

**Zeitschrift:** Schweizerische numismatische Rundschau = Revue suisse de numismatique = Rivista svizzera di numismatica  
**Herausgeber:** Schweizerische Numismatische Gesellschaft  
**Band:** 97 (2019)

**Artikel:** A stave church revisited : Ringebu stave church, Ringebu municipality, Oppland county  
**Autor:** Masterud Hellan, Terje  
**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-869547>

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 02.04.2026

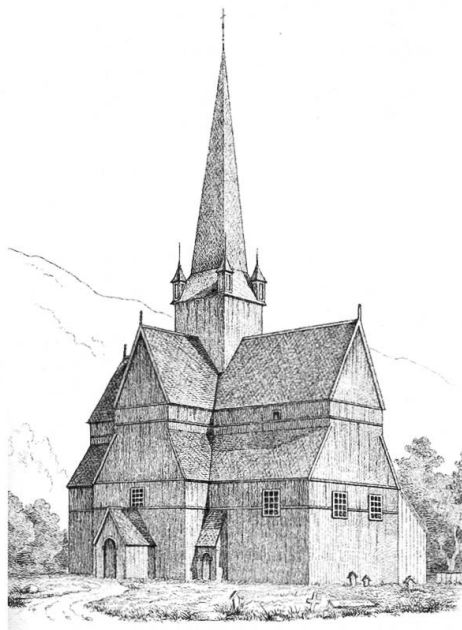
**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

---

TERJE MASTERUD HELLAN

A STAVE CHURCH REVISITED.  
RINGEBU STAVE CHURCH, RINGEBU MUNICIPALITY,  
OPPLAND COUNTY

Ringebu stave church is situated on a small plain at the steep eastern valley side of the river Gudbrandsdalslågen, roughly 2 kilometers south of the present-day township's centre (*Fig. 1*).<sup>1</sup> Gudbrandsdalen is one of the great valley districts in Eastern Norway, stretching from the town of Lillehammer (124 masl) in the south, to lake Lesjaskogvatnet (612 masl) in the north. One of the main pilgrimage routes to the Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim, and later also the king's road, passed through Gudbrandsdalen. The church is today a parish church and was originally a stave church with a raised roof above the central space of the nave. Architecturally this type is one of the more advanced kind of stave churches. It is one of the largest of the preserved stave churches,<sup>2</sup> and one of few that probably



*Fig. 1* Drawing of Ringebu stave church by J. FRICH, Foreningen til norske fortidsminnesmerkers bevaring Årbok (Oslo 1855), pl. IV.

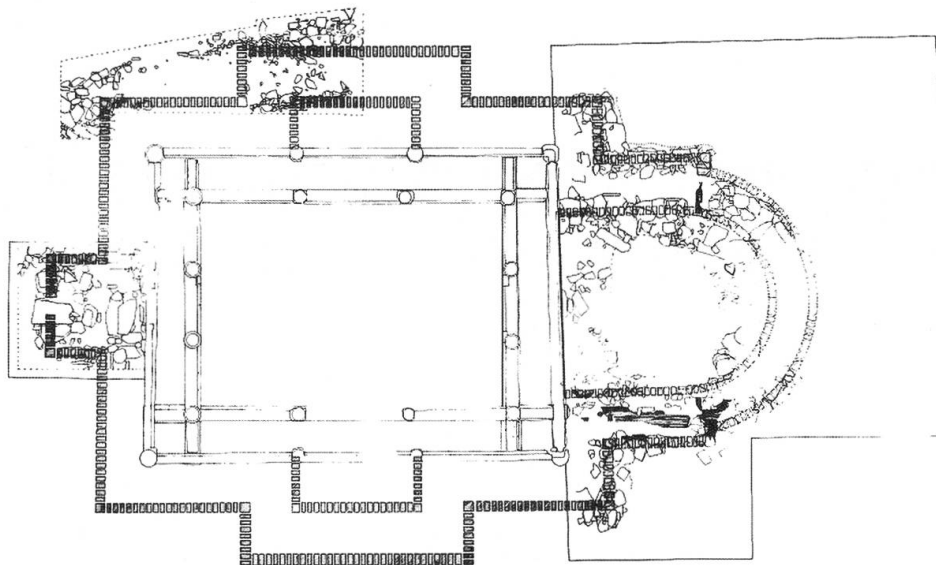
<sup>1</sup> Askeladden ID: 85295; Gnr/bnr 64/43, 64/51, 64/55; Museum nr. C35149, Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo (the 1980–82 excavation).

<sup>2</sup> Today there are 28 remaining stave churches in Norway. A conservative estimate for the number in the 1300s is around 1000, see L. ANKER, *Kirker i Norge 4. Middelalderen i tre – stavkirker* (Oslo 2005), pp. 12–14.

had a transept in medieval times. The original stave construction of the nave is still intact, but the present-day transept, chancel and tower are additions from around 1630.<sup>3</sup> When it was excavated in 1980–81 the methods applied brought Norwegian church archaeology a step [or steps] further for rigorous precision and documentation carried out. The new approaches proved viable through 868 coin finds and a large numbers of artefacts.

### *1. Aim of the study*

Ringebu stave church was excavated by Riksantikvaren<sup>4</sup> in cooperation with Universitetets Oldsaksamling<sup>5</sup> in the period 1980–82 (*Fig. 2*). The reasons for the excavations were decay and circulation of air beneath the floors and the load-bearing constructions in the lower parts of the church. The extent of the alterations was comprehensive. They decided to open up all the floors and remove as much soil as possible, and restore the broken construction parts.<sup>6</sup> The work was initiated in May 1980 and finished in April 1982. The archaeological field work took place, effectively, over a period of five to six months.



*Fig. 2* Drawing of Ringebu schematics from the excavations with an interpretation of the shape of the 1200s church as well as an outline of the 1630 additions. JENSENIUS – SKRE 1983 (note 6), p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> ANKER 2005 (note 2), pp. 296–298.

<sup>4</sup> The Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage Management.

<sup>5</sup> The Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo.

<sup>6</sup> J. JENSENIUS – D. SKRE, *De bygningsarkeologiske undersøkelsene. Ringebu stavkirke forteller*. Hemgrenda, Ringebu Historielag (Ringebu 1983), pp 7–21, att. 7.

The excavations revealed older building structures, 868<sup>7</sup> coins and coin fragments (*Fig. 3*), around 740 of them pre-Reformation, and other archaeological artefacts. This article will discuss what information we may gather from these finds. Can they shed light on the local religious practice throughout the medieval and early post-Reformation periods? If yes, this presuppose that these finds, fully or partly, can be considered as material remains from the church liturgy or laymen rituals over periods of centuries – a presupposition that has been tested elsewhere.<sup>8</sup> Particular attention will be paid to certain focal points with large distribution of coins, mainly an area south in the western aisle and between the nave and the chancel in the eastern aisle. I will examine church phases from the early Middle Ages up to early modern times, and identified coin concentration, often within disturbed archaeological context, and discuss possible correlation and possible explanations for the coin clusters and their relationship to the church architecture and interior.

The year after the excavations were finished – in 1983 – the Norwegian numismatist Karin Berg published the first article on the coin finds from Ringebu and another one two years later.<sup>9</sup> Followed-up by several scholars discussing the finds from Ringebu – Anne-Marie Mørch von der Fehr,<sup>10</sup> Herleik Baklid<sup>11</sup> and Kolbjørn Skaare.<sup>12</sup> The finds from the excavation in Ringebu stave church have attracted more scholarly attention than any other church excavation in Norway, and thus sparked a broad range of discussion on the interpretation of coins ending up under floor, different archaeological aspects and issues, and the possibility to relate such finds to religious and devotional practices in medieval society. In this article, I will revisit the site and the discussions and apply broader perspectives to the analysis and interpretation of the archaeological contexts of the coin finds.

Of previous research Karin Berg's article from 1983 is the one who touches most of the different subjects related to coin finds in Ringebu. She summarizes the time latitude of the coin finds – most importantly the decrease after the Reformation, their distribution inside the church – both in relation to the posthole church and stave church, and she discusses possible reasons for the deposition and/or retrieval

<sup>7</sup> The actual number of coins as well as details in the identification of them may vary slightly between different publications. The number 868 stems from the authors review of finds lists and the actual coins. Several finds numbers not interpreted as coins are now omitted.

<sup>8</sup> H. KLACKENBERG, *Moneta Nostra. Monetarisering i medeltidens Sverige* (Stockholm 1992); S. H. GULLBEKK – C. KILGER – H. ROLAND – S. KRISTENSEN (eds.), *Money and Religious Devotion in Medieval Northern Europe* (Oxford – New York, forthcoming).

<sup>9</sup> K. BERG, *Myntene fra Ringebu stavkirke*, in: *Ringebu stavkirke forteller, Hemgrenda, Ringebu Historielag* (Ringebu 1983), pp. 49–63; K. BERG, *Mynter fra en stavkirke i Gudbrandsdalen*, *Hikuin* 11, 1985, pp. 249–260.

