and a further example at Nab-



berör, Öland, with at least four individuals. The latter dates to the 8th century (Müller-Wille 1970:160). Double burials in boat are Ka. 301–302, Ka. 303–304, Ka. 310–311, Ka. 254–255, Ka. 263–264 and Ka. 265–266.

The boat grave Ka. 307 at southern Bikjholberget is peculiar in that it has a *chamber*. The chamber or coffin was c. 2.8 m long, considerably longer than the wooden coffins from Kaupang. Its width is not recorded. It was erected between two of the ribs of the c. 7 m long boat. Due to the poor state of preservation, nothing is known about the method of construction.

While occurring regularly in ship graves (Tune, Gokstad, Oseberg, Storhaug, Grønhaug, Hedeby and Sutton Hoo), burial chambers are very seldom found in the smaller boat graves. Haakon Shetelig did not list a single example in his 1917 survey (Schetelig 1917:237). Michael Müller-Wille (1970:77) does, however, note three examples from western Norway: at Holmedal (Sogn og Fjordane), and Osnes and Røyrvik (both Møre og Romsdal).

The furnishings – a sword of type M with an hourglass-shaped inlay in the upper part of the blade and a copper-alloy belt buckle, to name but two – date the grave to c. 900. The artefacts were found inside the chamber.

### 5.7 A horseman and a falconer? Ka. 157

The furnishings in Ka. 157 from Søndre Kaupang included a matching pair of stirrups (Fig 3). While horse equipment is relatively common in Viking-age graves from Norway, especially in the eastern districts, graves with specialised riding equipment, i.e. spurs and stirrups, form a relatively small and distinct group (Braathen 1989; Sørheim 1997). The so-called horseman's graves, of which there are c. 120 in Norway, and many in both Denmark and Sweden, have been dealt with in detail elsewhere, and are often seen as evidence of a particular political and/or military structure, or of specific religious beliefs (Botond 2002; Braathen 1989; Lyngstrøm 1995; Pedersen 1997b; Roesdahl 1983; Simonsson 1969; Wallin 1995; Ziefwert 1992).

The "horizon" of horseman's graves in Scandinavia falls in the 10th century. However, some of the finds from Norway are older. Ka. 157 dates to the first part of the 9th century, as does a grave from Ophus in Vang, Hedmark. Two other finds, from Farnen in Vang, Hedmark, and Særheim in Klepp, Rogaland, both belong to the period 800–900. These early finds could be indicative of influences from the Continent, where horseman's graves are known from the Merovingian period (Braathen 1989; Müller-Wille 1977; Stein 1967).

Ka. 157 is a very richly furnished grave in Kaupang respects. It contained an assorted assemblage of horse equipment, tools, weapons, and furniture. Also, it is one of the possible boat graves from Nicolaysen's 1867 excavations. Besides the stirrups, another object from

the grave might point towards the adoption of Continental practices.

The object in question is a small bell made of copper alloy (Fig. 5.16, top). While this bell might be part of the rather lavish horse harness featured in the grave, another interpretation is worth exploring, namely the use of small bronze bells in *hawking*. In Scandinavian contexts, iron bells of various types are known to have been part of the horse equipment (Petersen 1951:56–5). For bells made of copper alloy, however, the interpretation differs – and varies. Small bells or rattles of type R 593 were found in 11 different graves in Birka. In five of these the bells seem to have been associated with the clothes of the deceased (Gräslund 1984:122). Gräslund interprets the bells as resulting from East Baltic influences, but she also mentions parallels from Frisian burial finds (*ibid.*). Among the Latvian tribes, small bells could be hung from the copper alloy chains attached to the women's costume (Sedov 1982:236). Copper alloy bells of similar types have also been used as part of the horse harness in the Baltic area (Sedov 1982:237; incidentally, a small copper alloy bell of type R 593 in the Borre ship burial seems to have been associated with a horse's head gear).

