

NOVEMBER 2001



ISSUE 59

VARANGIAN Voice



QUARTERLY MAGAZINE OF THE NEW VARANGIAN GUARD INC

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COVER

Vlachernai Garrison's 20th Birthday Commemorative Medallion produced by Birka Traders, see. Vlachernai Garrison's 20th Birthday Event, page 2.

Varangian Voice Policy

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FROM The EDITOR

Welcome to another issue of the Varangian Voice, the last for the year 2001. Sorry you've received it late but work commitments have been pretty heavy recently. The Vlachernai 20th Birthday seems to have revived interest in the old drinking songs and merry making of the NVG and for good reason I think!. A request for copies of the old songs (including any actual historic song) has been emailed around. However, if anyone knows someone not on email, who may have some of these songs tucked away in their memory, please contact them and ask them to forward their rendition. Songs can be forwarded to: Warwick Gill, 45 Xavier Street, Oak Park Vic 3046 (03) 9306 8542, Stephen Wyley at svenskildbiter@angelfire.com or to myself at any of the Varangian Voice addresses. When we think we have a fairly complete songbook, the Varangian Voice will publish the first complete Varangian Songbook.

Hope to hear from you soon, have a great Christmas and New Year.

All the best

JED

Jeremy Draper
Editor

PAST TIMES

• Vlachernai Garrisons 20th Birthday Event

Was held on the 17 – 18 November 2001 at Mernda Ring Fort. The event was very well attended and despite the weather turning on the Saturday Night a lot of fun. A commemorative medallion was commissioned by Vlachernai and produced by Peter Beatson of Birka Traders for the event (see the front cover). The medallion was presented to all the past and present members that were able to attend the event (which included some of the founding members of the NVG!).

Archery was held on the Saturday Morning, with Quarf from Miklagard taking out the honours. The rest of the day was spent fighting over the ringfort and included some great battles.

The feast was excellent and it was great to see so many past members recognised for their contributions to Vlachernai and the NVG. Overall, an excellent event.

• Al Zinj Archery Event (Mountains Garrison)

Was held on the weekend of the 29th September 2001 at Kim & Graeme Walkers property in Bullaburra, NSW. A great time was had by all. The overall results were as follows:

- 1st Quarf with 198 points
- 2nd Sven with 168 points
- 3rd Chris T. 132 points

So Quarf (Chris Morgan, Miklagard Garrison) took home the Al Zinj perpetual trophy.



A History of the New Varangian Guard

By Steven Lowe

This is a preliminary history only, based mostly on my own knowledge as having joined NVG Sydney in early 1987, and moved to different states (and garrisons) in the years since.. There have been two previous "NVG histories" - one put together in 1983 by Tim Dawson, the other by Stephen Wyley in 1991, but neither received very wide circulation.. This is an attempt to both update the previous histories, and complete the work they started. The information in it is, of necessity, incomplete. Anyone who has extra information to add is welcome to do so. Ideally, it would be good to see as much detail in the other garrison histories as I was able to put into those of which I had personal knowledge – Egfroth

The **New Varangian Guard** is a re-enactment society based in Australia, which takes its name from the Viking bodyguards and mercenaries who served the Byzantine (East Roman) Emperors from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries. Our core period is from 950 to 1250 AD.



One of the few known contemporary representations of the Varangian Guards - from the version of the *Skylitzes Chronicle* held in the Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid

The Garrisons

It was originally thought that Varangians were commonly used as garrison troops in the major cities of the Byzantine Empire. It is now recognised that such uses of the Varangians were comparatively limited. Nonetheless, this led to the Guard's branches being called Garrisons, as they are to this day. In order of formation the garrisons are as follows:

Vlachernai Based in Melbourne, capital of the State of Victoria (S-E corner of Australia). Founded 1981

Mountains Blue Mountains, approx 15km west of Sydney, near the east coast of Australia. Founded 1984.

Miklagard (originally Sydney) - founded about 1986

Riverina 1989-95 Based in Wagga Wagga, 400 km south west of Sydney.

Hedlandings (1990-95) - Based in Port Hedland, West Australia, 1800km north of Perth.

Antioch Based in Ballarat, approx 200 km north west of Melbourne. (Founded 1991.)

Melbourne University (1992-93)

Rusland Brisbane, Queensland - founded 1991

Dubh Linn Based in Geelong, 70 km SW of Melbourne. Founded 1993.

Thessalonika Mildura, Victoria, approx 550km NW of Melbourne founded 1995

Dyrrakhion Geraldton, Western Australia. Founded 1994

Hodegon East and south-east suburbs of Melbourne. Founded 1998.

and there are three overseas sister organisations - one in Italy, named **Bari**, another in the UK, called **Cherson**, and a third in the USA, called **Kastoria**.

Beginnings - Melbourne - Vlachernai Garrison

The NVG celebrates its 20th anniversary in 2001. It began in Melbourne, the capital city of the State of Victoria, in the south east corner of the Australian mainland. As outlined in the 1983 outline prepared by one of the founding members, Tim Dawson;

"On the 31st of May 1981, Bev Lane, herbalist and Celtic Revivalist arranged a meeting at her house of a number of people she knew to have serious antiquarian interests. It was Bev Lane herself who proposed the name on that first day, saying that the collection of people present were as diverse as those the Varangian Guard might have attracted. In those days genuine historical knowledge was negligible and the members tended to think of the Varangian Guard as being a Viking free company like the Jomsvikings."

"In common with re-enactment groups everywhere, the Guard was dominated by combat and archery for many years. It was soon accepted that members of the Varangian Guard could not be seen fighting amongst themselves all the time and people began to branch out into ethnic groups who fought against Byzantium. This ultimately produced the present image of the N.V.G. as "Allies and Enemies of Byzantium".

Tim Dawson was the first President. Many of the founding members, perhaps all, have left the NVG, often to form groups of their own, but their memory lives on. Bev Lane, Tim Dawson, Robert Gudan, Roy Castell, Alison Cowling, Michael Docherty, Steve and Margie Nicole, and Andrew(?) Frencham. There may be others, but this is well before my time, many people have moved on, and records are few.

The Varangian Voice

The Varangian Voice is the Guard's quarterly magazine and newsletter. It began as the newsletter of Melbourne NVG in March 1984, edited by Steve Nicole. It has continued, under a variety of editors (the burnout rate was high) and sometimes in fits and starts, to the present day. In the second half of 1988, in keeping with the expansion of the NVG, it graduated to a national magazine, serving all garrisons. It has become thicker over the years, the presentation is more professional, but in general



it has maintained its original character - a combination of news with articles on history, armouring and costume, cooking and other things of value and interest to the members.

Expansion and Growth

For some years the sole NVG group in Melbourne grew steadily; its first tournament and banquet was held at Montsalvat, a mediaeval style artists colony outside Melbourne on January 8th, 1983. There were also occasional forays northward to other States, notably the Second Australian Warriors' Conference, held in New South Wales in 1983, two annual get-togethers at Gundaroo, outside Canberra in 1983 and 1984, and Odinfest, held by 1066 at Castle Mountain outside Sydney.

Mountains Garrison

In 1983 Tim Dawson moved to New South Wales where he helped found Janus Keep in Katoomba in the Blue Mountains (*Varangian Voice* No. 18, p. 5). This became the Katoomba Garrison in November 1984 (*Varangian Voice* No. 10, p.3) Other early members were Sean McBride, and the Baker brothers, Stephen and Martin.

The First Maldon Convention

At Easter 1985, The NVG hosted the 3rd Australian Mediaeval Convention at Steve and Margie Nicolls' property "*Four Winds*" outside the historic goldmining town of Maldon north of Melbourne. A fort was constructed of saplings for the event (and as far as is known, still exists). Re-enactors from many clubs came to take part, and the tradition of holding these Conventions/Conferences every two years began at this time.

Sydney - Miklagard Garrison

The Sydney group was originally part of the Mountains garrison. Early members included Andrew Brew, Mark(?) and Peter Traise. In early 1987, an influx of people who are now NVG veterans - Peter and Max Beatson, Amanda Gorry (now Baker), Graham Nott and Steven Lowe (Egfroth). It was awarded its charter on 31 October 1987, on the occasion of the Battle for Megalong.

The NVG's Eagle Banner first appeared in the pages of Miklagard's newsletter *Havamal* in October 1990, at the suggestion of Amanda Baker. It has since been adopted as the NVG has to an official logo.

Riverina Garrison

In October 1998, Egfroth moved to Cootamundra in the Riverina district of New South Wales, and by May 1989 a new group had started. The Riverina Garrison was presented with its charter at the 1991 Mediaeval Convention.

