Methodological Reflections and Theoretical Perspectives on Analysing Church and Cemetery Finds

Herleik Baklid

Abstract

Archaeological investigations of the ground beneath church floors and cemeteries have uncovered extensive and varied artefactual material. Based on individual studies of four types of artefacts – coins, sticks with incised notches, dolls and hazel rods – in which the social significance of the artefacts and their association with the church area are analysed and discussed, this article aims primarily to develop an overall perspective on this thematic field. This is done by summarizing my applied methods and analytical results from the individual studies, conducting a comparison with other and more recent research and placing all these elements in a larger theoretical perspective. Christopher Tilley's concept of materiality, Alfred Gell's agency theory and Jonathan Z. Smith's place theory are used as theoretical inputs.

Keywords: church and cemetery finds, materiality, agency, topography of holiness

Archaeological investigations of cemeteries and the ground beneath church buildings have uncovered extensive artefactual material. The function and association of some artefacts with the church and the church area are obvious, but for other artefacts it is not clear what their purpose and function were, and neither, therefore, is their presence in the church ground or the cemetery ground. Nevertheless, this archaeologically produced artefactual material represents a potential for acquiring new cultural-historical knowledge about the behaviour and ideas associated with the church building and the church grounds. As an extension of this, I will explain and discuss methodological approaches and the source-related challenges of using this artefact material in cultural-historical research. Furthermore, I will discuss theoretical perspectives on the relationship between people and artefacts from the church and cemetery grounds, and how theoretical perspectives on the church building and the church grounds can help explain the findings and provide a better overall understanding of them.

The background to this question is that on the basis of many years of studying several types of artefacts produced by archaeological investigations of churches and cemeteries, I see the need to develop an overall perspective on this thematic field. I will do this by summarizing and compiling my methodological approaches and analytical findings from each of the individual studies, comparing them with other and more recent research and finally placing all these elements in a larger theoretical framework.

The individual studies I have conducted and published previously, and which I will use as a starting point to discuss the problem, concern coins, sticks with notches, dolls and hazel rods. The first three of these artefact types come from church grounds, while the fourth comes from graves in cemeteries (Baklid 1995, Baklid 2004, Baklid 2007 and Baklid 2017).

The Materiality of the Analysed Artefacts

The studies of the four types of artefacts mentioned above from archaeological investigations of churches and cemeteries have involved studies of material culture. A conventional approach to such material artefacts would be an empirical description and assessment of them in terms of e.g. material, design, colour, content and age (cf. Tilley 2007:17). However, since the primary purpose of my studies has not been to describe and examine the artefacts themselves, but rather to discuss and clarify their function, purpose or significance and why they have ended up under the church floor or in graves, which is not obvious from the outset, other and additional approaches have been required. As a result, I have moved on to the research concept of materiality, which has a far more comprehensive content in a scientific context. The term is defined somewhat differently and can have somewhat varying content (Rogan 2011:313ff), but since I have been concerned with the relationship of the objects to people, the British anthropologist and archaeologist Christopher Tilley's (b. 1955) account of the concept is highly appropriate in my context. He emphasizes the relationship of objects to people in a contribution to a discussion about stones and stone axes:

> I am concerned with the properties this stone has in relation to people. I am going beyond an empirical consideration of the stone to consider its meaning and significance. In doing so I move from a "brute" consideration of material to its social significance. This to me is what is meant by the concept of materiality. To consider the materiality of stone […] is to consider its social significance, the stone as meaningful, as implicated in social acts and events and the stories of people's lives, in both the past and the present (Tilley 2007:18).

In the following, I will link my four aforementioned studies to this theoretical-methodological framework, and specifically account for and reflect

on the procedure for clarifying the function or social significance of the artefacts, and thus penetrate behind the artefacts themselves. In this work, it has been necessary to take an interdisciplinary approach and draw on various professional competences. Since church and cemetery artefacts are relatively unexplored, it has been necessary to carry out very basic descriptions and investigations of the objects. In the following review, the general procedure for the four artefact types will be explained, while specific adaptations for each artefact type will be discussed.

The description and discussion are divided into the following main points:

- Description of the artefacts themselves
- The context of the discovery as a source of information
- Statistical hypothesis testing
- Comparison of the four artefact types
- Comparison with other source material
- The social significance and meaning of the artefacts

Description of the Artefacts Themselves

Describing the artefacts themselves, assessing and categorizing them has been a necessary first step on the way to clarifying their relationship to people or their social significance. I have done this through four approaches:

1. Description of the artefacts' categorization, design and occurrence
2. The material
3. Scientific investigations
4. Dating of the material

1. When it comes to categorizing the artefacts, it can sometimes be challenging as the artefacts can be both damaged and fragmented. In addition, the design of an artefact type can vary. However, it cannot be denied that categorization is easier for some of the object types than for others, e.g. categorizing coins is easier than categorizing dolls.

Although the categorization of coins is somewhat simpler, numismatic expertise is still required both to categorize them and to describe and evaluate them. This is therefore work done by numismatists. The coins in the church finds mainly consist of the following types: bracteates, hollow pennies, quarter pennies, half pennies, pennies, 2-shillings and 1-shillings. This means that the coins in the church finds are the smallest nominals in circulation at any given time (Baklid 1995:188). The total number of coins in the four church finds I have examined – Uvdal stave church, Ringebu stave church, Høre stave church and Bø old church – varies from about 350 to about 900.

The second type of artefact is sticks with notches cut into them. These are flat wooden sticks with a rectangular cross-section where the notch is cut

into the narrow long sides. The total number of such sticks uncovered is not particularly large, only 36, and they have only been found in Uvdal stave church and Bø old church (Baklid 2004:179, 182f). The number of notches on the sticks varies between 1 and 13, while the length of the sticks varies between approximately 5 cm and 58 cm (ibid.:181f).

The next type of artefact, dolls, does not occur in any great numbers either. In this context, a doll is textile pieces with lashings around them or textile pieces that are rolled up and bound and/or assembled in such a way that the head and body are visible (Baklid 2007:189). This is clearly visible on some of the dolls, while on others it is only hinted at. The design is therefore reminiscent of a small human child. From Reinli stave church, Lom stave church, Uvdal stave church and Vågå church, 19 dolls have been uncovered, varying in length from approximately 4.5 cm to approximately 12.5 cm (ibid.:189 and 191). Some of the dolls occurred in series, i.e. two or three pieces of identical or almost identical design made of the same type of textile (ibid.:196). As mentioned above, the categorization of dolls can present challenges. The guiding principle for categorization has been that if it is doubtful whether the object satisfies the definitional requirements, it has been omitted. This may of course have affected the number of objects included in the study, but it is unlikely to have any impact on the actual results of the analyses of the social significance of the objects. On the other hand, it could have an impact on our knowledge of the prevalence and extent of the practice.

The last type of artefact, hazel rods, have been found in graves in Norway, Sweden and Denmark. However, it should be noted that hazel rods are by no means found in all graves. The number of rods in the graves varied from 1–2, which is the most common, up to 7. In the graves, the rods were in different places in relation to the skeletons and in different positions. In coffin graves, the rods were placed under, in or on top of the coffin, while in coffinless graves the rods were placed under, next to or on top of the deceased. Sometimes the hazel rods were placed on top of the deceased in a cross formation (Baklid 2017:8ff). In the case of this artefact type, the number, location and formation of the rods may have been affected by decay.