Reconstructing the original function from grave finds is one thing. Recently, however, small copper alloy bells have been found in settlement contexts in Scandinavia. The finds in question, from Uppåkra and Järrestad, both in Scania, seem to suggest a link between the bells made of copper alloy and hall buildings (af Rosenschöld 2005, who, by the way, interprets these objects as musical instruments). This link points towards some kind of connection between the bells and aristocratic life. One possible connection is found in aristocratic hunting practices.

Some copper alloy bells known from the archaeological record have been interpreted as hawking bells, i.e. bells attached to one foot of a falcon or a hawk used for hunting purposes, and designed to make it easier to find the bird if it is tangled up in a bush etc. during the hunt. For instance, it has been suggested that the small copper alloy bell from the Sutton Hoo ship burial was worn by a falcon or hawk (Carver 1998:136). The bell finds from Fröjel have been discussed in a similar way (Carlsson 2000), while Maria Vretemark (1983) discusses the possible link between small bells and falconry in a more general way.

Nicholas Orme, writing of the education of the medieval English kings and aristocracy, says that hunting came second only to fighting as the most prestigious physical activity (Orme 1984:191, cited after Almond 2003:39). The earliest record of falconry in Anglo-Saxon England was the dispatch by St Boniface of a hawk and two falcons from the Continent to King Æþelbald of Mercia in 745–6. Hawking as a highly developed form of hunting was established in continental Europe around AD 500 already,

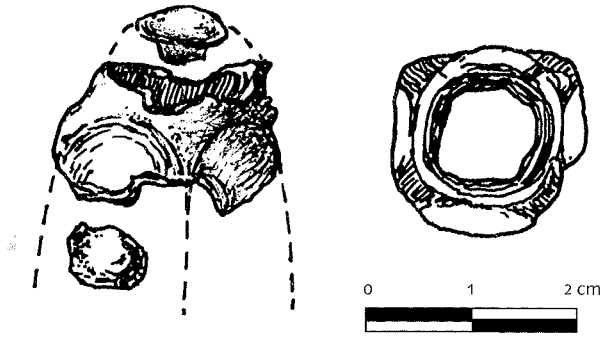
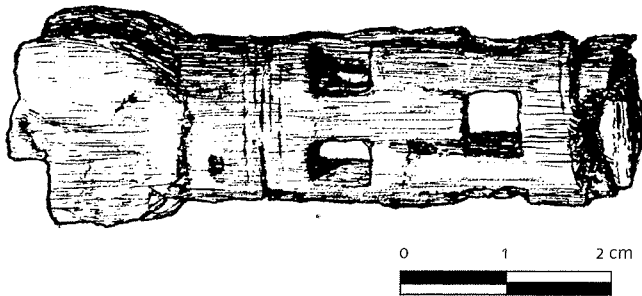


Figure 5.16 Swivel and bell from Ka. 157, interpreted here as indicative of hunting with hawks (and dogs). From Blindheim et al. 1981.



as evidenced by various Germanic laws (Lindner 1973:165–6). It was no different in Viking Age Scandinavia, where written sources record hawking in several instances. Thus, according to Frankish sources, Godfred, the early 9th century king of the Danes, was killed by his own son while out hunting, just as he was about to release his falcon from its prey. According to the Norse sagas, earl Håkon had to pay 100 “marks” of gold and 60 hawks or falcons as tribute to Harald Bluetooth. Olav Tryggvason, on the other hand, is said to have plucked the feathers off his sister’s hawk in a fit of fury (Bø 1962:9–11). The latter examples are from the 10th century. By the mid-11th century at the latest hunting falcons were being exported from Norway to England (Oggins 2004: 64–5).

Judging from finds of bones from birds of prey in cremation graves, however, hawking seems to have been practiced in Scandinavia almost as early as on the Continent. Lavishly furnished graves like Vendel III and Valsgårde 6 contains birds of prey, as do at least 14 other Swedish graves, dating from the late 6th to the 10th century (Vretemark 1983; Gräslund 2004; cf. Ljungkvist 2005 for a revised dating of the supposed oldest finds, from Gamla Uppsala). There are also a number of Continental finds of birds of prey in graves. In a cremation grave dating to c. 800 from Hedehusum/Süderende on Föhr, bones from a man,

his dog and his falcon was salvaged (Jankuhn 1960: 36). In a somewhat earlier grave from Staufen in Dillingen, a man had been inhumed along with rich furnishings, including a hawk or a falcon placed at his right hand (Stein 1967:138–9).