<sup>10</sup> A-M. M. VON DER FEHR, *Myntkonsentrasjoner i Ringebu Stavkirke*, *Universitetets Oldsaksamling Årbok 1986–88* (1989), pp. 161–169.

<sup>11</sup> H. BAKLID, *Hvad der har bragt dem gjennom gulvet er dessverre efter al sansynlighet en hemmelig ofring [...]*, *Heimen* 32, 1995, pp. 181–196; H. BAKLID, *Folket må samles i Jesu tro, der hvor fra oven det klinger (...)*, in: *Ringebu stavkyrkje. Sognekirken i form og funksjon gjennom 900 år* (Ringebu 1998), pp. 32–40.

<sup>12</sup> K. SKAARE, *Myntfunnene i Ringebu Stavkirke*, in: *Ringebu Stavkyrkje. Sognekirken i form og funksjon gjennom 900 år* (Ringebu 1998), pp. 16–40.

of such large quantities of coins. She makes the argument that the baptismal font maybe once stood south in the western aisle based on the coin finds there, but also that alms boxes, or cracks in the floor might be the explanation. She explains coin concentrations in the eastern aisle by possible layman altars or alms boxes in connection with the triumphal cross. She ends her article calling for more detailed maps highlighting coin finds from different time periods.<sup>13</sup> Berg also touches what is already an old discussion within Scandinavian numismatics, which can be summarized like this: Were the coins intentionally deposited or lost? One of the biggest proponents of the former explanation is Herleik Baklid who among other churches uses coin concentrations in the eastern and western aisles of Ringeby in an argument on behalf of «the offering hypothesis».<sup>14</sup> Kolbjørn Skaare, on the other hand, is more in favor of the coins having been lost, but also touches other topics like distributions in time and space in his article of 1998. Von der Fehr was more or less only concerned with the latter and proves on a statistical basis that there are actual coin concentrations in the eastern and western aisle. This opinion is shared by all scholars mentioned, but most agree there might be several possible reasons for this. Only Baklid makes a clear stance arguing that the eastern aisle coins are votive offerings by a side altar and the ones in the western aisle are actually lost and swept down.<sup>15</sup>

In the process of revisiting this site the excavation's find report has been immensely useful, and the coin finds are summarized in the following points:

- 1 the majority of artefacts and coins were found on the southern side of the nave
- 2 there were in general few artefacts and coins from the chancel compared to the nave
- 3 two large concentrations in the south-western part of the nave contain artefacts that suggest it was gathered up piles of filler
- 4 the coins had two main concentrations: beneath the chancel arch and in the south-western part of the nave. Both locations also have rich amounts of other artefacts.<sup>16</sup>

All these considerations have to be seen in the light of the fact that the excavations took place mainly in the nave, crossing and porch, and that they were excavated by different field leaders, and with different documentation methods.<sup>17</sup> The mentioned area does however seem to cover most of the extent of the medieval church. Of noteworthy point is also the fact that neither coins nor other artefacts

<sup>13</sup> BERG 1983 (note 9), pp. 62–63.

<sup>14</sup> BAKLID 1995 (note 11).

<sup>15</sup> BAKLID 1995 (note 11), p. 191.

<sup>16</sup> K. KNOPH, Ringeby stavkirke. Systematisering av gjenstandsmaterialet, gjenstandsfordelingen i lag, arkeologisk kontekst, plotting, Rapport til Riksantikvaren, From the archives at The Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage Management (Oslo 1981), p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> D. SKRE, Innberetning om den arkeologiske delen av de bygningsarkeologiske undersøkelsene i Ringeby stavkirke 1980–1981, Rapport til Riksantikvaren, From the archives at The Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage Management (Oslo 1985), p. 4.



*Fig. 3* Photos of a selection of coins from Ringebu. Terje Masterud Hellan.

were found in the layers interpreted as belonging to the medieval northern transept.<sup>18</sup> Using the archaeological reports and the scholarly debate as starting points, the room for interpretation comes across as fairly wide, and one with considerable interdisciplinary relevance.

## 2. *Building history and interior*

The earliest written source implying the existence of a church in Ringebu dates from 24 February 1270 when a priest from Ringebu acted as one of the arbitrators in a dispute regarding a parcel of land.<sup>19</sup> The stave church is some decades older, and its dating has been the subject of considerable debate. It was dated by stylistic criteria to the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century by the art historian Lorentz Dietrichson.<sup>20</sup> A preserved medieval baptismal font is typologically dated to the late 1100s,<sup>21</sup> and the beams from the original construction are dated by dendrochronology to 1192/3.<sup>22</sup> Around 1630 the church had several alterations and additions.<sup>23</sup> For the sake of convenience, the phase between 1192/3 and 1630 will be addressed as the 1200s church further on in this text.

The archaeological excavations identified three main chronological phases older than the stave church: Postholes from a pre-Christian construction, an undisturbed cultivation layer and an early medieval posthole church.<sup>24</sup> In addition, there were several graves, some of them interpreted as pre-Christian. Of these we will in this article only be concerned with the early medieval posthole church, dated to AD 1045+/- 75 (14C), and to some extent the graves. The church had a rectangular

<sup>18</sup> A. M. KNUDSEN, Rapport for utgravning i Ringebu stavkirke, Ringebu k., Oppland fylke. Gravning N for skipet, i tidsrommet 16. juni – 1. august 1980, From the archives at The Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage Management (Oslo 1980), p. 5.

<sup>19</sup> ANKER 2005 (note 2), p. 298.

<sup>20</sup> L. DIETRICHSON, De norske stavkirker (Kristiania – Kjøbenhavn 1892), p. 268.

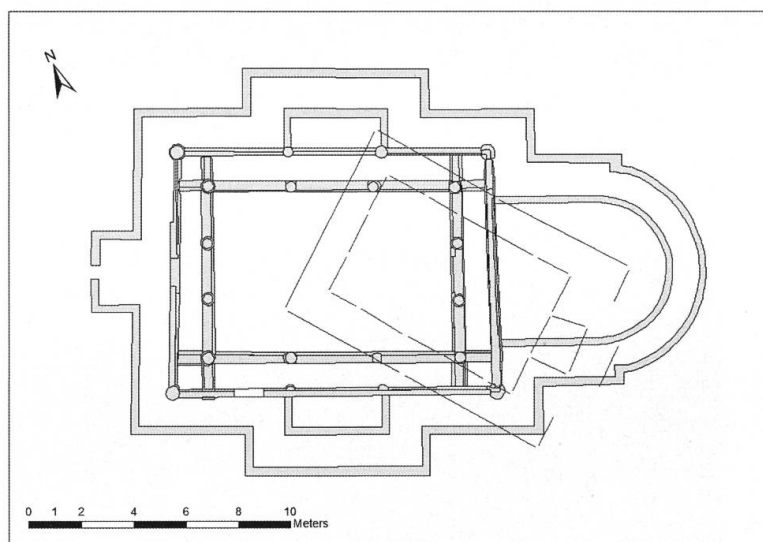
<sup>21</sup> M. B. SOLHAUG, Middelalderens døpefonter i Norge, vol. 2. Dr. avhandling (Oslo 2000), p. 75.

<sup>22</sup> ANKER 2005 (note 2), pp. 71–72 (Meaning the timber were felled during those years. The actual building date is uncertain and the topic of time between felling and building has not been studied in detail. Laws like the Frosthathing Law and the Gulathing Law (none of which covered the current Ringebu municipality, that would be the Eidsivathing Law) states that churches should be finished within one year from the start of building. The Gulathing law actual prescribes one year for rebuilding churches after a fire, and in *i.e.* Nore stave church (Nore og Uvdal municipality, Buskerud county) the wood work implies the church was built with fresh timber).

<sup>23</sup> SKRE 1985 (note 17), p. 6.

<sup>24</sup> Whereas a stave church usually consists of a wooden frame resting on stone sills a posthole church here points to a trestle-frame building with earth-bound posts. A building tradition stretching back more than 3500 years in Norway, see H. SCHJELDERUP, Trestle-frame buildings in Western Norway. Grindbygde hus i Vest-Norge, in: H. SCHJELDERUP – O. STORSLETTEN, NIKU-seminar om grindbygde hus, Bryggens museum 23.–25.03.98. NIKU temahefte, bind 30 (Oslo 1999), p. 5.

nave<sup>25</sup> and a small chancel in the east,<sup>26</sup> and while in most of its extent it was overlapped by the 1200s church, the buildings were not constructed on the same axis.<sup>27</sup> The excavations also showed that the posthole church was probably burnt down before the stave church was built (*Fig. 4*).<sup>28</sup>



*Fig. 4* Possible shape of the 1200s church with outline of the 1000s church.  
Map: Terje Masterud Hellan.