2. The description of the artefacts also includes determining the material they are made of. The coins are mostly made of silver, but with somewhat varying silver content. For a couple of the artefact types, however, specialist expertise was needed to determine the material of the artefacts. A wood expert determined the species of a selection of the sticks with incised notches with the naked eye or a microscope to take a closer look at the cell structure, and found that they were mostly made of pine (Baklid 2004:186). Furthermore, a textile expert stated that the dolls were made of linen or cotton cloth (Baklid 2007:194f). As we will see below, the identification of material can be a useful aid to dating.

3. Scientific examinations of the artefacts have also been valuable in extracting further information from them. Such examinations can, for example, reveal whether there are biological or chemical traces on the artefacts or whether they have any content. The results of such investigations have been able to provide evidence to determine the purpose or meaning of the artefacts. This was the case, for example, with the sticks with notches carved into them, where the application of the chemical benzidine revealed blood stains on one of them (Baklid 2004:186).

When it came to the dolls, it was relevant to investigate whether they could contain anything. X-rays and computed tomography (CT) scans were therefore carried out on them. But nothing was found inside them. However, such examinations have limitations in that they have difficulty detecting very small or thin objects. As a result, there is a risk that important information may be missed, which in turn may affect conclusions about the purpose and social significance of the artefact type (Baklid 2007:199).

A more reliable method is endoscopic photography, which involves inserting a narrow tube with a light and camera at the end into the artefact. The method produces sharp images of the interior of the object, and any contents are clearly visible. However, the method is limited by the fact that there must be an opening in the object where the camera tube can be inserted. Since there were no such openings in any of the dolls and it was not desirable to damage them by making separate holes for the examination, endoscopy photography was not carried out on them.

As can be seen from this review, scientific investigations can provide valuable information for determining the meaning and social significance of artefacts, but they can also have limitations that make the results of limited value.

4. The dating of artefacts is also an important aspect of their description and evaluation. But dating them can sometimes be problematic. Coins are the easiest group of artefacts to date. Coins from more recent times are generally marked with the year, but this is not the case for medieval coins. Instead, they must be dated by comparing the style and technical characteristics of the coins or by the name of the sovereign or lord of the mint stamped on the coin. This means, therefore, that the dating of these coins can only be specified within a limited period of time (Baklid 1995:182f). The numismatic material in each of the church finds forms a continuous series of coins from the end of the twelfth century to around 1850 (cf. ibid.:186). In each of the church finds, more than 80 per cent of the coins originate from the Middle Ages (ibid.:185).

When it comes to the sticks with incised notches, as archaeologically produced material, these can only be dated on the basis of the stratigraphic conditions in the church ground. This does not provide any evidence for an

exact date, but the result was that the majority of the sticks very probably date from the second half of the seventeenth or eighteenth century (Baklid 2004:186). The majority of the dolls also date from the post-Reformation period, but these too cannot be accurately dated. However, the dating basis for the dolls is different from that for the sticks. The dolls were generally dated based on the textiles in them, and around half of them can be attributed to the nineteenth century (Baklid 2007:194f).

Different dating methods have been used for the hazel rods. In most cases, the rods have been dated based on archaeological criteria, but the C-14 method has also been used. Both of these methods only provide dating within a broadly defined time period and therefore no precise dating (Baklid 2017:15). In addition, written source material as a basis for dating has provided evidence for dating the hazel rods from Heddal (Nøstberg 1993:30 and 33f). The dating of the hazel rods spans a long period of time, from the tenth century to the nineteenth century (Baklid 2017:15f).

This review of the dates shows that it has been necessary and appropriate to use different types of dating methods for the church and cemetery artefacts examined. If we compare the dates of the four types of artefacts, we see that the coins and hazel rods mainly date from the tenth/eleventh century to around 1850, while the sticks with incised notches and the dolls mainly date from the post-Reformation period, with a concentration after the end of the seventeenth century or from the nineteenth century.

The Context of Discovery as a Source of Information

Since the artefacts studied are archaeologically produced, their context of discovery, not just the artefacts themselves, may also be of importance and a valuable addition to clarify their function. This will apply in particular to the church finds – the coins, the sticks with carved notches and the dolls. The topographical distribution of the artefacts in the church interior has been of particular interest, in order to investigate whether there were clusters/concentrations that could be linked to church furnishings, or whether the artefacts were evenly distributed throughout the church space.

From a source-critical point of view, however, there are a couple of problems associated with such an analysis. Firstly, the ground beneath churches is often disturbed by building work and burials (cf. Müller 1984:184), which means that it is not always certain that the artefact is in situ. Secondly, excavation and documentation routines were not fully developed at the earliest excavations (cf. Baklid 1995:183). This means that the information about the location of the artefacts can be very general, e.g. the site is only stated to be part of the church space. Of course, both of these factors may to some extent affect the informational value of the context in which the artefacts were found, but this is unlikely to affect the main results of the study.

As the numismatic material comprises several hundred coins and forms an almost continuous series of coins from the end of the twelfth century to around 1850, I carried out a topographical-chronological analysis of it for each of the four churches examined. In Uvdal stave church, Høre stave church and Bø old church, the majority of the coins from the Middle Ages occurred in the chancel, while this changed during the post-Reformation period, and from around 1650 onwards most of the coins were located in the nave. The ratio in Ringebu stave church deviated somewhat from the other churches, which is most likely due to the fact that soil has been disturbed and removed in connection with the construction and excavation of burial chambers. Coin accumulations occurred in all four churches in the Middle Ages, including in a depression in the apse of Høre stave church, the eastern part of the chancel in Bø old church and in the eastern part of the nave in both Uvdal stave church and Ringebu stave church. These coin accumulations could then be related to church furnishings. The depression in Høre stave church is probably a reliquary, the accumulation in the chancel of Bø old church can be linked to the high altar, which according to church regulations should contain a relic, and the accumulations in the eastern part of the nave of Uvdal and Ringebu stave churches can be linked to medieval side altars with associated saint sculptures. After the Reformation, the general trend in all four churches was that the coins no longer occurred in clusters, but were more scattered (Baklid 1995:186f, 191). For both groups of artefacts, sticks with incised notches and dolls, the number was small and they were relatively scattered in both the chancel and the nave (Baklid 2004:182f; Baklid 2007:190ff).

Statistical Hypothesis Testing

In cases where a type of artefact is found in large numbers under the church floor, it would also be scientifically appropriate to use statistical hypothesis testing as this provides a measure of how likely it is that a given accumulation or distribution is random or non-random. This statistical method was therefore applied to the coin material.