Pictorial evidence for hawking in Scandinavia includes the 11th century picture stones from Alstad, Toten (Norway), and Böksta, Uppland (Sweden), both of which show a mounted man with dog(s) and bird(s) of prey. The tapestries from the Oseberg ship burial (dated dendrochronologically to AD 834) also include a scene with a mounted man and two birds of prey, interpreted as either falcons or hawks (Hougen 1940; Åkerström-Hougen 1981; Ingstad 1992:234). The birds’ pointed wings suggest that they are indeed falcons.

Thus, hawking as an aristocratic and royal hunting technique is an established fact in the Viking Age (see also Stalsberg 1982; Ambrosiani 2001b). But is the bell in Ka. 157 indicative of hawking? The burial itself is obviously that of a prominent person, and the presence of a hunting falcon or hawk does not seem out of context in this social milieu. The hypothesis is strengthened by the possibility of there being one or more dogs in the grave. The presence of these dogs was suggested by Blindheim and Heyerdahl-Larsen on the basis of a copper alloy swivel rescued from the cremation remains by Nicolaysen (Fig. 5.16, bottom). This swivel seems to be similar to a Danish specimen which is interpreted as a strap distributor from a dog lead (Blindheim et al. 1981:208; cf. Thorvildsen 1957:fig. 34, from Lille Lime, Jutland). This is important, because dogs were used to assist in the hunt in all varieties of hawking and falconry (Oggins 2004:32), as suggested by the grave from Hedehusum, as well. The rest of the falconer’s equipment, his gloves and the bird’s foot leashes, would have been made of organic material and left no traces in a cremation grave. Even if the presence of dogs (?) and a



riding horse in Ka. 157 is not in itself evidence of hawking, it is strongly indicative of hunting, and thus lends credibility to the idea that the copper alloy bell was in fact a foot bell for a hunting bird, and that hawking was the kind of hunting practiced.

### 5.8 The horseshoe from Ka. 250

A horseshoe was found with the artefacts associated with the double boat grave Ka. 250 from Bikjholberget. Near the shoe was a collection of horse bones. Ka. 250 dates to the 9th century. In the Scandinavian Viking-age assemblage horseshoes are not otherwise known, their function presumably being filled by crampons or frostnails.

In other parts of Europe, however, horseshoes are known in the Viking Age. Both Byzantine and Frankish sources mention shoes for horses in the 9th and 10th centuries; emperor Leo's *Strategicon* (886–912), for instance, puts horseshoes together with stirrups among the horsemen's equipment (Steuer 2000:194). The oldest Continental finds are also from the 9th and 10th centuries (Steuer 2000:193). For a long time to come, though, horseshoes were expensive and relatively rare; a source from the 11th century tells that a shod horse at that time was worth twice the amount of an unshod one (Steuer 2000:195).

The shoe from Ka. 250 has a width of 10,4 cm and is 9,6 cm high (Fig. 5.17). It is rounded and broad, and it has a set of shallow calkins. There are three holes to each branch. The holes have separate countersunk slots for the nail-heads, similar to Clark's (1995) types 1 through 3. The shoe is so heavily worn at the toe that the hoof itself would have been eroded.

The Kaupang specimen lacks the wavy edge typical of early medieval shoes. The large rectangular countersunk slots, the generally crude appearance of the shoe, its rounded and broad shape, as well as the wide-webbed but thin metal suggest that the Kaupang shoe is of Clark's type 1 (Clark 1995:85).

British finds confirm a "pre-Conquest" date for this type (Clark 1995:93). Finds from the 10th century and early/mid-11th century are confirmed from a number of sites (Clark 1995:93). A single 9th century specimen has been found in Winchester (Clark 1995:94). Horseshoes of type 1 seem to have persisted in use into the 12th century (Clark 1995:95). The presence of calkins on the Kaupang specimen may indicate a late date (Clark 1995:85).