Between the building of the 1200s church and the extensions in 1630, our information about the church interior is scarce, but it can be suggested that few changes were instigated. During the excavations, no earthen floor was identified inside, making it probable that the church was furnished with wooden floors resting on sills.<sup>29</sup> In addition to the current west door there was once a door in the south wall of the nave and probably in the chancel of the 1200s church as well.<sup>30</sup> The one in the south wall of the nave is now covered with wall planks, but is directly underneath where the westernmost window in the south wall lies today.<sup>31</sup> No information exists on when the door was in use.

<sup>25</sup> Roughly 8x5 meters.

<sup>26</sup> J. JENSENIUS, *Trekirkene før stavkirkene. En undersøkelse av planlegging og design av kirker før ca. år 1100*, Con-text Avhandling 6 (Oslo 2001), p. 157; D. SKRE, *Gård og kirke, bygd og sogn: organiseringsmodeller og organiseringsenheter i middelalderens kirkebygging i Sør-Gudbrandsdalen*, Riksantikvarens rapporter 16 (Øvre Ervik 1988), pp. 43–44.

<sup>27</sup> JENSENIUS – SKRE 1983 (note 6), p. 15.

<sup>28</sup> SKRE 1985 (note 17), pp. 25–30.

<sup>29</sup> SKRE 1985 (note 17), pp. 35 and 46.

<sup>30</sup> JENSENIUS – SKRE 1983 (note 6), p. 18; SKRE 1985 (note 17), p. 6.

<sup>31</sup> Dagfinn Skre, e-mail message to author, 29 October 2014. The observation of the door is also mentioned in a letter from H. Jürgensen to The Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage Management in 1921, albeit without an exact description on the doors location («Ad: Ringebu kirke». *Brev til Riksantikvaren*. 1921. From the archives at The Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage Management).

In respectively the 1770s and 1780s the two famous Norwegian antiquarians Gerhard Schøning<sup>32</sup> and Hugo Frederik Hiorthøy<sup>33</sup> visited Ringeby stave church during journeys that later were published. According to them, the walls in the nave was once decorated with sculptures and paintings that had been demolished and erased during renovations in 1719. Neither of them stated where they got their information. The only remains of the paintings are a loose wooden board depicting The Last Judgment (*Fig. 5*), also mentioned by Schøning.<sup>34</sup> They both also mention a latticework feature each on a post near the entrance, presumably the western one.<sup>35</sup>



*Fig. 5* Photo of building part C18926. Museum of Cultural History.

<sup>32</sup> G. SCHØNING, *Reise som giennem en deel af Norge i de aar 1773, 1774, 1775 paa Hans Majestæt Kongens bekostning er giort og beskrevet: 3: Reise gjennem Gudbrandsdalen 1775* (Trondhjem 1926).

<sup>33</sup> H. F. HIORTHØY, *Beskrivelse over Gudbrandsdalen. Anden deel* (Lillehammer 1907).

<sup>34</sup> SCHØNING 1926 (note 32), p. 135. The artefact is today in the collection of the Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo (C18926).

<sup>35</sup> HIORTHØY 1907 (note 33), p. 94; SCHØNING 1926 (note 32), p. 135.

Of medieval furnishings still intact, we know of two crucifixes dated to the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>36</sup> a statue of St Lawrence from the late 1200s,<sup>37</sup> and the already mentioned late 1100s baptismal font. They are both dated by typological or stylistic criteria. One of the crucifixes is located above the west entrance and the other on a St Andrew's cross in the chancel arch of the 1200s church. Today the latter location corresponds to the upper wall facing the nave from the crossing. Whether these represent the original locations is not known, but it should be considered likely there was a triumphal cross in the chancel arch in the Middle Ages.<sup>38</sup> The crucifixes have however been moved around inside the church and for a period even were away from it.<sup>39</sup> In 1775 both crucifixes as well as the statue were in the chancel.<sup>40</sup> The fitting marks on the chancel arch crucifix sculpture also suggests that it was once attached to a different cross than it is today.<sup>41</sup> The baptismal font's probable location in the Middle Ages was established to be close to the western entrance, but in the northern half of the nave during the excavations. Traces of running water which appear to have been deposited over an extensive time interval were detected under the church. In Torpo stave church a hole in the floor beneath the baptismal font has been identified. The purpose was presumably to pour the water into sacred ground.<sup>42</sup>

The formerly mentioned latticework features observed by Schøning and Hiorthøy were interpreted as different features by Nicolay Nicolaysen, referring to their texts,<sup>43</sup> but it seems from both the location and descriptions that it is probably the same feature they described. Since Nicolaysen apparently never saw the feature himself it should have been removed sometime before his visit in the 1860s.

Nicolaysen did, however, mention a previously undescribed feature. On the right side of the door was a wooden construction that he described as apparently pre-dating the Reformation and without comparison in other buildings. It had the form of a semi cylinder about 20 cm long and 7 cm thick and was placed horizontally on the wall approximately in «breastheight». The feature which can only be identified as an alms box (or *truncus concavus*), had a coin slot and a hole through the wall. According to Nicolaysen there must have been a container for the coins on the inside of the wall.<sup>44</sup> This feature seems to be the only existing

<sup>36</sup> M. STEIN *et al.*, Ringeby stavkirkes 2de gamle crucifixer... Intet forandrer seg så ofte som fortiden. Om krusifiksene i Ringeby stavkirke, NIKU rapport 2 (Oslo 2003), pp. 7–36, att. 21 and 25.

<sup>37</sup> M. BLINDHEIM, Gothic painted wooden sculpture in Norway ca 1220–1350 (Oslo 2004), p. 208.

<sup>38</sup> ANKER 2005 (note 2), p. 76.

<sup>39</sup> STEIN *et al.* 2003 (note 36), p. 26.

<sup>40</sup> SCHØNING 1926 (note 32), p. 134 (Schøning actually interpreted the statue to be of St Olaf).

<sup>41</sup> STEIN *et al.* 2003 (note 36), p. 20.

<sup>42</sup> SKRE 1985 (note 17), pp. 14–15.

<sup>43</sup> N. NICOLAYSEN, Norske fornlevninger: en oplysende fortegnelse over Norges fortidslevninger, ældre en reformationen og henførte til hver sit sted (Kristiania 1862–1866), p. 88.

<sup>44</sup> N. NICOLAYSEN, Antikvariske notiser, Foreningen til norske fortidsmindesmærkers bevaring, Aarsberetning for 1895 (Oslo 1896), pp. 124–131, att. 124–125.

furnishing that can be directly connected to coin use as no remains of medieval altars have been identified, although it seems reasonable to assume it must have had several including layman or side altars.<sup>45</sup>

### 3. *The archaeological excavations and methodological issues*

The church was not excavated in its entirety. Only in the present northern transept did the archaeological investigators excavate down to sterile ground everywhere. In the rest of the church they went down to a level about 0,5 meters beneath the upper parts of the beams. In addition, they excavated several burials which revealed older phases. From this they made smaller examinations in specific areas.<sup>46</sup> All the excavated residues were sieved.<sup>47</sup>

In Norwegian church archaeology the excavations in Ringebu were to count almost as a pioneer project in terms of the ambitions of documentation, but as already mentioned the excavation had different field leaders and different documentation methods. Which means there are several methodological issues following an attempt to plot finds in a search for meaningful patterns. Trials and errors affect the precision of the find coordinates that vary from centimeter precision up to partly overlapping areas of several square meters, the most extensive up to a total of 28 m<sup>2</sup> (Fig. 6 and 7). The second season of excavation – in 1981 – had a much finer degree of precision than the previous year, with more than 4/5 (81,64%) of the coins attributed to square meter polygons, or less. 85 coin finds are recorded with precise coordinates. However, the nature of the documentation provides finds charts that in most cases are not a picture of how it was, but rather how it might have been.

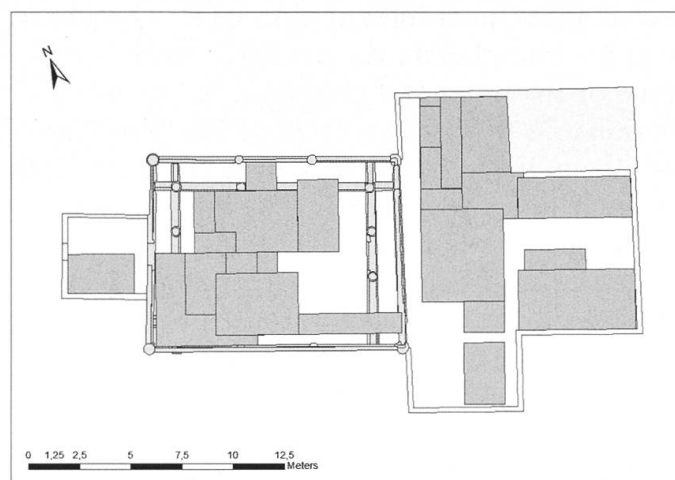
The areas that were excavated were for a large part disturbed, and the sterile ground of a sort that often made it difficult to separate different disturbances<sup>48</sup> caused by a variety of activities beneath the floor level, including burials and levelling. The current church is built on fire remains of the older church. Parts of these remains were *in situ*, but other parts were in layers from the levelling of the area. The different

<sup>45</sup> J. E. A. KROESEN, *Recentring Side Altars in Medieval Church Interiors: The Example of Late Romanesque Churches in Groningen*, in: J. E. A. KROESEN – V. M. SCHMIDT (eds.), *The Altar and its Environment 1150–1400, Studies in the Visual Cultures of the Middle Ages 4* (Turnhout 2009), pp 147–167; A. NILSÉN, *Focal Point of the Sacred Space. The Boundary between Chancel and Nave in Swedish Rural Churches: From Romanesque to Neo-Gothic* (Uppsala 2003), pp. 127–128.