Statistical hypothesis testing has been used very little in historical or cultural history research. This may be because there has been a common perception that statistical tests cannot be applied to historical material as the historical data that has been handed down to us usually does not fulfil the requirement of being a random sample of a finite population. The Norwegian historian Eli Fure has countered this view in her article "Skipperskjønn og stokastikk". In the article, she shows that model-based statistical theory makes it possible to use hypothesis testing on historical data, even if they are not a random sample from a larger, finite population (Fure 1983).[1]

A well-suited type of hypothesis test for testing conditions related to church coins is the χ^2-test. The test involves testing hypotheses in relation

to the observed distribution compared with the expected distribution (cf. Bhattacharyya & Johnson 1977:424f). For the coin material from all four churches, the coin density was tested: 1. between the church's chancel and nave and 2. between clusters and the rest of the church. The result of the hypothesis testing showed that for Uvdal stave church, Høre stave church and Bø old church, the coin density in the chancel in the Middle Ages was statistically significantly different from the coin density in the nave below a level of 5 per cent. Similar test results were obtained for the density of coins in all of the above-mentioned coin hoards in relation to the density of coins in the rest of the churches (Baklid 1995:186, 194). When these test results were combined with the fact that the coin hoards could be linked to a reliquary and altars, this provided a stronger basis for clarifying the social significance of the coins.

However, it is important to realize that even if a hypothesis test results in a statistically significant accumulation of artefacts, nothing specific can be concluded about the underlying cause. The statistical hypothesis test can only be used to substantiate the existence of a type of causal relationship. In order to arrive at the specific underlying cause, a separate discussion is required.

Comparison of the Four Artefact Types

As archaeological investigations have been carried out in dozens of churches and church ruins, this has made it possible to compare the individual, specific artefact type with the associated find context from several churches. The same applies to cemetery excavations.

Such comparisons provide an opportunity to demonstrate the prevalence and regularity or the opposite, that is, the lack of prevalence and regularity for the individual artefact type. Prevalence, regularity and correspondence support an inference that the artefacts were attributed a collective and general social significance, while a lack of prevalence and regularity may indicate the opposite. This methodological approach has to a greater extent yielded results and strengthened the conclusion of a meaningful function for the coin material, the doll material and the hazel rods than for the sticks with incised notches, as the latter have only been found in two places.

While the coin material and hazel rods showed a greater degree of consistency, there was somewhat more variation when it came to the doll material. Although the sticks with incised notches were only found at two sites, the correspondence between the type of wood and design of the sticks, and the number of sticks at each of the sites, suggest that they were given a special meaning. However, based on the available source material, the geographically limited distribution would suggest that this cultural phenomenon had a more limited and localized practice (cf. Baklid 1995; Baklid 2004; Baklid 2007; Baklid 2017).

Comparison with Other Source Material

The descriptions, assessments and analyses of the artefacts themselves and the associated find context only provide evidence that the artefact types studied have been assigned a social significance, but this information is not sufficient to clarify specifically which one. In order to fulfil the content of Tilley's concept of materiality, i.e. to determine the function or social significance of the artefacts, it has required a discussion in which other source material has been drawn in. Information in different types of sources has therefore been compared with the descriptions and analyses of the objects themselves. This applies in particular to traditional records, but sagas, church-historical documents, legal material, descriptions, questionnaires, dictionaries and artefacts from archaeological investigations of a holy well have also been utilized (Baklid 1995:191f; Baklid 2004:188f; Baklid 2007:200ff; Baklid 2017:18ff). Through juxtaposition with these other sources, material culture has been linked to information within immaterial culture.

From a source-critical point of view, there may be a couple of challenges with this. Firstly, it is not given that the types of artefacts and the information in the tradition or the other sources are contemporaneous, and secondly, there is not always a geographical correspondence between the place where the artefacts were uncovered and the place where the information originated. However, when it comes to behavioural traditions, it has been shown that they can last several hundred years (Baklid 2015). What is more, the same traditions are often found over large distances. On the basis of this, these two stated source-critical elements should not have any decisive impact on the results of the analysis.

The Social Significance of Artefacts

As pointed out above, the social significance of artefacts is central to Tilley's concept of materiality. In the following, I will therefore briefly explain this for the four artefact types studied on the basis of the above descriptions, investigations and approaches. The conclusion regarding the coins is that the majority of them from both the Middle Ages and the post-Reformation period were deposited as votive offerings to alleviate a situation of illness or crisis (Baklid 1995:192f). This was primarily practised in the Middle Ages, but the practice continued in post-Reformation times, albeit to a lesser extent. While many of the coins from the Middle Ages occurred in clusters adjacent to or near the high altar in the chancel and adjacent to or near the side altars in the eastern part of the nave, and were apparently aimed at relics and sculptures of saints, the post-Reformation coins were far more scattered in the church grounds. When I make some reservations and do not claim that all church coins were laid down as votive offerings, it is because the congregation in the Middle Ages made their sacrifices of offerings on or at the high altar or on

the side altars (*NGL*, Anden Række, vol.1:552; *DN*, vol. 4:107). Since coins were usually sacrificed in the Middle Ages as well (Molland 1967:526), we cannot completely rule out the possibility that some of the coins may have fallen down or been lost. The same applies to the post-Reformation period. After the Reformation, there seems to have been a partial change in terms of places of sacrifice in the church. Sacrifice on the high altar in the chancel was retained for the major festivals and for baptisms, weddings and the introduction of women after childbirth, the so-called axiden sacrifices (Fæhn 1956:260ff; Amundsen 1987:258ff), but it seems that offerings in so-called tablets that were distributed among the congregation in the nave occurred to a greater extent (Fæhn 1956:59ff). This partial change in sacrifice sites can perhaps to some extent explain the shift in the topographic-chronological distribution of the coins through the loss of coins in the nave during sacrifice. However, when I claim that the majority of the coins under the floor of the nave in the post-Reformation period were also deposited as votive offerings, it is because there is tradition-based evidence of such a practice (SAO, Kallsbok no. 1 for Rødenes:69f; Fonnum & Svarteberg 1952:193).

In votive offerings, we encounter the gift-giving principle in the God/saint–human being relationship. This type of votive gift practice was a folk-religious form of behaviour associated with the church as a sacred place with its sacred objects and its sacred ground. In other words, the coins reflect a religious-magical behaviour that occurred within the church building (Baklid 1995:193).

When it comes to the other three types of artefacts examined, the analysis resulted in the conclusion that they are instead linked to the church, the church grounds and the cemetery as a burial place. It is highly likely that the sticks with notches carved into them were placed in the church ground as a magical transfer of warts to the dead (Baklid 2004:190). It is also highly likely that the dolls were placed under the church floor as a therapeutic measure against the childhood disease *liksvekk* or *valken*. The supposed cause of the disease was that the dead inflicted it on the child through *forgjøring*. The idea was that the dolls would fool the dead into believing that they had got the child to them, and that the disease-causing influence would be transferred to the doll, thereby making the child healthy (Baklid 2007:203ff). Both the sticks and the dolls are part of a folk medicine practice that is linked to the church building and the church grounds through magical-therapeutic behaviour aimed at the collective of the dead. Based on the material studied, these two folk-medicine remedies were practised in the post-Reformation period, with the second half of the seventeenth or eighteenth century as the *terminus post quem*.