The Second Maldon Convention

Due to difficulties experienced by the hosts of the 1989 Convention, Melbourne garrison took it upon themselves to put it on, with only 8 months to prepare something that usually takes 2 years! The venue was again at *Four Winds* at Maldon. With hard work and dedication the project was finished, the fort extended and the Convention was a great success. This was the occasion of the first "State of the Movement" discussion, hosted by David Green (Pierre) of the Routiers. It began a tradition that continues to this day.



Hedland Outpost

In June 1990 Egfroth moved to Port Hedland, on the North-West coast of Western Australia, and shortly afterwards started a new group, to be known as Hedlandingas. Because of the high population turnover it never became more than an outpost (we had such things in those days). At Port Hedland Rod Southall joined the NVG, and when he left to live in Geraldton, about 1500km south, he founded the Dyrrachium garrison.

Antioch Garrison

In early 1991, Julie and Heron and John Sultana, who lived nearby, were at *Four Winds* near Maldon, and met up with Tim Dawson who introduced them to the Guard.. Shortly afterwards they founded an NVG group in their area. Initially there were two branches - a northern one in Bendigo and a Southern in Ballarat, but the northern branch did not survive for long, and Ballarat became the centre of activities. Originally called the Central Victorian Garrison, it later changed its name to Sarkland, and then Antioch. It concentrated first on things Islamic, but later changed its emphasis to re-enacting the Crusader society of the 12th century.

Rusland Garrison

A group was set up in Brisbane (Queensland) by Patrick Urquhart and other people, most of whom had left the Companie of Knights Bachelor, which itself had considerable Varangian help in setting up. The Brisbane group is first mentioned in the Varangian Voice in October 1992, but seems to have had only provisional status until at least May 1993. It has from its inception been oriented toward Russian Vikings, and later took the name Rusland.

Dubh Linn Garrison

After a display by Melbourne Garrison in Geelong, about 70 km south-west of Melbourne, a new group of Varangians was set up. It is first mentioned as a provisional garrison in February 1993. Founded as a group of Irish Vikings, as it evolved its name has changed to Dun Loughaire, then Dubh Linn (Dublin). Andrea Redden (now Willett) was one of the founding members.

Thessalonika Garrison

In December 1993 Egfroth moved to Mildura, in northwestern Victoria and began a new group. This developed into Thessalonika Garrison, which received its garrison charter at the Brisbane Mediaeval Convention, Easter 1995.



The NVG at Brisbane Convention, 1995

Hodegon Garrison

In September 1997 Egfroth moved to Frankston, 43 km south-east of Melbourne, and began a group which was to become Hodegon garrison. Covering territory to the east and south-east of Melbourne, it was awarded garrison status in late 1998. It is oriented to re-enacting a unit of Varangian Guards, billeted in the Hodegon monastery in Constantinople. In 1999, Egfroth declared himself Emperor, so the Varangians could have someone to be bodyguards to. Nobody else seemed to care. Hodegon is known as being one of the less serious garrisons, carrying out acts of great silliness at Conventions.

South Australia

In April 1998 members of Antioch and Hodegon garrisons drove to Adelaide in South Australia to attend a Mediaeval Fair - partly for fun, partly on a recruitment drive and to foster relations with re-enactors in South Australia (the Companie of Knights Bachelor). The SCA were there, and put on their usual form of combat. Very stylised, individual combats with rattan weapons and lots of formality. The the NVG went on, and put on a proper mediaeval blood and guts battle. Very graphic - the audience were very impressed. Thessalonika garrison has developed a friendly relationship with re-enactors in Adelaide. However, NVG expansion into South Australia still seems fairly far off. Perhaps it will need a Varangian to go and live there before it finally happens.

New Varangian Guard - National Body

Beginning in 1992, the idea of forming a National Body for the scattered garrisons across Australia was discussed at length over the following two years or so. Many suggestions and proposals were made toward dealing with the problems and issues involved in becoming a national group. A publication called the *Golden Bull* came out on a regular basis documenting the progress toward incorporation. In late 1993 the combined Garrisons voted to incorporate as a single body. The NVG Inc. was formed as a corporation registered in New South Wales and replaced the NVG in January 1994. The first issue of the *Varangian Gazette*, the administrative newsletter of the NVG Inc. was published on February 17 1994.

Combat Regulations

As part of the proposal to become a National Body, it was felt important to have standardised combat regulations throughout the whole of the NVG. A preliminary set of regulations was put together by Stephen Wyley in 1993, mostly incorporating current practice throughout the garrisons. However, it took another two years of discussion and proposals to iron out local differences so everybody was happy with the regulations (for example - what was to be the correct radius for a "safe" point on a weapon? Or what is an acceptable weight for a mace head?). They were officially adopted in 1995, but are still revisited from time to time, as new issues are raised and discussed.

NVG National Gatherings

It has become a tradition for the NVG to hold gatherings to promote communication and good relations between members of the various garrisons, as well as get together to fight and have fun together. It's also an opportunity to discuss issues of importance to the Guard as a whole. Gatherings have been held in Wagga Wagga (September 1993 and September 1994), Batlow in Southern New South Wales (22-24 Sept 1995), and Arcadia on 7 Oct 1996. There have been others which need to be added to this list.



Australasian Mediaeval Conventions

Mediaeval Conferences/Conventions are get-togethers with the purpose of promoting friendship and communication between re-enactors and re-enactment groups throughout Australia, and more recently, New Zealand. Since 1987 they have been held every second Easter. Contingents from the NVG have attended every Convention held since the Second in 1983, earning a reputation for consistently high quality re-enactment in many areas including combat, costuming, research, music, archery and armouring. NVG Melbourne hosted the Conventions of 1985 and 1989.

Hastings 2000

Several NVG contingents - from Miklagard, Hodegon and Edinburgh - attended the re-enactment of the battle of Hastings held on the anniversary, October 14 on the site of the actual battle in Sussex, England. Relationships were formed with re-enactors from all over the world, particularly with the Russians, with whom the Aussies were billeted, *Conquest* and the *Vike* of England, *Hag' Dik* of Normandy and a contingent from Oklahoma. It demonstrated that the NVG is the equal of the best overseas re-enactment societies.

Edinburgh and UK

Over the last few years, several members of the NVG have, for various reasons, moved to the UK to live and work. This led to the formation of an ad hoc NVG group in the UK, particularly in Edinburgh. But just as it looked like another garrison was to start there, most of the members were planning to move back home to Australia. They will be welcomed back here. As it turns out, another UK group has started, anyway, from another source.

International Expansion

In the last 12 months, re-enactors and other people interested in things mediaeval in Italy, the US and the UK have become Sister organisations of the NVG. We look forward to further international expansion.



The Making of A Bone Archer's Ring

By Steven Baker

The ring I'm about to describe is one I purchased on EBAY and it had the following description:

100-800 AD. The second of four Archer Rings, with Triangular Lip for Grasping a Bow String. Made of bone, with a design of circles and slashes on the sides. Size 6.5.

Other archer rings that are made of bone and of this styling are described as being Byzantine or Islamic usually within the period of the 7th - 10th Centuries. This however does not make them of that period or time. A lot of these finds are dated based on other things dug up at the time. They are definitely not to be totally relied upon, even (as in this case) you get a Certificate of Authenticity with the ring.

The main reason for presenting this article is not so much to show an historical example of an archer ring but to show that you do not need much in the way of materials to make your own ring and still be period. I would however recommend that you look up information on working bone to see what you need to do and what problems you could encounter. You can find these references on the web or in the library.