Thus, the horseshoe from Ka. 250 seems to be of either Late Viking Age or Early Medieval date. The find context, however, is difficult. The artefacts belonging to Ka. 250 were found during construction works, and while the find assemblage was salvaged and brought to the museum in 1947, the detailed find circumstances were not recorded until three years later (Blindheim et al. 1981:217). One cannot rule out the possibility that the horseshoe represents a secondary intrusion.

There are a number of horseshoes presumably associated with grave finds in the museum's collections. All of the associated find assemblages belong to the Viking Age. Most of these finds reached the museum at an early date; in the late 19th century in most cases. With just a few exceptions, the horseshoes are not found in professionally excavated graves. None of these finds are convincing, as the stratigraphy is either unclear in some cases, or the horseshoes are of late, even modern types in others. In the majority of cases only one shoe was salvaged. It was probably for these reasons that Jan Petersen did not include horseshoes in his survey of Viking Age artefacts (Petersen 1951).

One probable cause for a possible later intrusion might be the road that today passes over Bikjholberget on its way from Kaupang to Lamøya. The Lamøya road was most likely built between 1805 and 1811, since it is shown on Broch's 1811 map but not on a six year older map (Blindheim et al. 1981:66, n. 11). But for topographical reasons there was probably a simpler road here long before this, since the sound between Lamøya and the mainland was at its narrowest at this place. In principle, it is not unlikely that a road or a path existed here at some time after the cemetery went out of use. As soon as the sound between Lamøya and the mainland dried up, this would have been the obvious place to cross over to the island.

To sum up, then, it is possible that the horseshoe actually belongs to Ka. 250. But source-critical considerations make it more likely that it represents a secondary intrusion, related to the Lamøya road established at some time after the Bikjholberget cemetery was abandoned.

### 5.9 A couple and their sorceress? Ka. 294–296

The most spectacular burial arrangement at Kaupang is the triple boat grave Ka. 294–296 from Bikjholberget, where three adult individuals were inhumed in a boat nearly 9 m long (Fig. 5.18). The boat was aligned SW.–NE. In the stem, and with her head facing away from it, lay a woman (Ka. 294). She probably had an infant (or possibly a small animal) at her pelvis. On her northern side was a man with his head close to hers (Ka. 295). Then followed a horse with a bronze-decorated harness, and then a dog. By the dog lay (see below) another woman with her head facing the stern (Ka. 296). Yet another man was lying beneath the boat (Ka. 297). His burial dates to the 9th century, all the others most likely to the early 10th.

The two women's graves in particular were lavishly furnished. Ka. 294 contained, for instance, a pair of gilded oval brooches, a silver arm ring, and a silver ring that seems to have been part of a bead necklace. Silver arm rings or bracelets are commonly found in Middle Viking-age treasure hoards, but are also known from a number of particularly rich women's



Figure 5.17 The horseshoe from Ka. 250. The type is early medieval, but the shoe is most likely a later intrusion in the grave. The road to Lamøya, which post-dates the use of Bikjholberget for burials, passed right over this grave. X-ray, KHM.

Figure 5.18 Ka. 294–296 during excavation. This four-sided stone setting (left) marked one of the most intriguing graves at Kaupang. Photo, Charlotte Blindheim, KHM.

graves. There is only one other example from Vestfold: Haugen/Hedrum (C5305–06, 5357–59), but there are a few others from western Norway – in Rogaland, Gausel/Hetland (B4233, S11640) and Bore, Klepp (S8506); in Hordaland, Veka/Voss (B6228); in Sogn og Fjordane, Dale/Fjaler (B5919); and in Møre og Romsdal, Heime-Giske/Giske (B675–683).