Although hazel rods have been found in graves in the church area, they did not have a folk-medicine purpose like the sticks and the dolls. It is very likely that their social significance was to discourage the dead from

becoming revenants, and they were thus a magical-prophylactic measure. The practice can be traced from the tenth century to around 1850 (Baklid 2017:15, 22).

Materiality and Church Artefacts

The religious studies scholar Birgit Meyer (b. 1960) and the sociologist Dick Houtman (b. 1963) write in the introduction to the book *Things: Religion and the Question of Materiality* from 2012 that the relationship between religion and artefacts

> has long been conceived in antagonistic terms, as if things could not matter for religion in any fundamental way. This antagonism resonates with a set of related oppositions that privilege spirit above matter, belief above ritual, content above form, mind above body, and inward contemplation above "mere" outward action, producing an understanding of religion in terms, basically, of an interior spiritual experience (Meyer & Houtman 2012:1).

Meyer and Houtman's point is clearly rooted in what is referred to as the material turn, which led to a change of focus in religious research "from beliefs to practices, from ideas to material things" (Heilskov & Croix 2021:15; Strijdom 2014:1).

Researchers who have conducted religious studies based on the material turn include the American medieval historian Caroline Walker Bynum and the Swedish historian Terese Zachrisson. In the book *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe*, Bynum discusses the place of materiality in both learned theology and the practice of piety in the late Middle Ages. Bynum's study includes material religious artefacts such as relics, communion bread, communion wine, anointing oil, baptismal water, statues, altarpieces, prayer cards and paintings (Bynum 2011:25f). Her conclusion is that the ecclesiastical authorities and ordinary believers were ambivalent towards the official religious material objects they worshipped and honoured. She points out that the high clergy promoted some miraculous material artefacts while failing to recognize others (ibid.:267). Furthermore, she claims that theorists "tended to argue that the material simply pointed beyond itself rather than enfolding or incorporating the divine" (ibid.). Bynum exemplifies this by referring to external religious acts linked to artefacts, such as the use of rosaries to keep prayers in order (ibid.). The objects thus became an aid in the behaviour to achieve the inner, religious experience. On the other hand, among dissidents who did not follow official church practice and mainstream theology, there could be an excessive focus on relics and images and their inherent power (ibid.:268).

The Swedish historian Terese Zachrisson conducted a similar study in her doctoral thesis *Mellan fromhet och vidskepelse: Materialitet och religiositet*

i det efterreformatoriska Sverige from 2017. The main focus of the study is an examination of how ideas and practices linked to sacred artefacts and places were influenced by the Lutheran Reformation. Her area of inquiry is Sweden. As a starting point, Zachrisson assumes that there was an interaction between religious artefacts and people, i.e. that the artefacts were not exclusively the targets of human actions, but that they also influenced the people who came into contact with them (Zachrisson 2017:9). In her study, Zachrisson concentrates on altars, sculptures, relics, free-standing crosses and sacred springs (ibid.:10). Zachrisson concludes:

> The belief in the mediating powers of holy matter did not die in the wake of the Reformation. Rather, it transferred from official teaching and liturgy to the realm of what the clerical élite labelled "superstition". It is paramount to emphasize that there is no reason to assume that the people who held these beliefs – where matter still mattered – considered their thoughts and actions superstitions (ibid.:313).

In terms of development, Zachrisson argues that pre-Reformation ideas of interaction between people and artefacts declined as early as the sixteenth century, and that there is little evidence from the seventeenth century that people's behaviour in relation to religious artefacts involved achieving penance or that the artefacts were regarded as a means of gaining spiritual merit. The motive for this was to alleviate worldly affairs. Furthermore, she claims that the number of records of superstition in relation to sacred artefacts decreases from the second half of the eighteenth century (ibid.:315).

Central to the material turn is the concept of agency (cf. Heilskov & Croix 2021:15). While Bynum explains that her approach to her study to some extent parallels agency-theoretical perspectives (Bynum 2011:31), this is more explicit in Zachrisson's thesis. As described above, she assumes that there is an interaction between people and religious artefacts, which implies an agency perspective.

The British anthropologist Alfred Gell (1945–97) was an important contributor to the development of agency theory. In his book *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* from 1998, he studies art and states that objects "interact" with the people who come into contact with them in one way or another. However, he argues that aesthetic theories take too narrow a view of art objects and their influence on audiences. According to these theories, artists are regarded as exclusive aesthetic agents who design artworks in which their aesthetic intentions are manifested. These intentions are then communicated to an audience that is assumed to view the works in much the same way as the aesthetic intention. Gell, on the other hand, argues that a wider range of influences must be allowed for, as the impact – agency – of an artwork on people can vary considerably depending on contextual factors (Gell 1998:66).

Gell's formulation is, in short, that artworks "are themselves seen as the outcome, and/or the instrument of, social agency" (ibid.:15).[2]

Gell's book gave rise to a major academic discussion, but as we can see from the studies cited above, the agency perspective has been adopted in materiality studies of other artefacts than works of art. The term "agency" itself is not unambiguous and precise, but the Norwegian ethnologist Bjarne Rogan has presented a clarifying conceptual content. If, he writes, we accept that artefacts or things "can be carriers of a meaningful content that affects us and sometimes causes us to act" ("kan være bærere av et meningsinnhold som påvirker oss og noen ganger får oss til å handle"), then "the 'effectual power' of things" ("tings *Virkningskraft*") will be an adequate translation of "agency" (Rogan 2011:362).

The Artefact Types from Church and Cemetery Excavations and Agency

The question is then how the agency model can be applied to the four types of studied artefacts from the church and cemetery excavations.

Both the studies referred to above focus primarily on ecclesiastical artefacts, i.e. artefacts in the church space that have a function in the church's communication with its congregation. This contrasts with the coins, dolls, sticks with carved notches and hazel rods. Although all of these types of artefacts occurred within the area of the church, they originate from and are associated with popular cultural practices and have no function in the dissemination of the Christian-ecclesiastical faith. In other words, they are not ecclesiastical artefacts. Of the types of artefacts I have examined, only the coins can be linked to religious activities, and then to a popular religious practice. But even if the artefacts from the church and cemetery grounds cannot be linked to ecclesiastical practice, they are nevertheless linked to a practice within the ecclesiastical, sacred area where religion was practised.

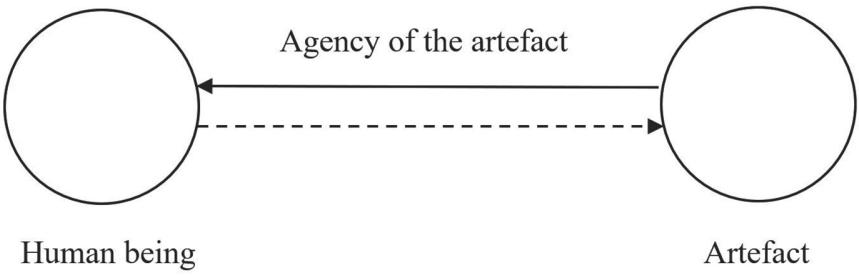

Figure 1. Schematic illustration of the interaction between artefact and human being according to agency theory.