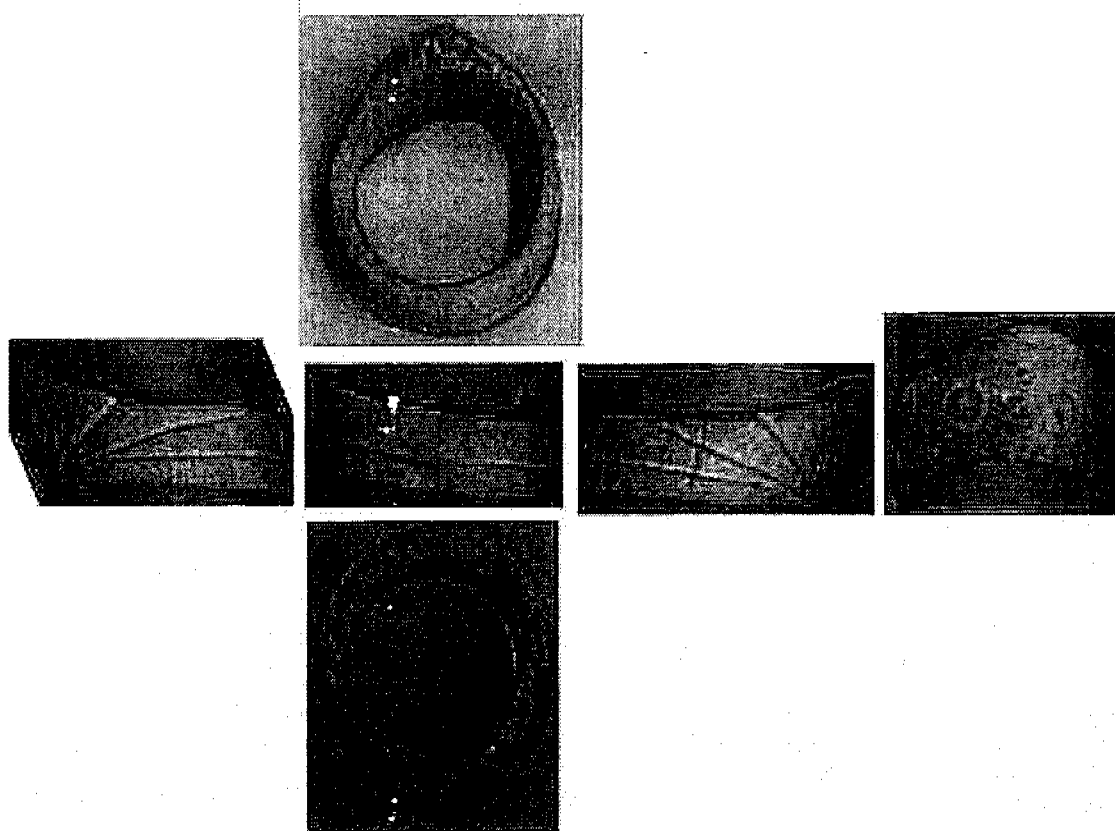


Figure 1 - Bone Archer's Ring showing all views.

In Figure 1 you can see the ring from all angles including the top and bottom. The measurements I obtained from the ring are as follows:

Front to Back	Side to Side	Band height rear	Thumb guard height
25mm	24mm	8mm	14mm

The interesting thing about this ring is that the thumb guard has a slight degree of outward slope. The most likely way this was achieved using a straight piece of bone would have been to cut it at a slight angle. By doing this not only would you have got a slight slope on the thumb guard portion but you would have got a slightly long length front to back than side to side. This is a requirement for such rings as it helps lock it on to the thumb and the difference only needs to be 1 or 2mm.

Figure 2 below shows the most likely cutting angle for this ring to produce the required results.

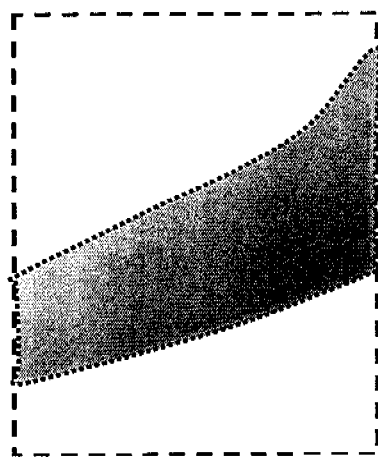


Figure 2 - Most likely cutting angle for ring.

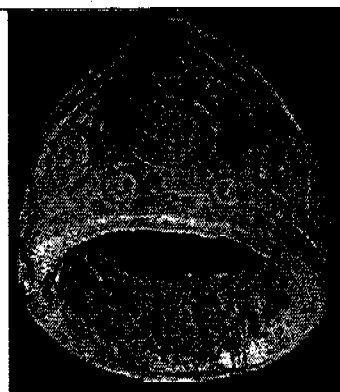
In addition, the ring had one other thing done to it to make it fit and to increase its comfort. The inside of the ring has been rounded not only on the thumb guard but also at the rear portion of the band.

The question remains as to who would have used this ring and why. One thing I noted with this ring and in the descriptions of the other rings is that they all have vertical cracks in them. From reading up on working bone and horn is that it would seem things made of bone can suffer from quite radical shrinkage. In fact all of the other rings had similar or larger cracks vertically across the band.

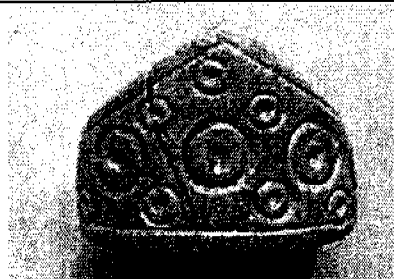
Given this shrinkage and the fact that it can occur during the lifetime of the ring these sort of rings were most likely carved for temporary use until the archer could get a replacement ring. Of course there is always the possibility that some archers could not afford a bronze ring and so regularly carved a new bone one whenever they needed to.

To complete this article I should mention that the decorations are of the most basic sort. To produce them you would only need a triangular file to make the long lines and simple piece of shaped metal to make the circle and dot decoration.

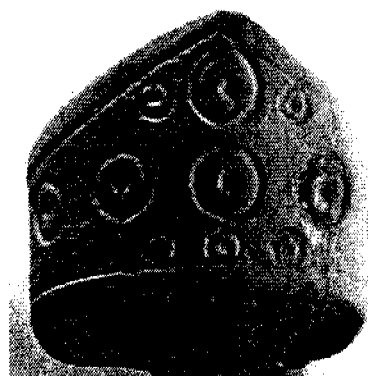
I have no references to include with this article, as there is little written about archer's ring. What I have done though is include all of the pictures from the other auctions for similar rings along with their descriptions



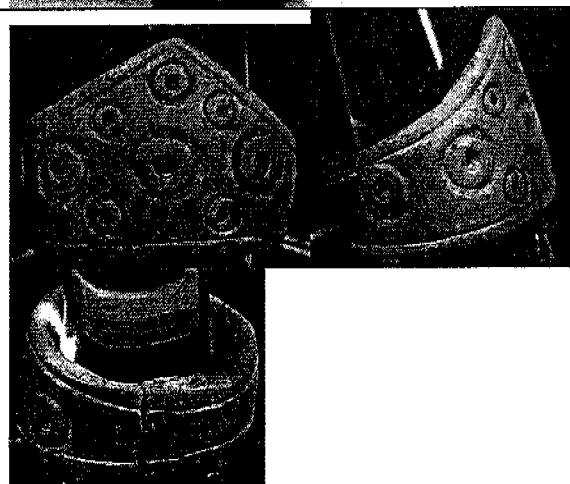
5th-10th c. Archer's thumb ring with annulets. Ancient discoloration. 1.1".



7-10 C. AD bone archers ring with decorative dot pattern 25mm repaired.



Early Islamic C. 7/10th century AD bone archers ring with circle and dot decoration some minor repair



Authentic, Roman Archers Ring, Dedicated to the God Sol. (100 BC – 200 AD). The ring is made of bone with an applied glaze and is in great condition. The ring is size 7.5 and the only damage is a crack to the back of the ring. The piece is an artifact that would have been used in the daily life of the Roman soldier. Of particular interest is the circle and dot design on the ring. This design is the sign of Sol, the Sun God. The ring has some burial deposits in the inside; these deposits have been left intact. This is a fine and authentic piece of ancient Roman history that is dedicated to an ancient God.



A History of The City of Chersonesos

By Peter James

Pre-Byzantine History

In ancient Greek the word *Chersonesos* was used to describe both cities and regions in a peninsula situation. Thus the region that we now call the Crimea was called by the ancient Greeks *Tauric Chersonesos* (Tauri being the name of the indigenous tribe who inhabited the mountains of the Southern Crimea).

The city was founded by Ionian Greeks in the 6th century, perhaps as a trading factory rather than a city. It was re-founded in the 5th century by Megarian Greeks from Heraclea Pontica but this earliest history of the city remains obscure. Certainly by the 4th C BC there was a thriving Greek city on the site. It appears to have operated as a 'free port' and an important channel through which trade flowed between the adjacent Bosporan Greek kingdom and the rest of the Greek world.

The peninsula on which the city stands was divided into individual allotments for the citizens, and vineyards were planted which proved extremely productive. Large areas of land in the Western Crimea grew wheat and a significant surplus was exported and the Rome's replacement of Greece as the most important power in the Mediterranean did not change this profitable situation.

About 110BC the citizens turned to the Pontus for protection from the Scythians, who were pressing heavily from the North. The result was that Chersonesos along with the Bosporan Greeks was incorporated in the Empire of the Pontic king Mithradates IV. When war broke out with Rome in about 66BC, Pompey moved swiftly to break up Mithradates' empire, but he restored Chersonesos to its previous 'free port' status, now protected by the new client-king of the Bosporan state.