The woman in Ka. 296 had been inhumed with a number of peculiar artefacts. Foremost amongst these is an Insular bronze cauldron of Trotzig's group C (Trotzig 1984), with a runic inscription: *i muntlauku* (Liestøl 1953, 1960:189–91). Inside this cauldron were a gilt copper-alloy rod and a "tweezer-shaped" copper-alloy artefact with only one arm, looped (for suspension?) at one end and with three small nails and traces of iron at the other, as well as a copper-alloy ring that might have been used for the suspension of the bowl. Near the bowl was found a small egg-shaped stone. To this find-complex also belongs a spit or, rather, iron *staff* (Price 2002:192, with reference to Bøgh-Andersen 1999:47–8). Ka. 296 also contained two objects usually associated with men's graves: an axehead and a shield-boss.

In their totality, the burials Ka. 294–296 are hard to interpret, but were clearly very special. An interpretation of this grave complex will be suggested here.

The staff in Ka. 296 is of a type suggested by Neil Price (2002) to be a sorceress's staff, and, indeed, there are some indications that the woman in Ka. 296 was a person of special status. It is noteworthy that two of the above-mentioned graves with silver arm ring(s), those at Gausel and Veka, also had an iron staff each. The staff in Ka. 296 lay at the bottom of the boat, under a large stone.

Apart from the inscribed cauldron and the staff, there is the dog. The dog, an adult male specimen, had been butchered and carved; in general, dogs in graves are typically intact, i.e. not butchered (A.S.

Gräslund, pers. comm.). The head was found on top of the bronze cauldron. Only one other grave at Kaupang contain dogs: Ka. 218 on Lamøya (the swivel in Ka. 157 from Søndre Kaupang seems to belong to a dog lead, thus pointing towards the presence of one or more dogs in this grave, as well). There may have been more dogs in the graves at Nordre Kaupang, but since Nicolaysen did not collect bones we will never know. Suffice it to say that dogs are not common in the inhumation graves at Kaupang, and it is significant that one occurs in a grave that is also "special" in several other respects (cf. Gräslund 2004 on dogs in Scandinavian Late Iron-age graves in general).

Fragments of leather(?) found near one of the oval brooches suggest that the woman in Ka. 296 could have been wearing a costume somewhat out of the ordinary. Judging from the position of the preserved parts of the skeleton and the position of the pair of oval brooches in the grave (both of them lying face-down in the boat), she may have been buried sitting up.

Seated burial is one of the characteristics of Price's *völva* graves (2002:127–40). It is known primarily at Birka (Gräslund 1980:37–40), but there are examples from other places in central Sweden, Iceland and Russia, as well as at a number of sites in what is now Norway: Sandvik, Nord-Trøndelag; Tjøtta, Nordland; Høv, Nordland; and possibly Olavsklosteret/Tønsberg, Vestfold (Rygh 1877; Marstrander 1973; Nordman 1989). We have two more possible examples at Kaupang: Ka. 267 and Ka. 284, both gendered female graves.

The deposition of "male" objects in the grave of a woman corresponds to a pattern found in a small number of Scandinavian graves singled out by Price as "special". Most prominent amongst these is the extraordinary double burial of a man and a woman at Klinta, Köpingsvik, Öland (Price 2002:142–9). The couple's bodies had been cremated in a boat, and the





burnt bones of the woman interred along with a number of grave goods, including an iron staff and a bronze bowl as well as a “male” axe.

Could we possibly have here, then, the grave of a sorceress? It seems certain at least that this grave belongs to the same class of burials as those discussed by Price. The woman’s seated position, the iron staff, and the transgression of gender roles implied by the presence of a shield-boss and an axehead, strongly suggest that the woman in Ka. 296 was indeed a *völva*.

#### The bronze bowl

The bronze bowl in this grave has sometimes been placed in a very different context. The runic inscription *i muntlauku* means literally “In (or into) the hand basin” (Fig. 5.19). Aslak Liestøl suggested that

the bowl had originally, i.e. in the Insular context, been used for the ritual washing of hands in connection with the Christian mass (1953). He suggests that it had been used as a hand basin in Scandinavia as well (1960:191). This is supported by a later find from Bråtorpsjön in Södermanland, Sweden, of a bronze bowl with the runic inscription *mudlög*, i.e. “hand basin”. The latter find is dated to the 12th or 13th century (Voss 1991:200). Egil Mikkelsen has suggested that the Kaupang bowl, together with some other Insular artefacts from Kaupang, are relics from missionary activities in the Oslofjord area emanating from the British Isles in the early 9th century (Mikkelsen 1999).