The coins, sticks, dolls and hazel rods do not belong to the church's permanent furnishings, but were added to the church or church area by members of the congregation on a situational basis, and some of them were also self-produced. When the four types of artefacts were placed under the church floor or in the graves in the cemetery, the purpose was to achieve some kind of effect, be it prayer, healing from illness or protection. In such cases, the artefacts were aimed directly at some type of power in order to influence or evoke an effect from it. This power was perceived as being present within the ecclesiastical sphere, and it could help, cause illness or harm people.

Thus, the situation is generally different from that of the ecclesiastical artefacts used in the practice of religion. With the artefacts from the church grounds and cemeteries, we are moving within a folk-cultural religious-magical, magical-therapeutic or magical-prophylactic context. The agency model must therefore be expanded, adapted and adjusted in order to be applied to the four studied artefact types from the archaeological investigations of the church grounds and cemeteries. In this context, religious-magical practice refers to practices directed towards the Christian God/saints in order to influence them, while magical-therapeutic and magical-prophylactic practices refer to practices directed towards other types of supernatural powers in order to achieve an effect.

In the following, the adaptation and adjustment of the agency model will be specified and somewhat elaborated on. As explained above, I concluded that the majority of church coins were deposited as votive offerings to alleviate a crisis or emergency situation. A votive gift is a gift that in a strict sense was promised in a votive prayer as a thank-you offering if one's prayers were answered by God/saints. However, the votive gift could also be given as an offering at the same time as the prayer for help (Edsman 1976:253). The coins, whether given at the same time as the prayer or promised in the prayer, were thus directed towards God/saints with the intention of eliciting an effect from them, which in turn would have an impact on or significance for the person. In the case of the sticks with notches, the result of the analysis was that they were very likely to have been stuck into the church grounds for the magical transfer of warts to the dead. In this context, we have to keep in mind that some dead people were buried under the church floor. The idea behind this magical-therapeutic medical advice was that the sticks had an effect on the dead by transferring the warts onto them, so that the person suffering from warts got rid of them. The same applied to the dolls. They were supposed to influence the dead by transferring the disease-causing effect of the dead to them, and thus the child would be healed. Furthermore, the hazel rods are believed to have been placed in the graves to prevent the dead from returning, which in turn would protect the living from them. In all these religious-magical, magical-therapeutic and

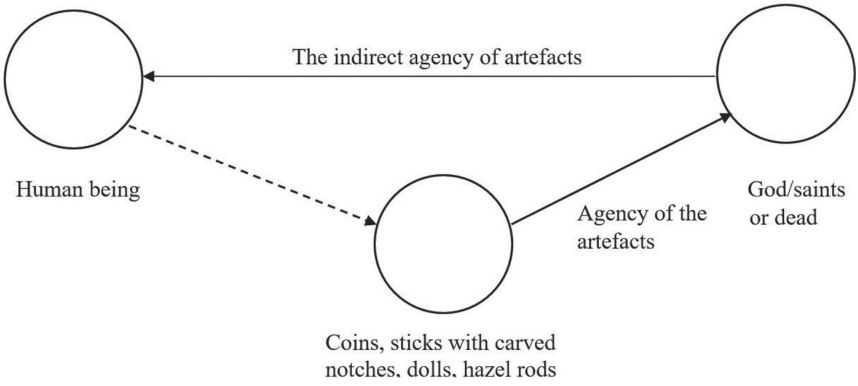

Figure 2. Schematic illustration of the interaction between artefacts, God/saints or dead and human being in a religious-magical, magical-therapeutic and magical-prophylactic context.

magical-prophylactic cases linked to the church area, the objects' agency is linked to God/saints or the dead, not directly to people as in the original agency model. Instead, the artefacts are linked to people through indirect agency, as the artefacts' effect on God/saints or the dead affects or has significance for people. This expanded and adapted agency model is schematically illustrated in Figure 2.

Theoretical Perspectives on the Church Building and Church Area

In the following, I will draw on theoretical perspectives that can help to explain and provide a better overall understanding of why the analysed artefacts have been added to church grounds and graves in cemeteries.

The theoretical framework I will use as a starting point is a theory of place developed by the American professor and religious studies scholar Jonathan Z. Smith (1938–2017).[3] In 1987 he published the book *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual*. Here he thematizes the construction of sacred places in Judaism and Christianity. In his theoretical view of the creation of sacred places, Smith can be said to be a constructionist (Moxnes 1998:VI). Smith claims that a place and its sacredness are socially created, and that they are not given and do not exist from the beginning. In addition, Smith believes that myths cannot be read straightforwardly as accounts of actual historical events, but that there is a distinction in them between event and memory, and that it is memory that creates a place (ibid.). Furthermore, Smith states quite unequivocally: "Ritual is not an expression of or a response to 'the Sacred'; rather, something or someone is made sacred by ritual (the primary sense of sacrificium)" (Smith 1992:105). This means that

it is people who create the sacred place through their activity there. The fact that the place is made sacred will in turn influence further human behaviour in the same location.

Smith's approach to the formation of holy places in the Christian tradition proceeds from the religious practices of the Christians in Palestine in the 4th century. According to him, they came to Palestine with a catalogue of places in the Christian myth or narrative, places that were linked to the life and work of Jesus. They then had to localize these places in the landscape. In other words, this involved combining the information about a place in the Scripture with the localization of the place in the landscape (Smith 1992:114f). Such places were, for example, the tomb of Jesus, the place of his resurrection, the Mount of Olives where Christ's ascension took place and the birthplace in Bethlehem (ibid.:92). On the basis of these "recollections", the Emperor Constantine built a memorial over the Holy Sepulchre (ibid.:77). Some of these, which Smith also calls central liturgical sites (ibid.), cannot be localized with complete accuracy on the basis of tradition (ibid.:76). Smith argues that the spread of church buildings was made possible by the fact that the Holy Sepulchre with the Anastasis building, which Constantine built, could be symbolically reproduced or recreated elsewhere (ibid.:86f). Furthermore, Smith writes that the Holy Sepulchre could be moved in the same way through the *pars-pro-toto* principle as relics (ibid.:87).

Applying Smith's theory to Norwegian and Nordic churches implies that the church sites themselves are socially created, whether they are parish churches or private churches. This is supported by the ritual practice of consecrating or sanctifying church buildings and cemeteries, which thus correlates with Smith's theory. The practice of consecration is enshrined in Old Norse Christian law from the twelfth to thirteenth centuries (see e.g. *Den eldre Gulatingslova*:39, *NGL* vol. 1:133; *NGL* vol. 2:346; *De eldste østlandske kristenrettene*:40, 44, 168; Nilsson 1989:70ff). The church consecration itself was carried out by the bishop and involved reading exorcisms and blessing salt and water separately before mixing them. He then sprinkled this on the church both inside and outside (Nilsson 2021:56). He also drew twelve consecration crosses with chrism, i.e. holy oil, on the interior walls of the church (ibid.:57 and Rydbeck 1962:458).[4] At the dedication of the church, at least one of the church's altars was also consecrated, which involved placing relics in a depression in the altar slab or adjacent to the altar (Nilsson 2021:57; cf. Karlsson 2015:51).[5] The latter can be linked to what Smith refers to as symbolic reproduction or recreation. By sanctifying the church building and the delimited church area, clear boundaries were also drawn to the surrounding areas as non-holy or profane.

