

Material Culture: Religious Objects (10 ects) (Department of Medieval and Renaissance Archaeology, IKS)

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Recent theories about material culture have stressed the agency of objects and the multifaceted meanings embedded in them. While even everyday objects may be perceived in many more ways than their primary function assumes, religious objects are expected to be highly symbolic. However, many can also act as tools for ritual practices, jewellery, commodities... Furthermore, what makes them "religious" is not always easy for the archaeologist to determine. We are rather well-equipped for reading the Christian cultural codes and expressions widespread across medieval Europe, less so for those of the contemporary, yet "pre-Christian" Scandinavia. This course will discuss aspects of the material culture of religious practice in Northern and Western Europe in the period between ca. 600 to 1200 AD. Through a number of case-studies from different regions and centuries, we will discuss in the frame of lectures and student workshops a number of current theories in material culture and take an in-depth look at the objects "they" saw and "we" see as bearing religious meaning.

Background readings

DuBois, T. A. 1999. *Nordic religions in the Viking Age*. Philadelphia.

Evans, G. R. 2007. *The church in the early Middle Ages: the I.B. Tauris history of the Christian church*. London.