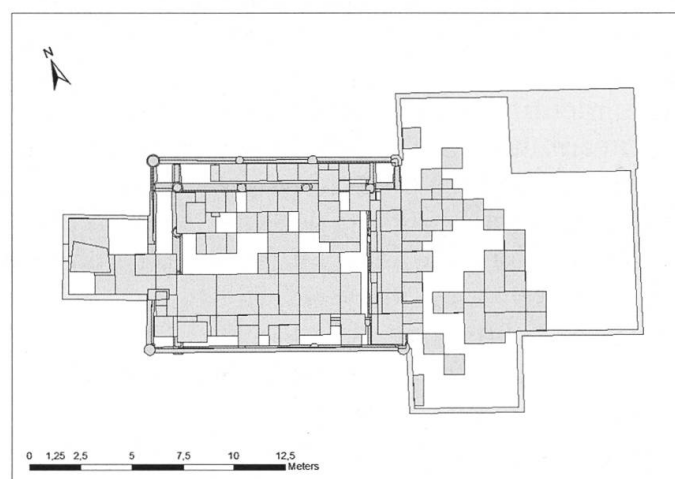
<sup>46</sup> SKRE 1985 (note 17), p. 2.

<sup>47</sup> The sieving equipment was custom made by Jørgen Jensenius before the excavations in Lom stave church in 1973, after consultations with Kolbjørn Skaare at the University Coin Cabinet. The exact measurements of the sieve holes are undocumented, but it was made to ensure bracteate fragments of about a quarter size could fall through (a Norwegian 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century bracteate's diameter is usually between 10 and 15 mm), but with some practice even they would be kept (Jørgen Jensenius, e-mail message to author, 23 January 2015).

<sup>48</sup> SKRE 1985 (note 17), pp. 3–4.



*Fig. 6* Demonstration of different kind of polygons finds are plotted in, exceeding 4 m<sup>2</sup>.  
Map: Terje Masterud Hellan and Steinar Kristensen, Museum of Cultural History.



*Fig. 7* Demonstration of different kind of polygons finds are plotted in, smaller than 4 m<sup>2</sup>.  
Map: Terje Masterud Hellan and Steinar Kristensen, Museum of Cultural History.

levelling layers were, in many cases, difficult to separate.<sup>49</sup> The uncertainty regarding the levels made it hard to connect coins to certain phases on a stratigraphic basis. Younger coins have been connected to older phases, and vice versa.<sup>50</sup>

In total 34 grave constructions were found during the excavations.<sup>51</sup> Eight of these are presumably older than the stave church, and among these there are three pre-Christian cremation burials not dated.<sup>52</sup> The majority of the coins found in connection to burials can be ruled out as secondary finds, for instance those

<sup>49</sup> SKRE 1985 (note 17), pp. 14 and 25–27.

<sup>50</sup> SKRE 1985 (note 17), p. 56.

<sup>51</sup> SKRE 1985 (note 17), pp. 93–96.

<sup>52</sup> SKRE 1985 (note 17), pp. 45–57.

localized from two collapsed post-reformation grave chambers, both with intact coffins inside. The grave chamber in the crossing stands out with about 40 coins found on the surface or in the actual chamber. 39 of these were certainly from before the Reformation and the last one from 1534–1559. The oldest dated coffin in the chamber was from 1681. There may have been a smaller grave chamber pre-dating 1630, limited to only one coffin, while the area in question was still a chancel.<sup>53</sup> The other grave chamber which can be dated accurately to 1652<sup>54</sup> and is located outside the 1200s church also contained 11 medieval coins. Thus, only a single coin found during the excavations can with an adequate amount of certainty be interpreted as a primary find from a grave. A Swedish penny from the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century found in a grave chamber in the nave.<sup>55</sup>

In addition to the varying degree of precision we also have to face the fact that most  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the coins were found in the disturbed top layer. The finds location has not necessarily a direct connection to the place of deposit, *e.g.* the levelling layers for the 1200s church have coins from the entire middle ages, the youngest from the 1500s.<sup>56</sup> In an undisturbed context they would only have coins older than around 1200, when the church was built.

When disturbance is identified and considerations regarding the finds within such contexts are interpreted, the contextual significance is often discarded, partly or fully. However, on a more positive note there are some things to be said:

- 1) Vertical disturbances do not necessarily make as much impact in the horizontal space as they do between layers. That is not to say that a coin cannot be moved back and forth several meters, but it is unlikely that it will happen with all of them. Finds patterns, therefore, are to be expected;
- 2) Compared to most churches we have, in Ringeby, a large number of finds make patterns all the more plausible. A kind of law of large numbers.
- 3) The archaeological report contains valuable written observations made by the excavators. These factors will in the following be used to show that the areas of most interest: The eastern and western aisle have concentrations that in all probability are indicators of an extensive handling of coins in those areas. It should be stated that the material in use in this discussion are mainly the coins themselves. Coins have a couple of obvious advantages over other medieval or early modern artefacts. They can be dated more easily and precise. Most artefacts would be hard to date to the pre- or post-Reformation. Lastly; coins have a documented liturgical importance.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>53</sup> SKRE 1985 (note 17), p. 7.

<sup>54</sup> SKRE 1985 (note 17), pp. 7–8.

<sup>55</sup> SKRE 1985 (note 17), p. 15. There have been a mixup with the finds numbers in this case. In the report and field diary it says coin number M144. In the list of coins finds it is called M243. Both the list and the field diary are dated 28 July 1981 and the coin was the only one to be found that day. It is hard to tell were the mistake was done, but both coins are twosided pennies from Magnus Eriksson, made *ca* 1319–1339.

<sup>56</sup> SKRE 1985 (note 17), p. 4.

<sup>57</sup> GULLBEKK *et al.*, forthcoming (note 8).

4. Money use and liturgy (Fig. 8 and Tab. 1)

In total 868 coins were found in the church. 740 of these are probably pre-Reformation<sup>58</sup> and 128 post-Reformation. The coin finds from Ringebu does not stand out in a Norwegian context regarding the timeframe or compositions of issuers, mints, denominations and types. The general trends in Norwegian coin circulation from the Viking Age up to post-Reformation days are well established, with some degree of variations. From the reign of Harald Hardrada (1046–66) until around 1320 most coins in circulation were Norwegian. In the 1300s Swedish coins became prevalent, probably instigated by a coin union between the two countries under the common king Magnus IV (1319–1355/63).

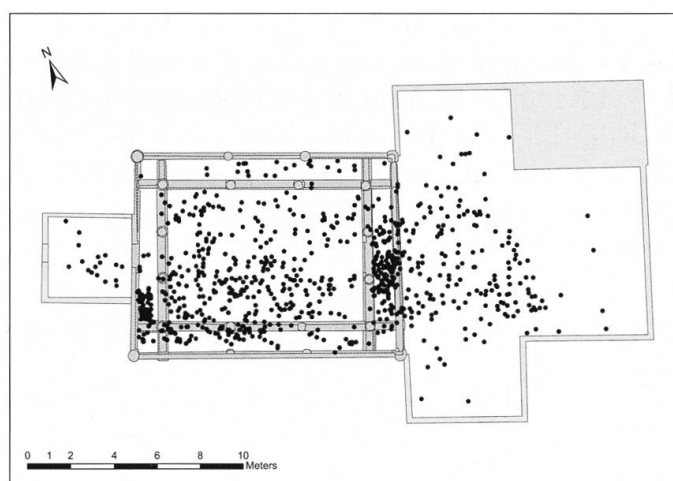


Fig. 8 Map of the plotted coin finds in Ringebu. Map: Terje Måsterud Hellan and Steinar Kristensen, Museum of Cultural History.

	1000s	1100s	1200s	1300s	1400s	1500s	1600s	1700s	1800s	Unknow	Total
Norway		34	361	23	15	6	27	18	7		491
Denmark	2		1		35	6	39	21	1		105
Sweden		1	4	52	23	4		1			85
Gotland		1	2	1	3	2					9
England				1							1
Mecklenburg					65					1	66
German or Baltic				5	13	4	1	1			24
Poland						1					1
Unknown										86	86
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>868</b>

Table 1 Summary of the coin finds of Ringebu Stave Church.