But even though the church area was sanctified, it was still not homogeneous in terms of holiness within the church space and between the

church space and the cemetery. This is what we might call the topography of holiness in the church area. If we return to Smith's account, he uses the Book of Ezekiel in the Old Testament as a starting point to show, through a reconstruction of a temple's floor plan and spheres of activity, the relative holiness of the temple with its central parts and adjacent areas. Running east-west through the centre of the temple is the altar and other central parts for the practice of religion, and these are consequently the most sacred parts of it. This is followed by decreasing holiness on either side of this passage, first areas for the priests' domestic activities and then areas for the people (Smith 1992:58ff).

If we transfer and adapt the heterogeneous holiness of the different parts to the Christian medieval churches in Norway, the greatest degree of holiness will be associated with the altars where the centre of religious practice took place. This will apply in particular to the high altar in the chancel, but also to the side altars in the eastern part of the nave. How central the altar was to the function of the church is evident from one of the legal provisions in the Christian section of the Frostating Law. This states that a church's consecration remains valid as long as the stones in the altar have not been disturbed and the latter has not been altered (*NGL*, vol.1:133). It was also, as mentioned above, adjacent to the altar that the relics were deposited.

The Reformation in 1537 brought changes to the church, and in the following decades the church was altered and furnishings removed. Shortly after the Reformation was completed, some provisions were added declaring that images that were worshipped should be removed from the churches (Amundsen 2011:290). Studies show that saints' altars/side altars, saints' representations/sculptures and altar relics were gradually removed from the churches, and new furnishings such as pulpits, altarpieces, benches and

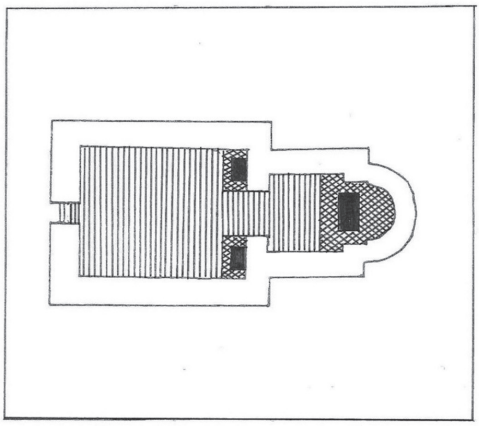

Figure 3. The sketch schematically shows the varying holiness within the church building and church area in the Middle Ages. The highest degree of holiness is associated with the high altar and the side altars, followed by lower holiness in the other parts of the church and lowest in the cemetery.

galleries were added (ibid.:293, 296 f). According to the Danish superintendent Peder Palladius, the Lutheran church should only have one altar, that is, the high altar in the chancel (Palladius 1925:30, 36f). These changes also led to changes in terms of the heterogeneity of holiness in the church space. The area of greatest holiness in the church space was now limited to the high altar in the chancel.

As mentioned above, cemeteries were also consecrated or sanctified as burial grounds for the dead. However, the sanctity of the cemetery seems to have been considered lower than the various parts of the church space. Norwegian medieval diplomas show that it was not uncommon to carry out farm trade or exchange land ownership in the cemetery (see e.g. *DN* vol. 5:203; *DN* vol. 6:390f; *DN* vol. 16:77). The Swedish historian Göran Malmstedt writes in his book *Bondetro och kyrkoro: Religiös mentalitet i stormaktstidens Sverige* that in the seventeenth century, "there are indications [...] that the cemetery was not accorded the same sanctity as the church building in the parishes" ("tyder […] på att man ute i socknarna inte tillmätte kyrkogården samma helgd som kyrkobyggnaden") (Malmstedt 2002:46). Information from the Diocese of Bergen from the first half of the nineteenth century leaves the same impression. The congregation showed "generally little reverence for the final resting place of the dead" ("i alminnelighet liten vørnad for de dødes siste hvilested") and the bishop complained about "the indifference that people displayed with regard to cemeteries" ("den likegyldighet som folk la for dagen når det gjaldt kirkegårdene") (Nilsen 1949:87). Not only were the cemeteries a regular gathering place for the congregation on mass Sundays (ibid.), but at weddings it was not unusual for there to be music, dancing, drinking and shooting in the cemetery (ibid.:146). Secular trade also took place in the cemeteries

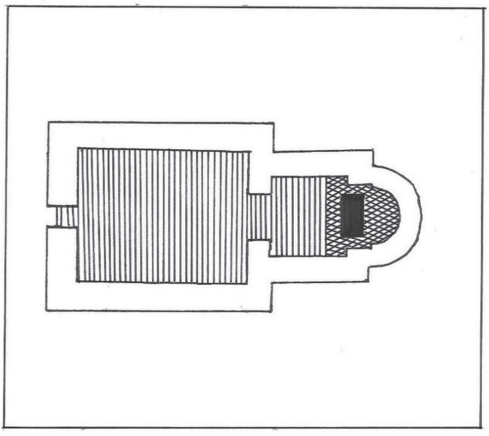

Figure 4. The sketch schematically shows the varying holiness within the church building and church area in post-Reformation times. Compared to the Middle Ages, it is now only the area around the high altar that has the highest sanctity. The holiness is lower in the other parts of the church and lowest in the cemetery.

(ibid.:393, 428). Rotten coffin parts and human bones were often left lying around in the cemetery (ibid.:155), and cows were sometimes seen grazing there (ibid.:173).

The Types of Artefacts and the Topography of Holiness in the Church Area

If we now combine the results of the analysis of the topographical-chronological distribution of church coins with the topography of the holiness of the church, there is a tendency for medieval coins to occur to the greatest extent in the ground of the parts of the church with the highest holiness, i.e. adjacent to or near the high altar in the chancel and adjacent to or near the side altars in the eastern part of the nave. The altars were the centre of religious practice and thus contained relics, and as mentioned above, the side altars also contained sculptures of saints.

As previously mentioned, the Reformation resulted in changes to the church space over the following decades, with relics and sculptures of saints being removed from the altars. As a result, both the specific sacred objects to which votive offerings were directed were removed and the topography of holiness in the church space was partially altered. As we have seen, the church space became somewhat more homogeneous in terms of holiness, and the post-Reformation church coins were more scattered in the church grounds without any signs of accumulation.

The conclusion must nevertheless be that the church grounds and the holiest areas of the church area were considered by the congregation to be particularly suitable for personal and direct approaches to God and the saints with a prayer for help and an accompanying votive offering (Baklid 1995:193). The areas with the highest degree of sanctity were thus used for religious-magical behaviour.

When it comes to the other three artefact types – sticks with carved notches, dolls and hazel rods – the result of the analysis is that they are linked to the dead and the church area as a burial site. The reason why the church area has been used as a burial site is to be found in the Christian tradition, in which there has been a desire to be buried near the sacred, i.e. near the altar and relics (Andrén 2000:8). Thus, in addition to the cemetery, the church ground has also been used as a burial site. Here we can see how the social creation of the church site also has an impact on the physical place where the dead are buried. The practice of burying the dead under the church floor can be traced back to the Middle Ages, but it increased in scope in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Munch 1988:30). In relation to the topography of holiness of the church area, graves were thus made in places of varying holiness.