The export trade in grain was of considerable importance to the Imperial economy, so a garrison was established to watch over Rome's interests. Throughout the Imperial period the city continued to flourish, but as the empire declined, pressure grew from the barbarian tribes to the north.

Early History

When Justinian I came to the throne in 527 he recognised that the army was too small to defend such a far-flung possession so he had the city defences rebuilt and strengthened. As well as improving the defences, the garrison was retained and the cities value to the new Empire grew.



Although the city, and the grain it provided was important enough to need a permanent garrison, it was also a long way from the centre of politics, and when, in 695 Justinian II was overthrown by Leontius, Chersonesos was the place chosen for his exile. He escaped in 698 and sought refuge with the local Khazar Khagan Ibuzir, who not only welcomed him but also gave him his sister (swiftly renamed Theodora) as his wife. He might have remained at the Khazar court indefinitely, but in 704 an Imperial envoy arrived offering rich rewards for Justinian, dead or alive. Within a few days he had identified his potential assassins and strangled both of them with his bare hands.

Justinian II

He now decided to act to recover the throne. He took a fishing boat back to Chersonesos, where he rallied his supporters. He then sailed to the lands of the Bulgar King Tervel who readily agreed to provide him with an army in exchange for the title Caesar. In the spring of 705 Justinian appeared before the walls of the city with an army of Slavs and Bulgars at his back and declared a siege.

Three days later, once a disused conduit had been used to gain access, the city wisely chose surrender rather than the sack. Justinian received the Imperial diadem, and crowned his son and wife himself. He then wrought a reign of terror on those who had dared to send him into exile.

In 711 Chersonesos was again on the Emperors mind, with unpleasant consequences for many Imperial citizens. His brother-in-law, the Khagan had advanced on the city and established a Khazar *Tudun* (Governor) in technical infringement of the Imperial frontier. An army was dispatched and on arrival proceeded to roast alive seven of the cities senior citizens. Many more were drowned in the approved manner (with weights attached) and some thirty (including the *Tudun*) were sent back to Constantinople in chains. His objective achieved he summoned the army home, only for the whole fleet to be lost in a sudden storm. At this point Justinian, hearing of the catastrophe, is reported to have burst into peals of laughter, and it is hard to avoid the conclusion that he had fallen victim to the family madness. His plan to send a second expedition was only thwarted by the news that a Khazar army had arrived to defend the city from Byzantine attack, and that the imperial garrison had also deserted en masse.

Insane or not he took the only logical decision and sent the *Tudun* back to his former position along with an escort of 300 soldiers. With him went the Grand Logothete George of Syria with instructions to present the Emperor's apologies for all that had happened. Unfortunately the citizens of Chersonesos were in no mood for conciliation. The Logothete and his entourage were put to death immediately upon their arrival. The *Tudun* and his 300 strong escort were despatched to the Khagan, but he died on the way. The Khazars, taking the view that if he needed an escort in this world, he needed one in the next as well, killed all of them. Chersonesos and the other Crimean cities had now had enough, and formally announced that they no longer recognised Justinian, and swore allegiance to another exile (a former general named Bardanes) who swiftly changed his name to Philippicus and proclaimed himself Basilius.

Justinian's wrath was fearful to behold. At once he sent a new expedition under Patrician Maurus with orders to raze the city to the ground. He had only managed to destroy two of the towers when a Khazar army arrived and he was forced to make terms. Having done so he dared not return to Justinian and he fell on his knees before Philippicus. The die was cast. The fleet and what remained of the army sailed for Constantinople with a new Emperor at its head. On his arrival he was welcomed with open arms, while Justinian, returning with all possible speed from another expedition heading towards Armenia, was intercepted at the twelfth milestone and executed on the spot.

Later History

In spite of all that had gone on in previous centuries the city retained its status as a free but closely allied city until about 830 when Emperor Theophilus, now growing concerned about the increasing threat posed by the Patzinaks sent his brother-in-law Petronus to be their first governor and for 150 years the city was a loyal part of the Empire. It was during this period that the abbreviated form of the city name 'Cherson' was first used to describe the military district (or Theme) of which the city was the capital.

In 987 the Emperor Basil, faced with yet another rebellion and desperate for troops, approached Vladimir, Prince of Kiev for help. His offered to send a force of 6000 Varangian warriors to help



the Emperor, but his price would be high, he wanted to marry the Emperors' sister Anna. Basil agreed, and early in 989, with an army of veteran warriors behind him he was able to overcome the rebels. At this point Basil seems to have blanched at the idea of sending his sister to marry a Northern pagan barbarian and tried to delay the wedding. Vladimir's patience was growing thin and he seized Cherson in the hope of reminding the Emperor of their agreement. This, combined with the presence 6000 veteran warriors now living in Constantinople, resulted in a tearful Anna being sent north to marry a man she must have considered an ogre. Immediately on her arrival Vladimir was baptised into the Christian church, (also part of the deal) and then married to Anna. His 'bride-price' to his new brother-in-law was the city of Cherson, returned to the Empire unharmed and as the future St Vladimir he spent the rest of his life converting the Russians to Christianity and building churches.

For the next 250 years Cherson was the principal Byzantine trading post on the northern Black Sea, first under central control, and then, following the disaster of the fourth crusade, as part of the Empire of Trebizond. In 1221 the Mongols arrived and sacked the city with their usual thoroughness. There is evidence though that some activity continued on the site until it was finally destroyed in 1299 by another Tartar-Mongol army. This final act of destruction bought an end to almost 1800 years of continuous occupation of the site.

Cherson Today

Today this truly unique city is listed as a world heritage site, but remains under threat from encroaching development by the city of Sebastopol, as well as a potential land grab by the Orthodox

church. For those interested in the archeology there is a web site established here <http://www.chersonesos.org/eng/> which has more details about the excavations so far and the continuing threat to those parts not yet investigated.



References

<http://www.chersonesos.org/eng/>

Encyclopedia Britannica

Penguin Atlas of Ancient History

Penguin Atlas of Medieval History

History of The Byzantine Empire Book 1

A Short History of Byzantium by John Julius Norwich



What is it?

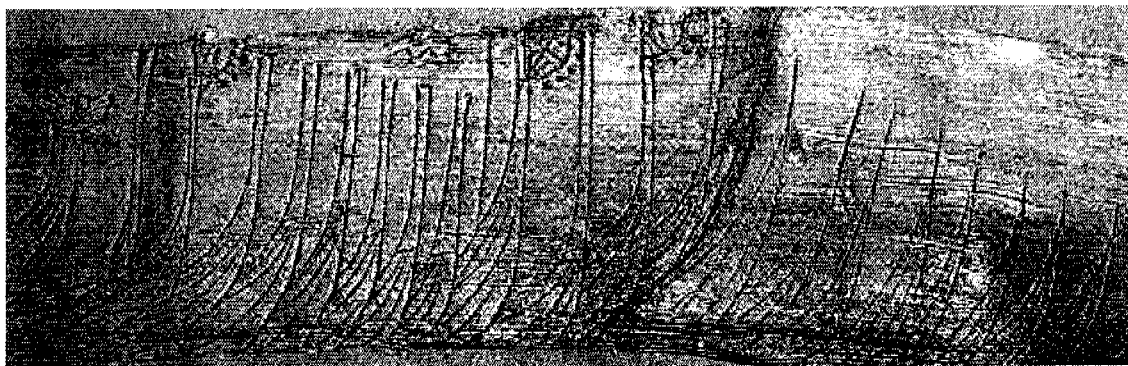
By Graeme Walker

Seen at the Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, one day. A carved grave stone bearing an armed warrior on one side and a long ship on the other. The warrior has a helmet, some heavily ribbed gear that might be mail, a more lightly ribbed, long sleeved garment that might be a padded gambeson, and a sword. He carries an axe with a long handle.

The ship in the carving fills the bottom half of one side of the stela. It is sailing from right to left, so we cannot see the steering oar. Three strakes and a keel are indicated for the hull, but realistically there would have been more. No oar ports are shown along the top strake, though subsequent comparison to other carvings indicates that they were a common feature. Another simplification?