<sup>58</sup> That number include 89 unidentified specimens with a thickness and fabric consistent with medieval coinage.

Also, English pennies was somewhat common in the 1300s, but few are found in the church finds in general, although one is recorded here. After 1387 Norwegian coin production seems to have stopped, and in the late 1300s and early 1400s both German<sup>59</sup> and Danish coins circulated; courtesy, probably, to Hanseatic merchants and the Kalmar union. In the 1500s the picture seems to be mixed between Norwegian, Danish, Swedish and German, but with a general shortage of small change, and from the 1600s Danish and Norwegian coins circulated side by side due to the union of Denmark-Norway.<sup>60</sup>

This article will not emphasize the questions of where the coins originally came from per se, *e.g.* Mecklenburgian bulls head bracteates that are common from the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, simply reflect their general standing as the most common small change in circulation in Norway at that time. However, it is, with few exceptions, the smallest coins from all periods that appears most frequent. Petty coins are more easily slipped or swept into the cracks of wooden floors than large denomination currencies, and small change coins would be expected to be used more frequently and lost more often due to careless use and with less care to recover them. This phenomenon can be observed in Ringeby stave church and is consistent with the trend among Scandinavian church finds.<sup>61</sup> This is true even for the 11<sup>th</sup> century, a period when only one denomination was minted, but where at least one, or probably both coins found, being intentionally clipped into farthings or quarter pence, and thereby transformed into petty coins through secondary use.

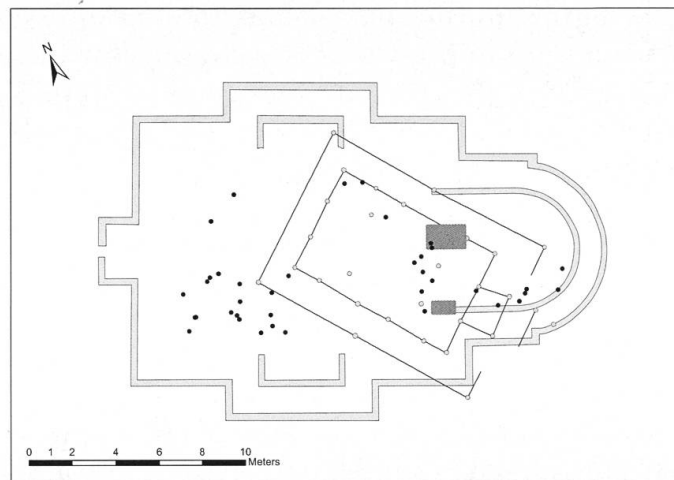
At any given point, each of the coin finds reflect them being brought into the church and The discussions in this chapter will focus on concentrations of coins by 1) in the south-west corner of the nave 2) by the triumphal cross and the coin finds – or lack thereof – in the choir.

<sup>59</sup> In table 1 so-called Mecklenburgian bulls head bracteates, although German by name, have been separated from German coins. The provenance of the coin group have been debated with some suggesting they have a Scandinavian origin due to their large numbers in Scandinavian finds. The majority of them seems to have circulated in the late 1400s or later. For a resume of the discussion *cf.* T. M. HELLAN, *Utenlandsk mynt i Norge, ca. 1350–1483*. Master thesis in archaeology - Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet (Trondheim 2012), pp. 40–43 and 75.

<sup>60</sup> S. H. GULLBEKK, *Pengevesenets fremvekst og fall i Norge i middelalderen* (København 2009); HELLAN 2012 (note 59); H. HOLST, *Norges mynter til slutten av 16. århundrede*, *Nordisk Kultur XXIX*, 1936, pp. 93–138; K. SKAARE, *Norges Mynthistorie*, Bind 1 (Oslo 1995).

<sup>61</sup> S. H. GULLBEKK – A. SÆTTEM, *Norske myntfunn 1050–1319: Penger, kommunikasjon og fromhetskultur* (Oslo 2019); H. HOLST, *Numismatiske kirkefunn i Norge. Mynter fra 12. århundre til nyere tid, funnet i norske kirker og kirketufter*, *Nordisk Numismatisk Årsskrift 1953* (1955), pp. 1–31.

4.1. *The posthole church (Fig. 9)*



*Fig. 9* Map of the posthole church's relation to 1100s coins. The two coins from the 1000s polygons marked as rectangles (near the chancel apse of the 1200s church). Map: Terje Masterud Hellan and Steinar Kristensen, Museum of Cultural History.

Under the standing stave church there are archaeological remains of an older and much smaller stave church, classified architecturally as a posthole church. Unfortunately, no coins can with certainty be related to this first generation church on the basis of stratigraphy. The dating of this first stave church is significant for our understanding of the archaeological complex as a whole. According to the sagas the Christianization of Gudbrandsdalen began with the rendezvous between the king St Olaf and the local chieftain Dale-Gudbrand at the still existing farm of Hundorp in the municipality of Sør-Fron in the year 1022.<sup>62</sup> Ringebu is roughly 10 km away, and the dating evidence based upon [C14] for a posthole church place it AD 1045+/-75.

The finds of two farthings from Cnut the Great, in context of the first church building on the site, should presumably be related to the first Christian activity in the valley. The coins cannot be connected stratigraphically to any of the pre-Christian burials and were found roughly 1 meter and 3–4 meters from the closest ones. The coins were found respectively in a levelling layer for the standing building and a deposited layer of wooden remains and splinters from the stave church's chancel and pentice. Several fragments of burned bone found in the area also indicated that burials had been disturbed by later activities.<sup>63</sup> We do not know how or why these coins ended up in the church, presumably more than a century earlier than the second oldest coins.

<sup>62</sup> J. H. LARSEN, Gravfeltet på Hundorp i Gudbrandsdalen – gamle og nye fornminner, in: I. YSTGAARD – T. HEIBREEN, *Varia 62, Arkeologiske undersøkelser 2001–2002: katalog og artikler* (Oslo 2007), pp. 189–210, att. 189–192.

<sup>63</sup> SKRE 1985 (note 17), p. 1.

In the way of comparison, similar finds in Høre stave church in Valdres valley provide possible explanations: A fragment of a Danish penny from the 11<sup>th</sup> century was found in a grave in the chancel and another one in a posthole in the posthole church.<sup>64</sup> Coin finds in pre-Christian and possibly Christian graves have been documented to exist in this period<sup>65</sup> and coins as a building offer is also a known phenomenon.<sup>66</sup> Unfortunately, the stratigraphic records only make room for indicative conclusions.

The cut pennies from Cnut the Great were minted between 1023 and 1029. What, where and who were involved in the use of these coins from they were minted until they ended up in Ringebu is difficult to recount in any detail. Presumably they left England before or shortly after the recoinage of *ca* 1029. How long they were in use within the Norwegian realm is uncertain, but from what was the trend, few foreign coins remain in circulation after *ca* 1080. What seems clear is that the two Cnut pennies constitute isolated examples of coin use at this Ringebu site. Further evidence of coin use appears first hundred years later, in the last quarter of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, with the possible exception of a Gotlandic coin from 1130–1220. The practice of paying Peter's pence was probably introduced in Norway around the middle of that century.<sup>67</sup> This correlates well with appearances of coin finds in significant numbers in Ringebu, especially Norwegian bracteates from the time of Sverre Sigurdsson (1177–1202).

In the earliest layers on the site we have records of finds several small melted metal pieces. Five of these were analyzed and in everyone the alloy contained mainly copper (Cu) with around 5–15% tin (Sn), and somewhere around 1% lead (Pb). In addition, there were traces of other elements (less than 1%). The five pieces were interpreted to be remains from three different artefacts<sup>68</sup> and stratigraphically belong to the posthole church as a part of the levelling layer the stave church was founded on.<sup>69</sup> Following the metal analysis there is no reason to believe that the melted material stems from coins, but rather unknown bronze artefacts. Although copper in the later Middle Ages would be the main element in at least small change coins, the bracteates of the 1100s consisted mostly of silver.<sup>70</sup> The two silver coins of the 1000s also made it through the fire without much damage, implying the heat would not be of the same intensity everywhere beneath the floor. More coins would probably survive to be found if they were numerous before the end of the 1100s.

<sup>64</sup> J. A. RISVAAG, Coin finds of Høre stave church, Oppland Norway: Reflections of regulation and conflict in the Middle Ages, in: GULLBEKK *et al.*, forthcoming (note 8).

<sup>65</sup> A. S. GRÄSLUND, Charonsmynt i vikingatida graver?, TOR, Meddelanden från Institutionen för nordisk fornkunskap vid Uppsala universitet, XI, 1965–1966, pp. 168–197; K. SKAARE, Myntene fra Lom kirke, Foreningen til norske Fortidsminnesmerkers Bevaring, Årbok (Oslo 1978), pp. 120–124.