With regard to the three types of artefacts, based on the available results of the archaeological investigations, there seems to be a distinction between

the sticks with notches and the dolls, on the one hand, and the hazel rods, on the other. The sticks and dolls have all been found in the church grounds, i.e. in the areas with the highest sanctity. In all the churches from which the sticks and dolls originated, there were graves under the church floor (cf. Baklid 2004, 2007). In other words, both the sticks and the dolls were aimed at the collective of the dead for magical-therapeutic purposes, which shows that the church ground was perceived as a dwelling place for the dead. In this context, it should be pointed out that there is a significant coincidence in time between the dating of the sticks and dolls and the period of the increase in burials under the church floor, i.e. the seventeenth–eighteenth centuries. In all likelihood, this coincidence is due to the fact that there was an easier access to the dead, for whom the sticks and dolls were intended, under the church floor than to the dead buried in the cemetery.

The hazel rods, on the other hand, were mainly uncovered in cemeteries, that is, in areas with a lower degree of holiness, and as pointed out above, they were laid down as a magical-prophylactic measure to prevent the dead from becoming revenants.

But the question then becomes why people had the idea that the dead could cause illness and inconvenience the survivors despite the fact that they were buried within the sacred sphere. Perhaps the aforementioned Smith can help provide an answer to this. In his book he writes about corpse pollution. "Within systems of status, grave sites (no matter how special) will always give rise to the question of corpse pollution" (Smith 1992:77). According to this, the dead could pollute the church site. And even if the dead were buried within the sacred area of the church, they were still profane elements within this sphere. Secondly, there was an idea that the distinction between life and death was not as absolute as it is today, as the belief in revenants shows. This may perhaps be an answer to the question posed. The lower respect for the cemetery and its holiness may also have contributed to a greater focus on the cemetery as a burial place, which in turn may have created greater concern about revenants.

Conclusion

Based on four individual studies of artefacts from archaeological investigations of churches and cemeteries, the main purpose of this article has been to explain and discuss methodological approaches for cultural-historical studies of them, to discuss theoretical perspectives on the relationship between people and the artefact types, and how theoretical perspectives can provide a better understanding of the artefact finds. I have used Christopher Tilley's concept of materiality, Alfred Gell's theory of agency and Jonathan Z. Smith's theory of place as theoretical approaches to these three sub-problems.

Tilley's concept of materiality includes not only a description of the artefacts themselves, but also a discussion of their social significance. This theoretical-methodological approach to the four archaeologically produced artefact types made it necessary to draw on several auxiliary sciences and interdisciplinarity. As I have explained, when discussing the social significance of the artefact types, it has been useful to draw on the context in which they were found, scientific investigations, statistical methods, comparisons of finds from several sites and comparisons with other source material. This has provided several important and sometimes decisive points of reference for the discussion. However, there are also some source-critical problems associated with the material when it is analysed, primarily that the excavation and documentation routines were not fully developed during the earliest archaeological investigations.

As opposed to what is the case for the ecclesiastical artefacts, I have shown that Gell's theory of agency is not directly transferable to the folk-cultural, non-ecclesiastical artefacts from the church and cemetery surveys. The coins, the sticks with carved notches, the dolls and the hazel rods are all intended to influence either God/saints or the dead, not people. But the influence on God/saints or the dead was intended to provide an indirect agency on humans.

On the basis of Smith's theory of place and his study of the relative holiness of the temple, I have customized a topography of holiness for Norwegian churches and church areas in the Middle Ages and post-Reformation period. Coupled with the locations of the various artefact types, this shows that there was a tendency for medieval coins to be found in the areas with the highest holiness in the church, i.e. the areas around the altars. In the post-Reformation period, the topography of holiness in the church room changed and became more homogeneous as relics and side altars were removed. This is reflected in the locations where the coins were found, as they were more scattered throughout the church without any clear tendency to accumulate. Based on the results, we can see that the votive offerings or religious-magical practices were linked to the most sacred areas in the church room and at the church site. The fact that the religious-magical practice of votive coins continued in the post-Reformation period is consistent with Zachrisson's finding that belief in "the mediating powers of holy matter" did not cease with the Reformation.

However, at the same time as the religious-magical behaviour linked to the church grounds and the holiest areas weakened after the Reformation, the magical-therapeutic practice linked to them increased. This latter practice was aimed at the collective of the dead, and must have its background in the fact that church grounds were increasingly used as burial grounds in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In other words, from the seventeenth century onwards, the church ground was also perceived as the abode of the

dead. As a result, popular culture from this time onwards had a dualistic perception of the church ground and the practices associated with it. The hazel rods in the graves in the cemetery, which have the lowest sanctity in the church area, stood out from the other types of artefacts studied. True, they too were aimed at the dead, but they had instead a magical-prophylactic purpose.

The theoretical approach to the analysis has shown that the occurrence of the archaeological artefact types at church sites depends on the degree of holiness of the various areas and the burial places of the dead. In conclusion, it should be noted that although there is a variation and range in the types of artefacts analysed, the number is still small. Analysing more types of artefacts will therefore be able to nuance, supplement and increase our knowledge of the folk tradition's perception of and practices related to the church grounds and the cemetery's dead.

Herleik Baklid
Associate Professor
Department of Culture, Religion and Social Studies
University of South-Eastern Norway
Gullbringvegen 36
NO-3800 Bø
Herleik.Baklid@usn.no

References

Archive Material
Statsarkivet i Oslo (SAO)
Prestearkivene: Kallsbok no. 1 for Rødenes.

Literature
Amundsen, Arne Bugge 1987: "Prestesekken som aldri ble full…". *Tidsskrift for Teologi og Kirke 4/1987*, pp. 253–271.

Amundsen, Arne Bugge 2011: Reformerte kirkerom? En studie av de lutherske kirkerommene i Østfold 1537–1700. In Saphinaz-Amal Naguib and Bjarne Rogan (eds.), *Materiell kultur & kulturens materialitet*, pp. 289–309. Oslo.

Andrén, Anders 2000: Ad sanctos – de dödas plats under medeltiden. *hikuin 27*, pp. 7–26.

Bagge, Sverre m.fl. 1973: *Norske middelalderdokumenter*. Bergen–Oslo–Tromsø.

Baklid, Herleik 1995: "Hvad der har bragt dem gjennem gulvet er desverre efter al sansynlighet en hemmelig ofring […]". *Heimen* 3/1995, pp. 181–196.

Baklid, Herleik 2004: "Dei skar so många skøre i ein kjeppe […]". Om pinner med innskårne hakk funnet under kirkegolv. *Heimen* 3/2004, pp. 179–194.

Baklid, Herleik 2007: "Det er ei råd, – det leiter på, men det får til". – om dokker under kirkegolv. *Viking* 2007, pp. 189–206.