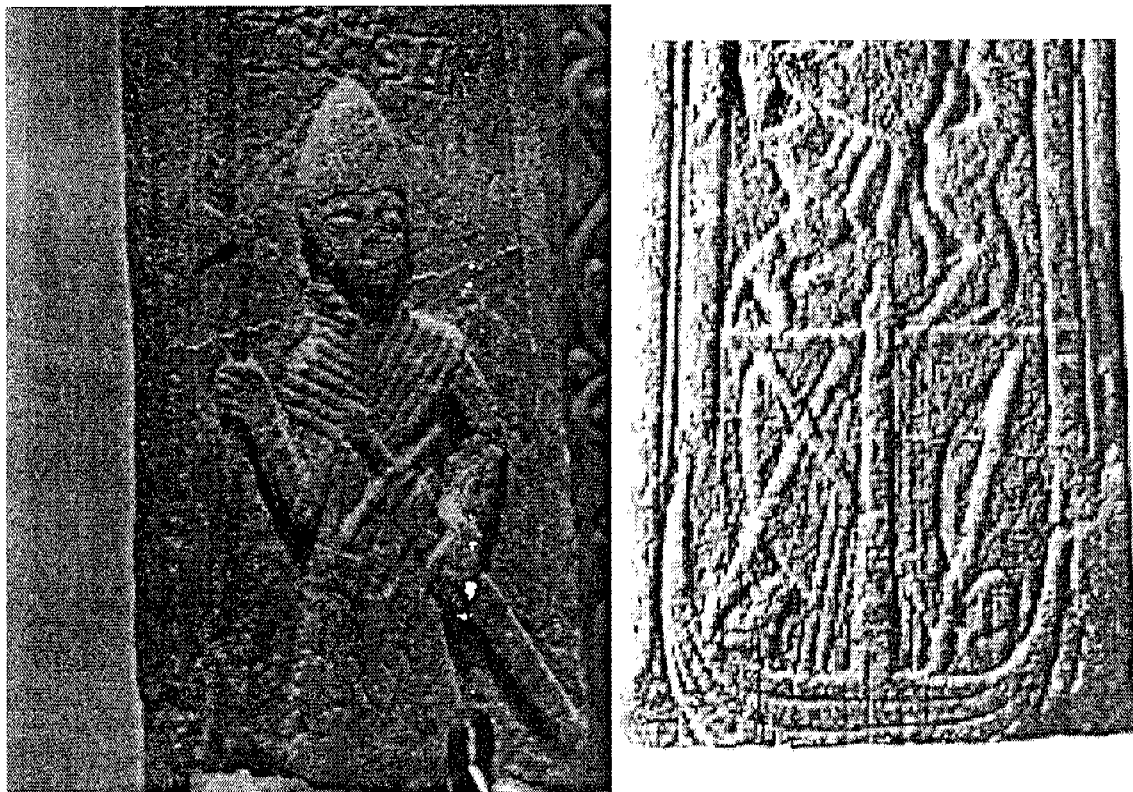
The ship style is that of a longship, not a cargo vessel. The prow and stern posts sweep to elegant points, high and almost vertical. The mast is centrally located. It tapers towards the top, then broadens briefly, just above the yard arm. The sail is not quite as broad as might have been expected for a Viking longship. Billowing in the wind, it looks to be square. Seven lines of rigging are apparent. The crew of the ship face left also. Above the ship is a hunting scene, in which two dogs attack a deer.

Comparison can be made to the carving of a line of ships, found on a rune stick from Bergen, and dated to the 13th century. The prows of the ships are shown close together, as if moored in a harbour. They are tall and sweeping. Some end in points, others bear figure heads or weather vanes. Possibly the decorations were removeable. The strakes of the ships sides are also shown.



The ships depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry record similar features, and indicate that alternative strakes may have been painted different colours.

The front of the carved stone depicts an armed warrior. He wears a conical helmet, in shape similar to that of a 14th century bascinet. This impression is strengthened by the garment that depends from it. This is heavily ribbed, likely indicating mail, covers the neck, the tips of the shoulders and reaches down to the centre of the chest. This is longer than other examples of camails from the 14th century, and would be cumbersome to wear, but would give reasonable neck protection. Alternately, perhaps something like a "Bishops mantle" is indicated, in combination with the helmet and an aventail. The sword's crossguard has long arms, unlike the majority of short, Viking crossguards, and the long handled axe has a fairly small head for a two hander.



So what is it? The carved stone comes from Texa, near the island of Islay, in south west Scotland. It has been dated to about 1380 AD, and interestingly both the long ship and the armed figure were carved at the same time. The warrior has been identified either as Reginaldus of Islay, or Donald son of John MacDonald, with the title "Lord of the Isles". This Lord controlled a small empire of islands in the seas between Ireland and Scotland, in the 14th and 15th centuries, with a fleet of latter-day Viking ships. The carved figure, which is armed in the style of a highland chief of the time, seems to have more in common with 11th century Norse warriors, than with contemporary lowland Scots and English, who were commonly depicted in plate armour. Further, he has chosen to be represented with a ship rather than the more common, medieval, symbol of aristocratic power, the horse.

Known as highlanders, red shanks, or gallowglasses, the men of the south west highlands were the lineal descendants of a mixed Viking and Gaelic society that fused in the area in the 11th century.



Three book reviews

by Steven Baker

The following three books I obtained from Poison Pen Press at an event in Pennsylvania, USA. However since this is a long way for most Varangians to travel to just for books you can obtain them through their web site - www.poisonpenpress.com.

Embroideries and samplers from Islamic Egypt. Marianne Ellis. Ashmolean Museum Oxford 2001. ISBN 1 85444 135 3.

This book covers some of the collection of Islamic Egyptian embroideries that were collected by Professor Newberry and his wife and are now part of the Ashmolean Museum.

The embroideries cover a period from the 9th Century to the end of the 15th Century.

There is a small introduction covering what is known about these embroideries including the problems they have had in dating some of them and the reason why. It also covers where such embroideries were likely to be used plus some minor details on the types of stitches that were used. You would still need an embroidery book to work out how these stitches are done. In the back of the book is a further reading list.

The rest of the book is taken up photographs and text on each of the items. There are one and sometimes two pages on each item. For each item there is a good close-up photograph. The accompanying text details what is known about the piece including an approximate date, materials used and a description of the types of stitches used.

All in all I found this to be an interesting and useful book, in fact useful enough to tempt me into trying some embroidery.

Tender Meat under the Saddle. Customs of Eating, Drinking and Hospitality among Conquering Hungarians and Nomadic Peoples. Krems 1998. Edited by Jozef Laslovszky. Translated from Hungarian by Alice M. Choyke and Laszlo Bartosiewicz. ISBN 3-90 1094 10 5.

This book is the proceedings of a 1996 symposium organised by the College of Commerce, Catering and Tourism, the Society for Old Hungarian Culture and by the Department of Medieval and Postmedieval Archaeology, Eotvos Lorand University, Budapest. As such this is neither a recipe book nor a book on steppe nomad feasting etiquette. It does however cover quite well what is known about early and medieval nomadic food and feasting customs.

The papers included in this book are as follows:

The Culture of Conquering Hungarians

Research Possibilities into the History and Material Culture of Eating, Drinking and

Hospitality during the Period of Hungarian Conquest.

Feasting and hospitality among Eastern Nomadic Peoples



*Customs of Eating and Hospitality among Nomadic Peoples of the Migration Period**How did Conquering Hungarians Prepare and Serve their Food?**Archaeobotanical Sources in Investigating the diet of Conquering Hungarians**Mobile Pastoralism and Meat Consumption: an Archaeozoological Perspective.*

The first two chapters cover basically how the research into Hungarian nomadic culture grew and changed as people gained more knowledge and perceptions and prejudices changed. In addition these two chapters cover what sources and avenues are available to research a culture that left no solid written record.

The next three chapters give you a glimpse into what is actually known about food and feasting in nomadic culture. Besides the Hungarians, references to Mongol, Avar, Oghuz and others are included to help elucidate nomadic practices. Suitable warnings are given about the dangers of extrapolating from one cultural group to another even if their lifestyles are very similar.

The last two chapters cover what is known about plants and animals that were eaten by the Hungarians. Again not recipes but an idea of what animals were herded or hunted, what plants, berries and fruits that might have been available to them. It even covers a little of how the carcasses were butchered and even who was likely to get which bits.

Overall it was an interesting book but one you definitely have to sit down and read (not recommended for reading with a five year old present).

The following are some excerpts of the sort of information you can expect to find:

Even individual hunters were not supposed to keep the entire game to themselves. On the way home, hunters often were greeted by acquaintances yelling the words syralga baatyr, e-e, mergenci and syralga which all guaranteed that they would receive their full share. Therefore sometimes the hunter arrived home empty handed. More often, the best cuts were lost, since if the one yelling syralga (sorloga in Mongolian) was older than the hunter he had to be given the best bits. If there was anything left of the prey by the time the hunter returned home, it was cooked and all inhabitants of the ayil were invited to join the meal.

...One of the few exceptions is represented by the grave of a conquering Hungarian of high social status in Zemplén which lies beyond the border of Modern day Hungary. This burial contained grain from millet. Migration Period plant remains from the Great Hungarian Plain, as well as from the rest of Eastern Europe show that the most important cereal cultivated by nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples was millet, whose cultivation requires little attention. Consequently, millet meal, that is kasha, must have been among the most important foods of these peoples.