Be that as it may, the bowl must have been put to a different, non-Christian, use in the local context. It is



of similar type to Bj. 544 from Birka and Ts 8334 from Borg in Lofoten (Trotzig 1984:230; Munch 2003:244). Inside the former were found two drinking horns and a silver rim-mount from a glass bowl, suggesting that at least this specimen may have been part of a set of drinking equipment (Trotzig 1984:227–8, who argues for a wider range of interpretations than Liestøl when it comes to the functions of the bronze vessels). Archaeological support for an interpretation along the lines suggested by Liestøl derives from a woman's chamber grave at Hørning, Denmark, where a bronze bowl was found along with a small side-table thought to be a wash-stand. In another case, from Ballyholm, Co. Down, Northern Ireland, a woman was buried on a raised beach near the sea with a pair of oval brooches and a bronze bowl with wool in it (Bøe 1940:73–5). In a recently excavated woman's grave at Adwick-le-Street in South Yorkshire, England, plant tissue and fragments of wood, probably hazel, were found associated with a bronze basin. In the latter case, however, the plant remains are thought to be part of the earth matrix of the burial, rather than the contents of the basin itself (Speed and Walton Rogers 2004:80). Linen associated with several of the Danish basins may have served to protect their contents or the valuable basin itself (Pedersen 1997a:88). In Norway, Insular bronze vessels are in most cases,

although not exclusively, found in women's graves (Wamers 1985:113–15).

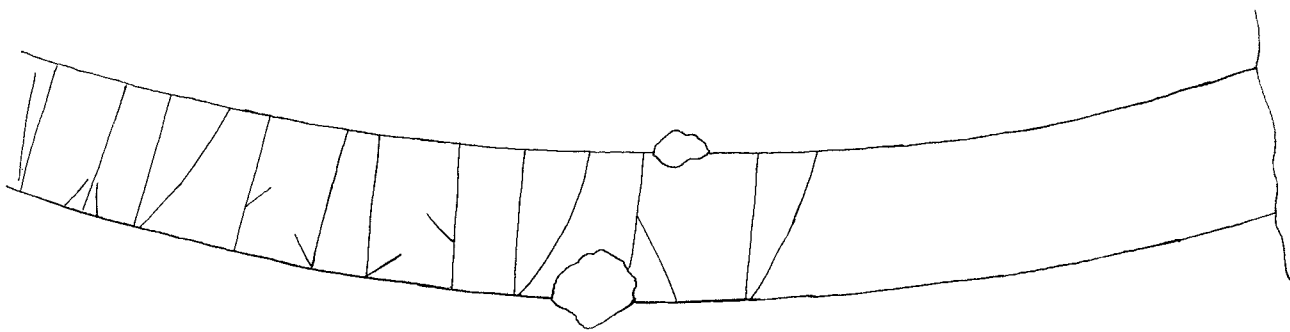
Both the (ritual) washing, the possible association with drinking, and the fact that these vessels are usually found in women's graves, suggest a connexion with the symbolism of the hall, but also (and the two are not mutually exclusive) with the remedies of a "cunning woman." The basin could have been used for the ritual cleansing of the woman or her "patient." Ritual purposes have been suggested for the presumably antique cauldron deposited in the burial at Bjerringhøj; in this case that was a deep cauldron (Iversen and Näsman 1991:59). It is possible that the runic inscription is a spell, or part of a spell. The inscription was probably never finished (Liestøl 1960:190).

This interpretation is congruent with some of the other items in this particular grave, first and foremost the iron staff. Taken together with the unusual position of the body and the presence of the butchered dog, this might indeed be the burial of a woman with a very special status, possibly that of a sorceress (cf., e.g., the mid-10th-century "sorceress" in Fyrkat grave 4, also with an iron staff: Price 2002; Roesdahl 1977).