Baklid, Herleik 2015: *"Hundrede Daler, Hest og Sadel […]." En eksplorativ studie av feste-, benke- og morgengaveskikken i et kontinuitetsperspektiv.* Dr. philos.-avhandling, UiO. Oslo.

Baklid, Herleik 2017: Hazel Rods in Graves. *Arv. Nordic Yearbook of Folklore* 73, pp. 7–26.

Bhattacharyya, Gouri K. & Richard A. Johnson 1977: *Statistical Concepts and Methods*. New York–Chichester–Brisbane–Toronto–Singapore.

Bynum, Caroline Walker 2011: *Christian Materiality. An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe*. New York.

De eldste østlandske kristenrettene, ed. Eyvind Fjeld Halvorsen & Magnus Rindal. Oslo 2008.

Den eldre Gulatingslova, ed. Bjørn Eithun et al. Oslo 1994.

Diplomatarium Norvegicum (*DN*) vols. 1–23. Christiania/Oslo 1847/2011.

Edsman, Carl-Martin 1976: Votivgåvor. *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder* vol. 20, col. 253–256. Oslo.

Fæhn, Helge 1956: *Ritualspørsmålet i Norge 1785–1813.* Oslo.

Fonnum, Helge & Kristen Svarteberg 1952: *Aal Bygdesoge* vol. 1. Oslo.

Fure, Eli 1983: Skipperskjønn og stokastikk. *Historisk Tidsskrift* 4/1983, pp. 404–418.

Gamal norsk homiliebok, ed. Gustav Indrebø. Oslo 1931.

Gell, Alfred 1998: *Art and Agency. An Anthropological Theory.* Oxford.

Heilskov, Mads Vedel & Sarah Croix 2021: Introduction. Materiality and Religious Practice in Medieval Denmark. In Sarah Croix and Mads Vedel Heilskov (eds.), *Materiality and Religious Practice in Medieval Denmark,* pp. 9–25. Turnhout.

Karlsson, Mattias 2015: *Konstruktionen av det heliga. Altarna i det medeltida Lunds stift.* Lund.

Latour, Bruno 1999: A Collective of Humans and Nonhumans. Following Daedalus's Labyrinth. In Bruno Latour (ed.), *Pandora's Hope. Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*, pp. 174–215. Cambridge.

Malmstedt, Göran 2002: *Bondetro och kyrkoro*. *Religiös mentalitet i stormaktstidens Sverige*. Lund.

Mansi, Giovanni Domenico 1902: *Sacrorum Conciliorum nova, et amplissima collection*, vol. 13. Paris & Leipzig.

Meyer, Birgit & Dick Houtman 2012: Introduction. Material Religion – How Things Matter. In Dick Houtman and Birgit Meyer (eds.), *Things. Religion and the Question of Materiality,* pp. 1–23. New York.

Molland, Einar 1967: Offer, Norge. *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder*, vol. 12, col. 525–527. Oslo.

Moxnes, Halvor 1998: Forord. In Jonathan Z. Smith, *Å finne sted. Rommets dimensjoner i religiøse ritualer*, pp. 1–8. Oslo.

Müller, Inger Helene Vibe 1984: Kirkefunn som arkeologisk og kulturhistorisk kildemateriale. *Universitetets Oldsaksamling Årbok 1982/1983*, pp. 183–198. Oslo.

Munch, Gerd Stamsø 1988: Begravelser under kirkegolvet. *Ottar* 1, pp. 30–47.

Nilsen, Halkild 1949: *Kirkelige og religiøse forhold i Bergens stift.* Oslo.

Nilsson, Bertil 1989: *De sepulturis. Gravrätten i Corpus Iuris Canonici och i medeltida nordisk lagstiftning.* Stockholm.

Nilsson, Bertil 2021: Materiality in Medieval Episcopal Rites. Some Examples. In Sarah Croix & Mads Vedel Heilskov (eds.), *Materiality and Religious Practice in Medieval Denmark,* pp. 51–70. Turnhout.

Norges Gamle Love indtil 1387 (*NGL*), vols. 1 & 2, ed. R. Keyser & P. A. Munch. Christiania 1846–1848.

Norges Gamle Love (*NGL*)*, Anden Række, 1388–1604*, vol. 1, ed. Absalon Taranger. Christiania 1912.

Nøstberg, Ingrid 1993: *Kirkegårder og holdninger til de døde. En studie med utgangspunkt i den arkeologisk undersøkte kirkegården i Heddal, Telemark,* Hovedoppgave i historie, UiO. Oslo.

Peder Palladius' Visitasbog, ed. Lis Jacobsen. Oslo 1925.

Rogan, Bjarne 2011: Et faghistorsk etterord om materiell kultur og kulturens materialitet. In Saphinaz-Amal Naguib & Bjarne Rogan (eds.), *Materiell kultur & kulturens materialitet,* pp. 313–381. Oslo.

Rydbeck, Monica 1962: Invigningskors. *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder*, vol. 7, col. 458–460. Oslo.

Smith, Jonathan Z. 1992: *To Take Place. Toward Theory in Ritual*. Chicago and London.

Strijdom, Johan M. 2014: The Material Turn in Religious Studies and the Possibility of Critique: Assessing Chidester's Analysis of "the Fetish". *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 70, pp. 1–7.

Tilley, Christopher 2007: Materiality in Materials. *Archaeological Dialogues* 14(1), pp. 16–20.

Zachrisson, Terese 2017: *Mellan fromhet och vidskepelse. Materialitet och religiositet i det efterreformatoriska Sverige.* Diss., Göteborgs universitet.

---

[1] Fure's explanation for being able to use statistical hypothesis testing on historical source material is as follows: In model-based statistics, the data are regarded as the result of a real or imaginary experiment. In the case of historical data, the experiment must necessarily be imaginary and it is not possible to repeat it. When the observations in a historical data set can be regarded as the result of an imaginary experiment, it is because we can assume that there are certain underlying conditions that are common to them and that are constant. At the same time, these underlying conditions must allow the outcome to vary if the experiment could be repeated. Given a specific historical data set to be studied, this can be done by establishing a stochastic model. This involves developing an imaginary experiment that "produces" the outcome of the phenomenon you intend to investigate. The historical data to be analysed is assumed to be the result of the experiment described in the stochastic model. In this context, it is irrelevant whether the data material is a random sample or whether it comprises an entire population (Fure 1983:405).

[2] In his article "A Collective of Humans and Nonhumans: Following Daedalus's Labyrinth", Bruno Latour also discusses the influence of objects on people. But he does not use the term "agency".

[3] I would like to thank Dirk Johannsen for his valuable advice on the theoretical approach.

[4] *Gamal Norsk Homiliebok* (Old Norwegian Homily Book) contains two sermons related to church consecration (95–101).

[5] The Second Council of Nicaea in 787 decided that relics should be placed in every church at its consecration. If a bishop did not comply with this rule, he was to be deposed (Mansi

1902:751). Based on the document "Canones Nidrosienses", dated to the period 1152–1180, it seems that the provision was widely followed in Norway at an early stage. In any case, the document assumes that all churches contain relics (Bagge et al. 1973:56).