One final thing to let you know about this book. Do not expect to have it hold together. I bought one copy and within minutes of reading it pages were falling out. I got a replacement copy and the same thing happened. So you may want to get it rebound or possibly punch holes in it and insert it into a small folder.

Medieval Arab Cookery. Essays and Translations by Maxime Rodinson, A.J. Arberry and Charles Perry. Prospect Books. 2001. ISBN 0907325 91 2.

For those into Islamic cooking this is definitely a book to get. Besides having a full translation of the al-Baghdadi it has a few others either in full or part. It also has chapters on where certain foods came from, when the earliest references to them were and how their use in recipes changed over time. Also some of the influences Islamic cooking had on surrounding areas.

Some of things mentioned, for example, are that Couscous as we know it probably only just fits into the Guards period (around the thirteenth century to be exact). Earlier it was a slightly different product. Eggplant was a new arrival in the ninth century and initially it was not a popular dish. Some descriptions are:

...a Bedouin says of eggplant, 'Its colour is like the scorpion's belly and its taste is like the scorpion's sting.'

...'What do you think of the eggplant of Buran?' He replies, 'Even if Maryam the mother of Jesus split it, and Sarah the wife of Abraham cooked it, and Fatima the daughter of the Prophet served it, I would have no taste of it.'

Even a positive description is not enticing:

...the poet Kushajam would write, 'The doctor makes ignorant fun of me for loving eggplant, but I will not give it up. Its flavour is like saliva generously exchanged by lovers in kissing.'

To end this on a nicer note I thought I should include a couple of recipes. I haven't tried these but they sound nice.

This is from an addition to a 13th Century cookbook called 'The Description of Familiar Foods'.

QAHIRIYYA. Two parts sugar, one part finely milled pistachios. Knead them with rose-water and musk and put in a third as much flour. Make rings and cakes, and leave them overnight on a tray to dry. Take two parts flour and one part starch and knead them a little harder than for mushabbak. Then dip the rings in the batter and fry them and put them in hot syrup mixed with honey, and take it up.

(Mushabbak is described as one part starch and two parts sour dough thinned with hot water until dough becomes as thick as milk. So the above recipe probably calls for a batter that is close to cream in consistency and would therefore stay on the rings and cakes)

The following recipe is from the al-Baghdadi:

KHABIS. Take half a ratl (225 grams) of crumbled pith of white loaf, and a quarter of a ratl (112 grams) of sesame-oil. Put the sesame-oil in a tinned copper dish, and boil. Sprinkle in the aforesaid bread, little by little, stirring over a slow fire. Add pure sugar, ground and sifted; stir, leaving moist. Dish out, and sprinkle with sugar. Some use fresh milk instead of sesame oil.



RELICS OF THE VARANGIANS

The physical traces of the Varangian Guard in Byzantine lands and elsewhere.

By Peter Beatson

PART 4 (Final)

St. Caecilian ivory

The **ivory panel** kept in the **Schnütgen Museum** in Cologne probably once decorated a casket:

This sturdy figure of a semi-nude warrior seems inspired by an Antique model, like so many similar ivories of the late tenth century.



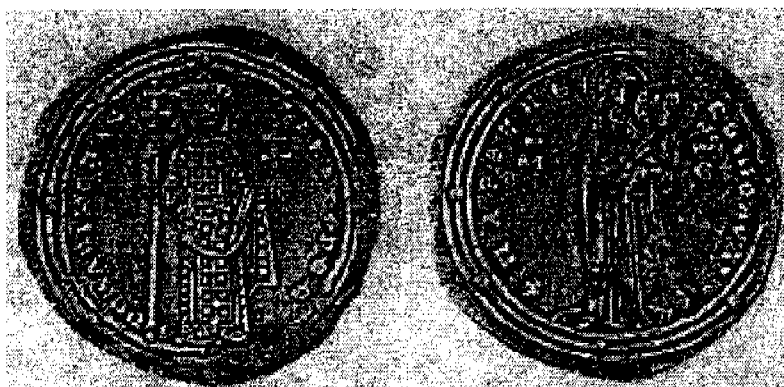
The style of his weapons are, however, close in time to the creation of the piece, and they are foreign to the Mediterranean region.

With its broad blade and man-high handle, the axe is very similar to the characteristic Viking broadaxe, or so-called 'Dane-axe'.

The sword, with its short plain cross and heavy semicircular pommel, is a widespread northwestern European style of around 1000AD.

Can we seek the inspiration for this piece in Northern warriors in Imperial service?

Hoard from Ochsarve, Gotland



Miliaresion of Romanos III Argyros [1028-34]. From the Ochsarve hoard, diameter ~2.7 cm [24]. Swedish Royal Coin Cabinet.

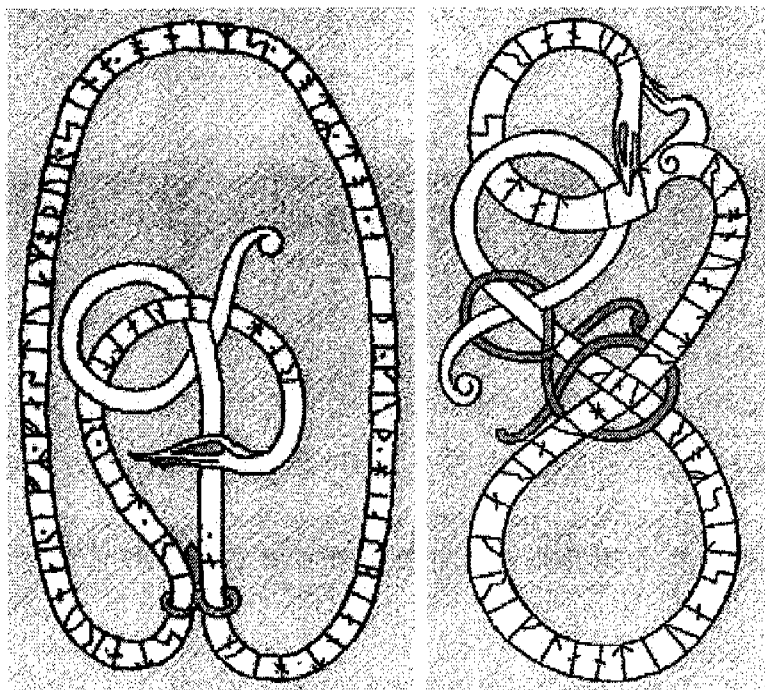
The only coin hoard in Scandinavia that contains only Byzantine coins in such a large number - 123 silver *miliaresia* - that it is likely to be the pay of a soldier returning from Byzantine employ. Equivalent to just over 10 gold coins - which is about the annual pay of an ordinary soldier, according to Treadgold [25].

Though the coins date between 945 and 1055, 90% of them are from the end of this period, the reign of Constantine Monomachos. The Varangian who collected them was therefore probably a near contemporary of Harald Hardrada, who left service in about 1044. Of the vast treasure that Harald himself collected, barely a coin must remain unsmelted - only 20 Byzantine coins have been found in all Norway.



Miliaresion of Constantine IX Monomachos [1042-55]. From the Ochsarve hoard, diameter ~2.7 cm [26]. Swedish Royal Coin Cabinet.

Ed Runestone



The **runestones** of Sweden tell of Vikings who travelled east; some of which won gold; some died there. There are over 30 inscriptions in all mentioning voyagers to Greece. Not all of them are necessarily joined the Varangian Guard, they might have been merchants, or mercenaries in the regular army.

The most likely example of a Varangian, and probably a high ranking one, is Ragnvaldr, who had an inscription (U 112) carved over two faces of a great boulder at Ed, just north of Stockholm. It was carved by his order, in memory of his mother, Fastvi. Ragnvaldr is a name reserved for nobility, and the stone, proudly located above a major road, advertises that he 'lead the host' in Greece:

The carving on the front face, with the first three lines, is shown at left, the back side is on the right [27]. In both cases the inscription starts from the head end of the serpent.

FRONT:

rahnualtr . lit . rista . runar .
 efR . fastui . mo] > ur . sina . onems . totR .
 to i . ai] > i . ku] > . hialbi ant . hein || a .

BACK:

runa rista . lit . rahnualtr .
 huar a . krikianti . uas . lis . forunki .

] > indicates the dipthong **th** = the rune "thorn"

**“Ragnvaldr let be cut the runes
After Fastvi his mother, Onamr’s daughter.
She died in Ed. God help her soul.**

**The runes be cut let Ragnvaldr.
He was in Greece, was the host’s leader.”**

According to other runestones (U 309, U 310), Ragnvaldr died together with his father Ingvarr and uncle Ingfastr, probably before 1050, but the location of this tragedy is unrecorded [28].