<sup>66</sup> F. LINDAHL, Om mønter og medailler som bygningsofre, Nationalmuseets Arbejdsmark 1956, pp. 93–102.

<sup>67</sup> W. E. LUNT, Papal Revenues in the Middle Ages, I (New York 1965), p. 67.

<sup>68</sup> Letter from Astrup to Knoph, 1982.

<sup>69</sup> Letter from Knoph to Astrup, 1982.

<sup>70</sup> GULLBEKK 2009 (note 60), pp. 363–375.

#### 4.2 *The stave church*

The majority of the coins in Ringebru were found in the nave of the current church. As can be observed in figure 8 there is a concentration of significant numbers of coin finds in the southern half. Traditionally this has been understood as the male side, although the view have recently been problematized and presented as more complex than previously thought.<sup>71</sup> Of the coins in the nave there are two or three areas that stands out: The western aisle, the eastern aisle, both areas undisturbed by post-Reformation burials, and maybe the southern aisle close to where there once was a southern door. In the following these will be presented. The eastern aisle will be compared to its nearby medieval chancel. It will also be looked at the remarkable change in find patterns in the post-medieval period.

By the south-western post, in the aisle, a distinctive composition in layer 1 was observed in a concentrated area. Wooden splinters, dust and sand lay in different stratas with a varying degree of compactness. Inside this area, in addition to several other artefacts, 64 coins were found. Dagfinn Skre suggests that this was a hatch or a larger crack in the floor into which materials have been swept down.<sup>72</sup> Jørgen Jensenius was also of the opinion that the floor boards had larger cracks in this area and describes a tilted pile beneath the aisle with dried wool fluff, coins and sand in different stratas.<sup>73</sup> The possibility that this was the location for a baptismal font has been mentioned,<sup>74</sup> but as already mentioned this one was presumably in the other half of the nave. The font could be placed different places at different times. However, the use of coins in the baptismal liturgy is not a widely recognized phenomenon. The art historian Mona Bramer Solhaug recently made a study further excluding any connection between coin finds and baptismal fonts.<sup>75</sup> The possibility that the earth ended up there after being dug away from another part of the church also seem slim given that the most obvious place this could come from is interpreted as a medieval grave chamber, and the north-south oriented floor boards<sup>76</sup> would have to be removed on both parts of the western sill for it to happen (*Fig. 10 and 11*).

In this part of the church the above-mentioned alms box was affixed to the wall beside the entrance close to these coin concentrations. Where the device

<sup>71</sup> S. H. GULLBEKK, Scandinavian women in search of salvation, Womens use of money in religion and devotional practice, in: N. MYRBERG BURSTRÖM – G. TARNOW INGVARSSON (eds.), *Divina Moneta: Coins in Religion and Ritual* (Abingdon – New York 2018), pp. 209–227; M. W. JÜRGENSEN, Syddør, norddør og det kønsopdelte kirkerum, *Kirkearkæologi i Norden* 9, Hikuin 36, 2009, pp. 7–28.

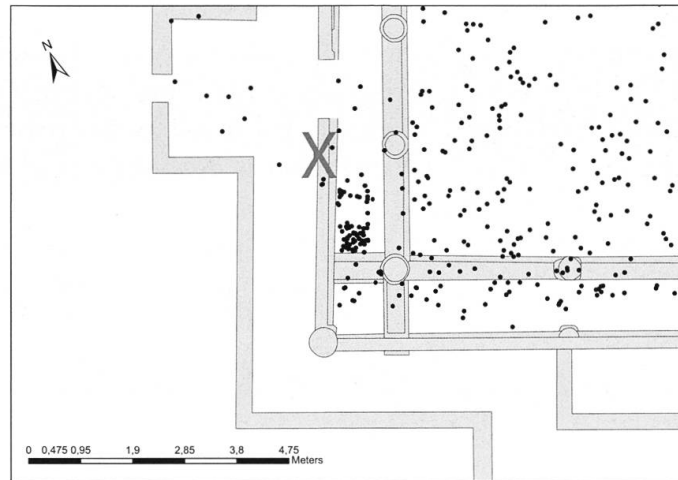
<sup>72</sup> SKRE 1985 (note 17), p. 16.

<sup>73</sup> Jørgen Jensenius, e-mail message to author, 23 January 2015.

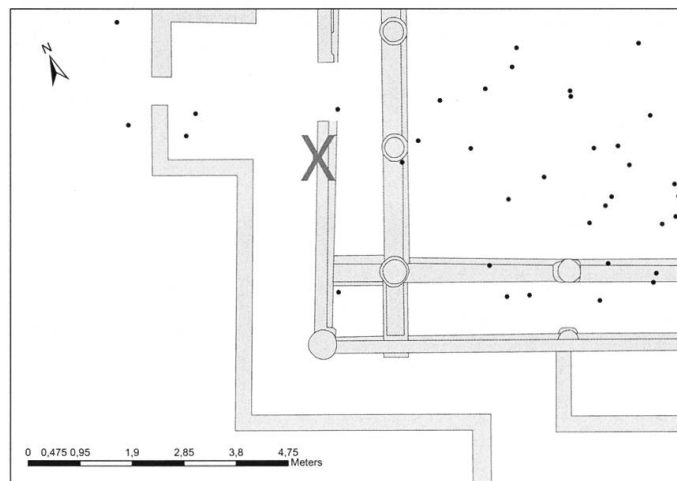
<sup>74</sup> BERG 1983 (note 9), pp. 61–62.

<sup>75</sup> Mona Bramer Solhaug, e-mail message to author, 9 February 2015. It should be noted that the study, also presented at a Religion & Money workshop in Visby, Sweden, 5–7 November 2014, is partially based on the Ringebru finds.

<sup>76</sup> Ringebru kirke. Kort beskrivelse av middelalderkirkens nedre konstruksjoner. Notat, From the archives at The Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage Management (Oslo ca 1979).



*Fig. 10* Map of the western aisle with pre 1630 coins. Approximate spot of truncus concavus marked with an X near the entrance. Unidentified medieval fragments included. Map: Terje Masterud Hellan and Steinar Kristensen, Museum of Cultural History.



*Fig. 11* Map of the western aisle with post 1630 coins. Approximate spot of truncus concavus marked with an X near the entrance. Map: Terje Masterud Hellan and Steinar Kristensen, Museum of Cultural History.

mentioned by Nicolaysen itself was located on the eastern wall of the porch, there was a hole through the wall corresponding to the slot for coin insertion, and according to Nicolaysen there must have been a container on the inside of the wall.<sup>77</sup> That would be in the nave approximately one to two meters from one of the most prolific concentrations of coin finds in the church. The coin finds suggest that the device was in place in the last quarter of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. When it went out of use is more difficult to establish, but the coin finds seem to disappear after *ca* 1600 when there is no longer a finds concentration in this area.

<sup>77</sup> NICOLAYSEN 1896 (note 44), pp. 124–125.

At the time of Nicolaysen the hole through the wall had «a long time ago» been replaced with a piece of wood, and Nicolaysen interprets the box to be from medieval times.<sup>78</sup> The problem with connecting coin finds to this box is the coin slot is actually located in the porch, but the coins themselves were found in the nave. If we have coin finds stemming from use of the alms box one should however be more inclined to expect more coin finds on the church porch where the actual payment would have taken place, with only 18 finds of which 12 pre-Reformation, but the current porch was built in 1715 and there were seemingly many different phases before that. Rebuilding would have disturbed the archaeological contexts. In addition, where the church floors in most of the church have some air between the boards and the earth, the flooring in the porch seems to have been partly or fully made from stone fundamentals<sup>79</sup>. A stone floor would explain the shortcomings of coin finds in the porch, in the same way that we can observe for lack of coin finds in medieval town churches. The archaeologist von der Fehr talks about coins possibly being lost on the inside of the church when the alms box was emptied<sup>80</sup> while the ethnologist Herleik Baklid have argued in favor of «the offering hypothesis».<sup>81</sup> Whereas the accidental coin dropping in relation to offerings would have been conducted by perhaps thousands of people over the years, the emptying of an alms box would obviously have been done by a small group of people, perhaps only one – operating alone when the crowd was away – over an extended time interval. If this were a problem, which it probably would be recognized as, it likely would have been fixed. An alternative model would be to consider the possibility of a medieval side altar being removed sometime between 1537 and 1630. Schøning was convinced the latticework feature on one of the inner posts once contained a saint's statue.<sup>82</sup> Such a side altar would have fueled extended coin handling in this particular area of the church. When so many of those coins have ended up beneath the floor boards it might be because the pillars would be a natural place for cracks since the floor boards would have to be very finely cut to fit the pillar perfectly. This alternative explanation is suggested by one of the executive archaeologists in the excavation diary.<sup>83</sup>

The other main concentration of coin finds in Ringebru is found in the eastern aisle, right beneath the medieval chancel arch (*Fig. 12 and 13*). This area has about 18,2% of all found coins. Interestingly there are not any notable numbers of finds in the chancel itself. Only about 18,5% of Ringebru's total coin finds are distributed in the entire area of the chancel. This in sharp contrast to the situation as documented in for instance Høre stave church where about 66% of the coins have been found in the chancel.<sup>84</sup> As there is no significant coin concentrations being observed in the chancel area this might be explained as consequences due

<sup>78</sup> NICOLAYSEN 1896 (note 44), p. 125.