Although precise datings are lacking, all three graves inside the boat seem to belong to the early 10th century (cf. Blindheim et al. 1999:142–3). Indeed, it is



Figure 5.19 The bronze bowl with the runic inscription *i muntlauku* (drawing) on the inside. Photo and drawing, KHM.



quite possible that all three are more or less contemporary. It is possible that Ka. 294 and Ka. 295 represent a married couple of high social standing, while the seated woman in the stern is a sorceress with a particular relationship with the couple, for whom she had been performing her services while still alive – as well as in death, judging from her position at the rudder, steering the little family towards the realm of the Dead (Fig. 5.20).

### 5.10 Concluding remarks – Birka and Kaupang

Even if we have only 204 recorded grave-finds available to study from a total of more than 600 grave monuments, we can draw some conclusions about the Kaupang cemeteries. The cemeteries are quite outstanding in a number of different ways, some of which have been discussed in this chapter. There are features that bind the Kaupang graves to southern Vestfold, and others that do not. I consider it an open question whether the Kaupang cemeteries to some extent conform to a southern Vestfold ritual system, or if, in Tjølling and the neighbouring districts, we are rather faced with areas *influenced* by Kaupang as the latter's sphere of influence (compare the role of Birka in central Sweden in this respect). There are indeed some peculiarities distinguishing southern Vestfold from the surrounding areas when it comes to burial rituals, and this might indicate that the latter is in fact the case.

There are several cemeteries at Kaupang. While the picture is clearest at Lamøya, I have suggested that even the most extensive cemeteries, Bikjholberget and Nordre Kaupang, might have consisted of lesser, distinct grave clusters in the 9th century, the early phase of the settlement, when the first burials took place there. The growing together of these putative grave groups is probably due to the growing number of people being buried at Kaupang in the later part of the settlement's existence.

As for Christianity, there is nothing particularly "Christian" about the graves in any cemetery at Kaupang. In general, I think it is nigh impossible to identify graves as belonging to converted individuals unless those graves occur in churchyards or at least in cemeteries of their own. No such separate cemetery has been discovered at Kaupang.

The Kaupang cemeteries cover a wide range of the myriad of rituals that are associated with Viking-age burial in Scandinavia. Most of these have parallels elsewhere in the Norse world. The specific mixture of rituals that leads to boat graves, chamber graves and coffin graves occurring in the same cemetery at Kaupang, namely at Bikjholberget, is harder to match. But there are a number of parallels in the coastal regions of Norway, at cemeteries that this author would interpret as aristocratic: Olavsklosteret/Tønsberg (Nordman 1989); several sites in Hedrum (Stylegar 2005a); and Gulli/Tønsberg (Gjerpe 2005c), all in Vestfold, come to mind, but also, *inter alios*, Revheim/Stavanger (Sørheim et al. 2004), or the possibly royal cemetery at Visterflo in Østfold for that matter (Brøgger 1922; Stylegar 2003b). There are also similarities between these southern Norwegian cemeteries and a number of aristocratic burial grounds in southern Scandinavia, in particular those in Denmark and northern Germany discussed by Müller-Wille (1987:69–90).

But is there anywhere else where a considerable number of aristocratic burial rites occurs in a context that also includes more "ordinary" types of grave, and indeed is spread across several distinct cemeteries or groups of graves? In other words, is there a parallel to the general pattern that we have at Kaupang, i.e. to the Kaupang burial complex as a whole (Fig. 5.20)?

Birka is really the obvious answer. Here we have the same typical mixture of rites: boat graves, chamber graves and coffin graves, as well as quite an even ratio of cremations and inhumations. The Birka