FOOTNOTES

[24] **E. Piltz**, ‘Varangian companies ...’, *op. cit.*

[25] **W. Treadgold**, ‘Byzantium and its Army: 284-1081.’ Stanford University Press: Stanford 1995.

[26] **E. Piltz**, ‘Varangian companies ...’, *op. cit.*

[27] *Front side:* **D.M. Wilson**, ‘The Northern World: The History and Heritage of Northern Europe.’ Thames and Hudson: London 1980. *Back side:* **P.B. du Chaillu**, ‘The Viking Age: The Early History, Manners, and Customs of the Ancestors of the English-Speaking Nations.’ (Vol. 1). John Murray: London 1889.

[28] **O. Pritsak** ‘The Origin of Rus’ (Vol. 1): Old Scandinavian Sources other than the Sagas.’ Harvard University: Cambridge (MA) 1981.



A Light in the Dark

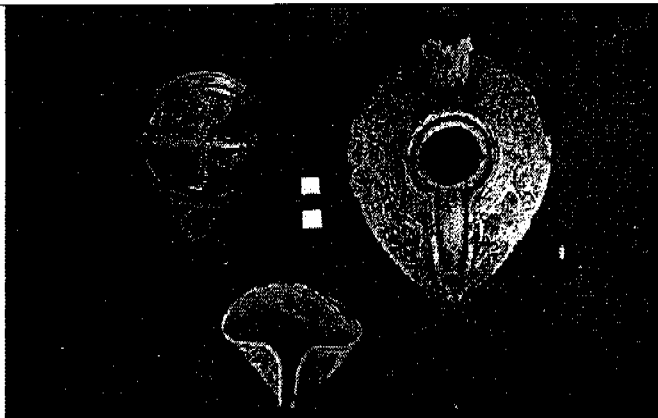
Byzantine Terra-cotta Oil Lamps through the centuries

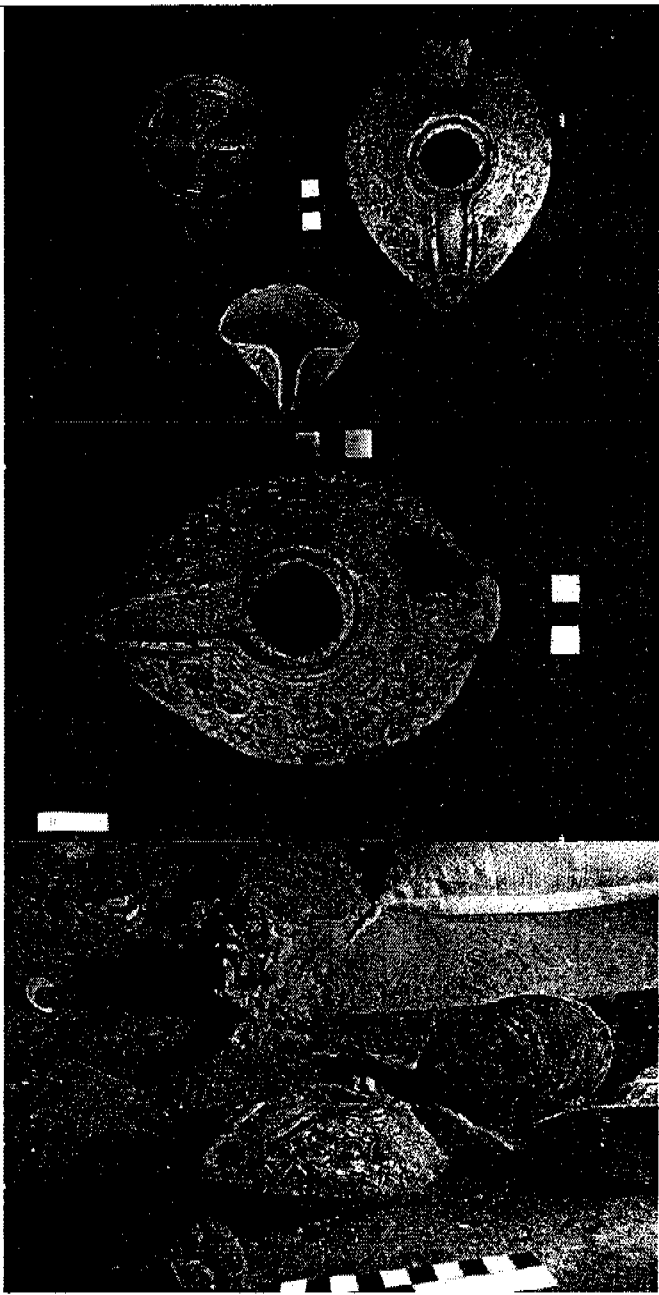
by Idunna (Jenny Baker)

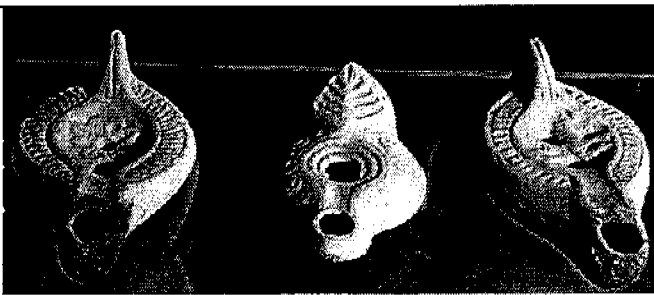
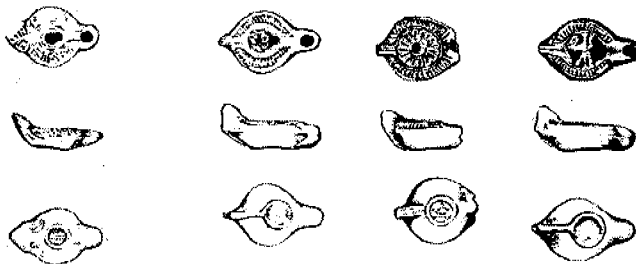
This paper is based on the Underwater Archaeological finds of the Institute of Nautical Archaeology in Bodrum Turkey

It will look at 5 of the shipwrecks found that had terra-cotta oil lamps found on them.

Decoration of the terra-cotta oil lamps seemed to peak at about the 4th / 5th centuries and the Arabic oil lamp from *Tantura B.* shipwreck is a prime example of how elaborate the decoration became, it is heavily decorated with geometric & vine like patterns. By the 7th century the lamps from Yassiada, the shipwreck with the most lamps on board, show us that while in common use there is a wide variety of styles, but that patterning has become more simple & stylised Byzantine patterns. By the 11th century and the Serçe Liman1 Shipwreck terracotta oil lamps are obviously no longer as popular as the glass lamps, of which there are 250 glass lamps found on board compared to the lone terracotta lamp. It is of a very simple design with only a dark green glaze for decoration.

Shipwreck	Period	Number of lamps	Design details
Roman Tantura	????? Century	1 lamp -	 <p>Fig 1 1 unglazed terra-cotta lamp Roman-period oil lamp from Trench VIII with a Tau-Rho cross monogram. The base of the same oil lamp , which bears the inscription "NoY," possibly the shortened name of the person who made it Size 9cm x 8cm Handle – no handle Side decoration – no side decoration Top decoration – Tau- Rho cross Monogram Spout – 2cm x 2cm triangle shape , 1cm oval opening with</p>

			<p>two small circle patterns either side in one end of the oval opening</p> <p>Central hole – none but eight small holes</p>
Tantura B	4 th – 5 th Century	1 lamp -	 <p>Fig 1,2,3</p> <p>1 unglazed ? terra-cotta lamp</p> <p>An Arabic oil lamp from <i>Tantura B</i>.</p> <p>Heavily decorated with geomatic & vine like patterns</p> <p>Size 18cm x 13cm</p> <p>Handle – a small wedge shape knob about 4cm long</p> <p>Side decoration – Heavily decorated</p> <p>Top decoration – heavily decorated</p> <p>Spout – 5cm x 2cm a sloping down ridge valley with a 1cm hole at the end heavly decorated with a herring bone pattern</p>

			Central hole – 3cm diameter with a lip
Yassiada	4 th century	4 lamps - unglazed	  <p>Fig 4,5 4 unglazed terra-cotta Lamps Sizes 9cm x 8cm & 12cm x 8cm Handle – one leaf shape handle Three ridge shape handles which contact / start at the base of the lamp Handles seem to be about 4cm high from the top of the lamp Side decoration – None Top decoration – 1 with a Byzantine circle pattern & 3 with a herring bone type pattern Spout – the spouts varied from 4cm x 3cm to 5cm x 4cm they were flat with a slight indented valley & unpatterned ending in a 2cm hole Central hole – the centers were decorated each different – 1 flower pattern indented with 2 center holes of 1cm – 1 large flower pattern – 1 with a ringed pattern indented with 2cm center hole – 1 with a griffin pattern slightly indented and 2 central holes of 1cm</p>