<sup>79</sup> SKRE 1985 (note 17), p. 17.

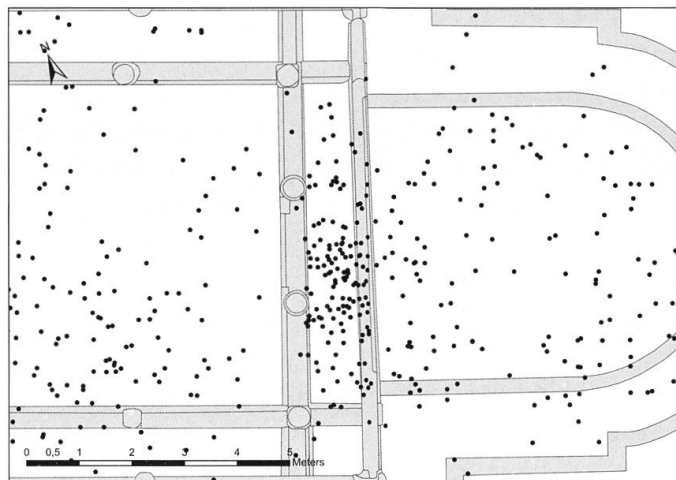
<sup>80</sup> VON DER FEHR 1989 (note 10), p. 167.

<sup>81</sup> BAKLID 1995 and 1998 (note 11).

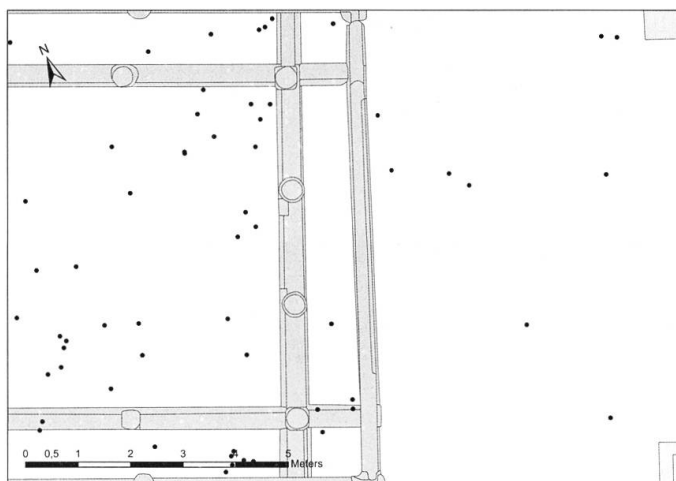
<sup>82</sup> SCHØNING 1926 (note 32), p. 135.

<sup>83</sup> Excavation diary: Graving i vestre omgang. 17.06.81.

<sup>84</sup> RISVAAG, forthcoming (note 64).



*Fig. 12* Map with eastern aisle centered and pre 1630 coins. Unidentified medieval fragments included. Map: Terje Masterud Hellan and Steinar Kristensen, Museum of Cultural History.



*Fig. 13* Map with eastern aisle centered and post 1630 coins. Map: Terje Masterud Hellan and Steinar Kristensen, Museum of Cultural History.

to the later disturbances. It could however be expected to be found more coins in disturbed contexts. With the eastern aisle concentration being right next to the chancel there could be a risk that deposits were moved from the chancel during post-Reformation alterations.

Still, that would require the floor boards in the nave to have been removed at the time for it to happen. This does not seem very likely, as remains from the digging of the grave chamber has been identified. The excavation diary also speculates that the floors were rebuilt in 1630,<sup>85</sup> but the grave chamber were built over an

<sup>85</sup> Excavation diary. Skip. Østre omgang. Gravning. 30.06.80.

extended time interval and only a small part seems to have been dug before or during the alterations in 1630, which minimizes the possibility of floor boards in the aisle missing when the hole for the chamber was emptied.<sup>86</sup>

Hence, internal disturbances inside the chancel itself seems to be a more plausible effect of the rebuilding and digging of the grave chamber.

There are several possible explanations for the significant concentration of coin finds in the eastern aisle, which ceases sometime between the Reformation and 1630, similarly to the one in the western aisle. The most obvious explanation for this concentration of finds is that it relates to one or several altars. Berg<sup>87</sup> and von der Fehr<sup>88</sup> have mentioned the possibility of a layman altar in connection with these finds. The area between the nave and the chancel is a natural placement for a side altar<sup>89</sup>. A more likely explanation than the finds being related to the high altar that in normal circumstances would be placed at the back of the chancel apse. However, no altar foundations have been identified in that area, as was usual and has been identified in other churches, *e.g.* Bø old church.<sup>90</sup> The reason why is that in Ringebru stave church this area was turned into a grave chamber, probably sometime after the restorations in 1630.<sup>91</sup> An alternative explanation could be that the stave church from the beginning had one room only, which would make the eastern aisle the only natural placement of the high altar. The coin finds in the aisle covers the whole period up to the reformation, and due to lack of stratigraphic continuity, there is no incontrovertible evidence that the building parts were founded at the same time.<sup>92</sup> In Høre stavechurch and in Sweden we can observe interesting examples of an alms box by the triumphal cross<sup>93</sup>, which, in principle, also could have been the case at Ringebru.

In the southern aisle there also seems to be a certain concentration of coins. The area concerned is also identified by von der Fehr<sup>94</sup> even though it is somewhat vaguer defined than the two previously discussed (*Fig. 14* and *15*). The coin finds in this area provide two extraordinary aspects: First, it ceases after the reign of Håkon Håkonsson (1217–1263) and secondly, it is very close to where there once was a southern door. If there once was an entrance there it would be a natural place for alms giving, and presumably an alms box. Being close to the wall and in between two posts it would however also be a natural place for a layman altar.

<sup>86</sup> SKRE 1985 (note 17), pp. 6–8.

<sup>87</sup> BERG 1985 (note 9), p. 258.

<sup>88</sup> VON DER FEHR 1989 (note 10), pp. 164–165.

<sup>89</sup> KROESEN 2009 (note 45), p. 152.

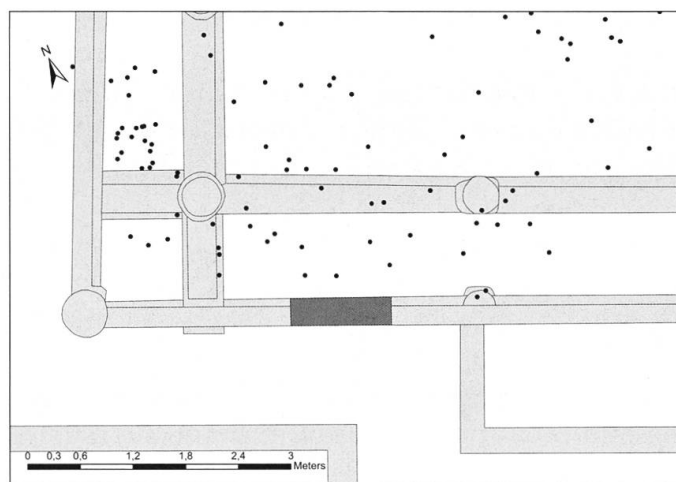
<sup>90</sup> D. SKRE, *Innberetning fra Riksantikvarens bygningsarkeologiske undersøkelser i Bø gamle kirke* 1985, From the archives at The Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage Management (Oslo 1987), pp. 26–31.

<sup>91</sup> SKRE 1985 (note 17), p. 7.

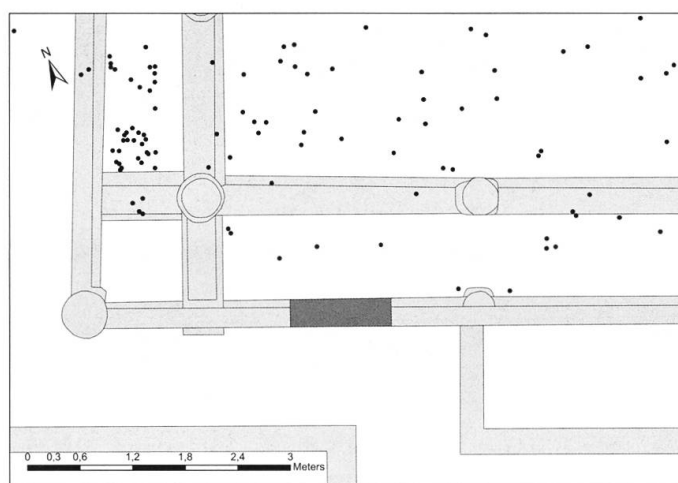
<sup>92</sup> SKRE 1985 (note 17), pp. 3–4 and 23.