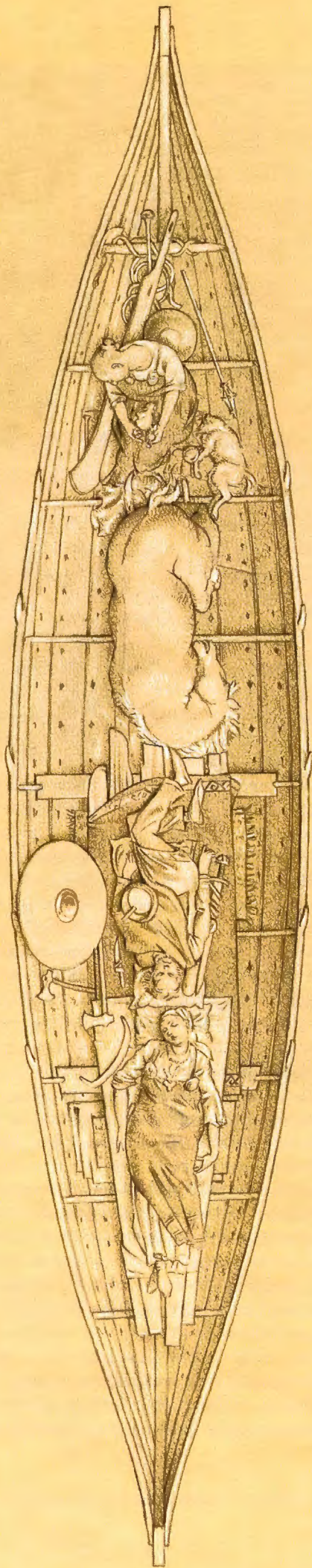


Figure 5.20 *A grave of a special kind: Suggested reconstruction of the boat grave Ka. 294–296. Illustration, Porhallur Práinsson.*

Figure 5.21 *Participants at the Viking Congress in Bergen visiting the excavation at Bikjholberget in September 1953. Photo, KHM.*

graves are spread across six separate and at least partly contemporaneous cemeteries. At the major one at Hemlanden, immediately to the north-east of the settlement area, at least 1,600 graves can be seen. Most of these are round barrows, often very substantial ones. Both cremations and inhumations are known from Hemlanden. Most of the inhumations are in the area to the west, while the cremations dominate the remaining, much larger area (Gräslund 1980:5–6). There is also a smaller cemetery immediately to the south of the settlement area, with almost exclusively flat graves, known in the literature as the cemetery north of Borg. This is where many of the chamber and coffin graves are concentrated (Gräslund 1980:5–6; Ambrosiani 1992:18–19).

Of the other Early Viking-age towns in Scandinavia, Hedeby shows a similar complexity to a certain extent (Arents 1992), but Ribe does not (Feville 2003).

The extent of the cemeteries and the number of graves is of course different between Birka and Kaupang, but there seem to be very clear similarities between Hemlanden and Nordre Kaupang on the one hand and between the cemetery immediately to the south of the settlement area and Bikjholberget on the other – the first two dominated by barrows and cremations, the latter two by different kinds of richly furnished inhumations.

The distribution of burial customs across the Birka cemeteries suggested to Björn Ambrosiani that “different groups of people were buried in different cemeteries” (1992:20, cf. Gräslund 1980:77–8). This is of course a possible interpretation of the situation at Kaupang, too. It is difficult to compare the different cemeteries at Kaupang – the state of excavations is too different to make this a fruitful undertaking. Only Nordre Kaupang and Bikjholberget can really be compared. What is the reason for the differences between the cremation barrow cemetery at Nordre





Kaupang and the flat-grave inhumation cemetery at Bikjholberget? This is of course a question with general implications and interest. It can be put differently. Who was buried at Nordre Kaupang and Bikjholberget, respectively? Were they different categories of people? We really cannot say. In the case of Birka, there have been several attempts to pin down what exactly distinguished the people using either of the cemeteries. Those inhumed in chambers or coffins are alternatively interpreted as craftsmen and merchants who had travelled to the town from afar, or as local people who had converted to Christianity

(Ambrosiani 1992:20). Steuer, discussing the early 10th-century chamber graves at Hedeby, attributes them to a leading social stratum, a "Kaufleute-Krieger-Gruppe" (Steuer 1984:360).

The one thing that can be stated with any certainty in this regard, is that this pattern, as found at Nordre Kaupang contra Bikjholberget and Hemlanden, contra the cemetery to the south of the settlement area, must correspond to the ritual reality of Scandinavian towns in the 9th and early 10th centuries. Whether the explanation for it is social, religious, or ethnic remains to be seen.