Yassiada

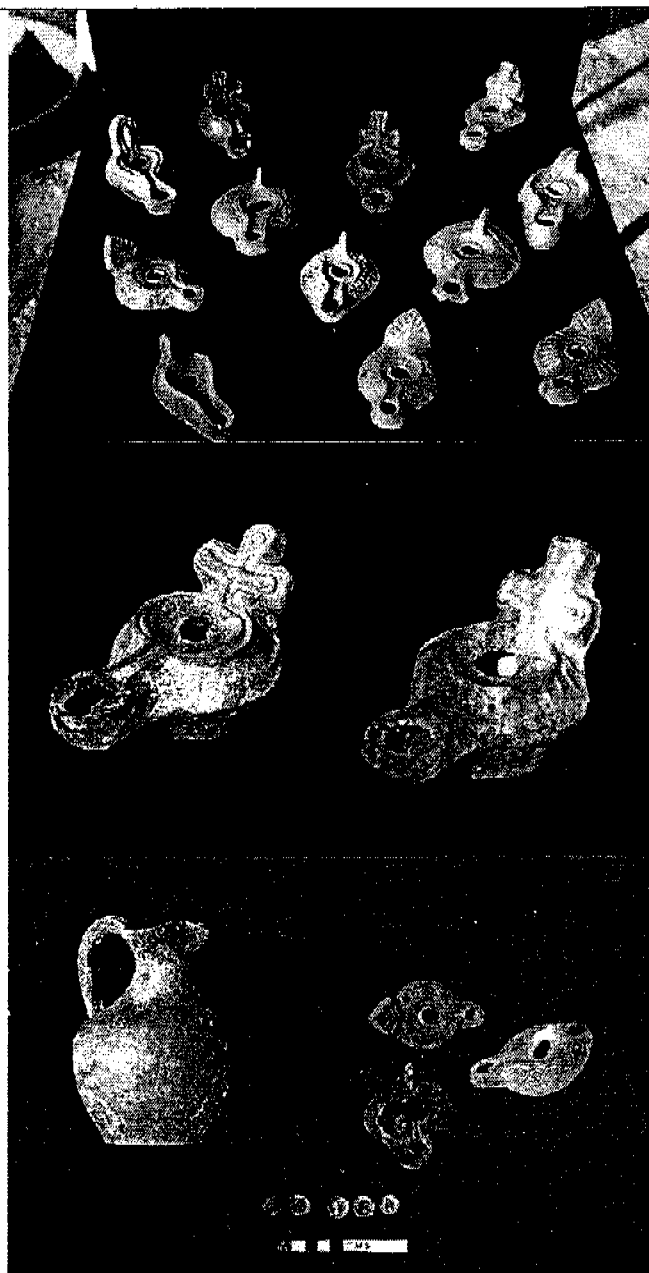
7th
Century24 lamps
-
unglazed

Fig 6,7,8

Two of the 24 unglazed terra-cotta lamps recovered from the galley area. These two are of Balkan type and show charring around the nozzles, suggesting that they were used during the ship's voyage

Sizes ranged from 6cm x 3cm to 11cm x 8cm

Handle - three cross shaped

~ 4 leaf shaped,

~ 5 Ridge,

~ 1 looped,

~ 1 wedge/stump,

~ 1 arch leaf shape.


Side decoration – none to be seen.

Top decoration – 5 with no decoration,

~ 3 with a ridge type pattern,

~ 5 with a spiral type pattern,

~ 1 with raised spots pattern,

			<p>~ 1 with twisted lines, <u>Spout – Plain spouts with 2cm hole,</u> ~ 9 had a slight valley, ~ 5 had a deep valley, ~ 3 had no valley Central hole – for the most part this section was plain with a ring lip in 10 , only 2 had a ridge pattern here</p>
Serce Liman1	11 th Century	1 lamp – glazed	 <p>Fig 9 1 glazed terra-cotta Lamp The only oil lamp found on the shipwreck. This lamp is Islamic in origin and originally had a dark green glaze Size 12cm x 6cm Handle – ridge shape Side decoration – None Top decoration – None Spout – a deep valley spout 4 cm x 2cm Central hole – center hole with lip 2.5cm</p>

All the photos are from the Web sites of the Institute of Nautical Archaeology which can be found at:

The Institute of Nautical Archaeology
<http://nautarch.tamu.edu/INA/vm.htm>

Tantura lagoon Shipwrecks Excavation
<http://nautarch.tamu.edu/INA/tantura.htm>

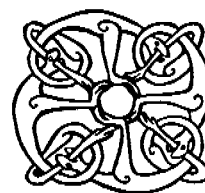
The Roman-period Shipwreck Excavation
<http://nautarch.tamu.edu/INA/TL-Roman.htm>

The Tantura B Shipwreck Excavation
<http://nautarch.tamu.edu/INA/tanturab.htm>

Yassiada 4th Century Byzantine Shipwreck Excavation
<http://nautarch.tamu.edu/INA/yassiada4.htm>

Yassiada 7th Century Byzantine Shipwreck Excavation
<http://nautarch.tamu.edu/INA/yassiada7.htm>

Serçe Liman1 11th Century Byzantine Shipwreck Excavation
<http://nautarch.tamu.edu/INA/SerceLimani.htm>



A Battle at Corryong (The Gathering)

By Kristen Pincott

It was an afternoon without rain that both sides had chosen to take full advantage of. The place of contest had fallen on a field cradled by foothills that were frequently obscured by low level cloud.

Already this valley was familiar with the sound of battle cry's and the ring of steel, as the afternoon had already seen a number of clashes on this very field, and now, yet again the two sides faced each other. Both sides, numbering a dozen or more combatants, were well armed with a collection of, broad swords, sabers, spears, and great axes. And both well armored in either lamella or mail.

I was positioned on the extreme right flank, broad sword in hand, and was soon moving past the main body as I pushed the foe standing directly opposite further back a away from the fray.

I exchanged many blows and parries before overcoming the foe, and having claimed victory, I turned to find myself in enemy territory. I was now directly behind the enemy. In-between myself and the main body of combatants was a member of the opposition turning from one of my fallen comrades, who like me had broken through the line.

Without hesitation I ran at him and struck him with a long broad stroke across the back. Not breaking stride I saw him, in the corner of my, fall to the ground. I closed with the enemy rank before they could become aware of my presence.

At this stage I became aware within myself of joy and elation at the prospect of sending many foes to the warrior halls of heaven, and had the courage to face the task ahead. My breathing became heavy.

Stepping into the enemy ranks from behind I believe I thrust into one, drew my sword across the back of another and then, as I watched another foe collapse from a strike that cut deep across the back of the shoulder, I became aware of the details of all that stood before me. My breathing was heavy.

In this awareness I saw the curiosity on the face of a warrior watching my last victim fall to ground, as he tried to understand why his comrades were still falling. I noticed the enemy rank had become strangely calm, with only sign of combat near the spot that I had first joined combat. I was now on the opposite flank, and with the exception of a lone spear man, who was a distance away and not identifiable, I seemed that I was about to be surrounded by the enemy and all my comrades appeared fallen. In my ears I could hear my blood sing.

Before I had a chance to claim another scalp they turned on me simultaneously, brandishing swords and making strange monkey noises. "Ooo, Ooo, Ooo", was all could understand, that and the half dozen sword points looking eager to strike.

In my ears I could hear my blood sing.

After a few sword parries and a couple of side steps I realized that the lone spear man would soon be behind me, and I decided my chances for survival might improve if maneuver to face him alone. I broke with the half dozen swordsmen and fled, quickly covering the distance to the lone spearman. In my ears I could hear my blood sing.



Confronting the spearman, we exchanged blows and parries, and I noticed that like the other foes he was making monkey sounds. "Ooo, Ooo, Ooo".
In my ears I could hear my blood sing.

The remaining half dozen opponents had rallied and was closing.
In my ears I could hear my blood sing.

The spearman had his spear level, a frustrated look on his face. "Ooo, Ooo, Ooo", he was saying.
Then I pondered as to why I could hear my blood sing.

I strained to listen. "Ooo, Ooo, two. Ooo, or, two. One or two?" the spearman was asking.

"One", I replied.

"You idiot! We're on the same side", Ragnar the spearman stated.

Of course we didn't last much longer after that, the enemy was closing and we were outnumbered.



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