<sup>93</sup> RISVAAG, forthcoming (note 64); KLACKENBERG 1992 (note 8), find 132.

<sup>94</sup> VON DER FEHR 1989 (note 10), p. 164.



*Fig. 14* Map of southern aisle with pre 1263 coins. South door marked as darkened rectangle. Unidentified medieval fragments not included. Map: Terje Masterud Hellan and Steinar Kristensen, Museum of Cultural History.

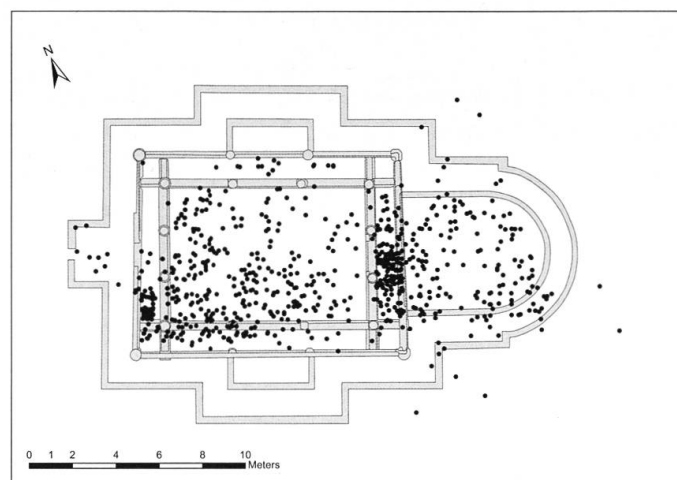


*Fig. 15* Map of the southern aisle with post 1263 coins. South door marked as darkened rectangle. Unidentified medieval fragments not included. Map: Terje Masterud Hellan and Steinar Kristensen, Museum of Cultural History.

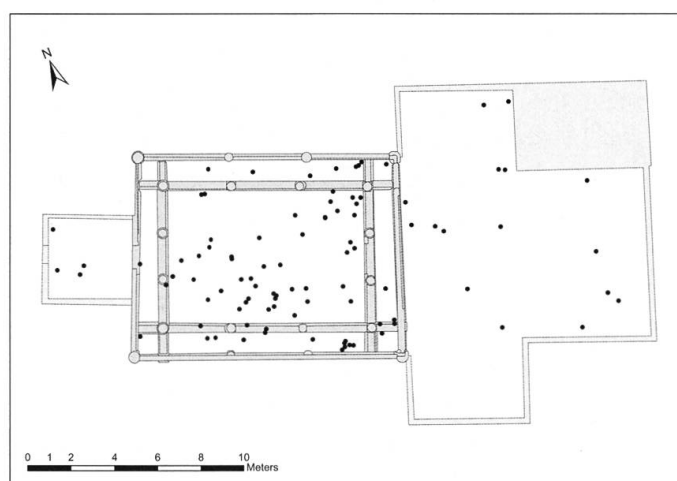
#### *4.3 Pre- and post-Reformation finds patterns (Fig. 16 and 17)*

There is a significant change in the find patterns between the 1200s church and the church after the 1630 rebuilding. In general, it is hard to detect changes immediately after the Reformation due to the limited amount of information about coin use in this period. This, of course, is for a large part a consequence of fewer coins from that period in circulation, and a significant decrease in the number of coin finds in most Norwegian churches.<sup>95</sup> In fact, very few coins were minted in Norway between 1387 and 1628, but as already pointed out, foreign

<sup>95</sup> HOLST 1955 (note 61) has compiled all known Norwegian numismatic church finds up to that point.



*Fig. 16* Map of the entire church with pre 1630 coins. Unidentified medieval fragments included. Map: Terje Masterud Hellan and Steinar Kristensen, Museum of Cultural History.



*Fig. 17* Map of the entire church with post 1630 coins. Map: Terje Masterud Hellan and Steinar Kristensen, Museum of Cultural History.

currency was available throughout the period. In Ringebru stavechurch most coins are medieval. What we also see is that coins with a dating that corresponds with the 1200s church have some notable concentrations, while the ones dated after 1630 are more evenly distributed within a larger area inside the church. One shift that is noticeable in Norwegian churches after the Reformation is a shift in the administration of the offering practice: the use of offering plates being carried around the church, a practice that is known to have become more common post-Reformation.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>96</sup> O. TVEITO, *Mynter i messen. Kirkefunnene som bidrag til kunnskap om offerpraksis og kirkeskikker (11.–17. årh.)*, *Historisk tidsskrift* 94, 2015, pp. 383–417, att. 413–414. It should be noted that the article in question is partially using Ringebru as an example to show this phenomenon.

### *5. Acknowledgements*

The author wishes to thank Dagfinn Skre and the late Jørgen Jensenius for their enthusiastic help and advice. Their first-hand information has been invaluable. I cannot thank Steinar Kristensen enough for his help with both the foundations for the map making, and his willingness to help when my own limitations became too obvious. Finally, I would like to thank all the participants in the Religion and Money-project for knowledge and advice.<sup>97</sup> The article's shortcomings are solely the author's responsibility.

#### *Archival material in the form of diaries, notes and letters (reports are in the ordinary literature list)*

Excavation diary 1980–1981, From the archives at The Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage Management

Letter from E. Astrup to K. Knoph, 17 August 1982, From the archives at The Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage Management

Letter from H. Jürgensen to The Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage Management, 1921, «Ad: Ringeby kirke». Brev til Riksantikvaren. From the archives at The Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage Management

Letter from K. Knoph to E. Astrup, 25 January 1982, From the archives at The Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage Management

Ringeby kirke. Kort beskrivelse av middelalderkirkens nedre konstruksjoner. Notat, From the archives at The Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage Management (Oslo ca 1979)

#### *Personal communications*

Jørgen Jensenius, e-mail message to author, 23 January 2015.

Dagfinn Skre, e-mail message to author, 29 October 2014.

Mona Bramer Solhaug, e-mail message to author, 9 February 2015.

#### *Written sources*

Diplomatarium Norvegicum [DN]. Oldbreve til Kundskab om Norges indre og ydre Forhold, Sprog, Slægter, Sæder, Lovgivning og Rettergang i Middelalderen. Vol. I–XXIII. (Christiania-Oslo: Kommisjonen for Diplomatium Norvegicum 1847–2011).

<sup>97</sup> <https://www.khm.uio.no/english/research/projects/religion-and-money/>

### *Abstract*

In 1980/1981 there were found some 868 coins beneath Ringeby stave church in Norway. Chronologically stretching from the Viking age up to 19<sup>th</sup> Century, with a majority from the medieval times – only three Norwegian and a few Gotlandic churches can claim larger numbers of coin finds in Scandinavia. The foundations of the current church dates to *ca* 1192/3, and most medieval coins have a dating that corresponds to this phase. Among the coin finds there are at least two, maybe three, notable concentrations. All of which were in the nave. In this article the coin finds and the information to gather from them will be discussed.

### *Zusammenfassung*

1980/1981 wurden unter der Holzkirche von Ringeby in Norwegen 868 Münzen gefunden. Diese verteilen sich von der Wikingerzeit bis ins 19. Jahrhundert, wobei eine Mehrheit ins Mittelalter datiert – nur drei norwegische und ein paar Kirchen auf Gotland zeigen grössere Fundzahlen in Skandinavien. Die Fundamente der heutigen Kirche stammen aus der Zeit um 1192/3, und auch die meisten mittelalterlichen Münzen lassen sich in diese Zeit datieren. Die Fundmünzen zeigen mindestens zwei, wenn nicht sogar drei bemerkenswerte Konzentrationen, alle im Hauptschiff. Der Artikel diskutiert die Münzfunde und die aus ihnen gezogenen Informationen.

### *Résumé*

En 1980/1981, 868 pièces ont été mises au jour sous l'église en bois de Ringeby en Norvège. Leur chronologie s'étend de l'époque viking au 19<sup>e</sup> siècle, avec une majorité d'entre elles datée de l'époque médiévale – seules trois églises norvégiennes et quelques églises du Gotland peuvent revendiquer un plus grand nombre de découvertes monétaires en Scandinavie. Les fondations de l'église actuelle de Ringeby datent d'environ 1192/3, et la plupart des pièces médiévales sont datées de cette phase. Parmi les monnaies recueillies, il y a au moins deux, peut-être trois, concentrations notables qui se trouvaient toutes dans la nef. Nous revenons dans cet article sur ces découvertes monétaires particulières et discutons des informations qu'elles peuvent livrer.

Terje Masterud Hellan  
Department of Archaeology and Cultural History  
NTNU University Museum  
Erling Skakkes gt 47b  
N-7491 Trondheim  
terje.hellan@ntnu.no

