

STUDIES IN VIKING AND MEDIEVAL SCANDINAVIA

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THE VIKING AGE AS A PERIOD
OF RELIGIOUS TRANSFORMATION

The Christianization of Norway from
AD 560–1150/1200

by

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PREFACE

Religion is of fundamental value for religious individuals, encompassing most people in past communities, and great proportions of archaeological sources from prehistory are also the result of religious cult. The establishment of Christianity by the turn of the second millennium AD is also key to understanding multiple processes of the time. In spite of this religion was almost non-existent in Scandinavian archaeological literature during several decades in the late twentieth century. The situation is very much improved in the twenty-first century, but beyond Fridtjov Birkeli's work in the 1970s on monumental stone crosses, archaeological material in Norway has so far rarely played an important role in any major, systematic research involving religious studies. It is thus not straightforward to write a book like this. Lacking access to most of the material in databases on the internet, the basic books presenting the material since the time of Jan Petersen, A. W. Brøgger, and Haakon Shetelig are sadly missing. Many readers will feel the lack of overview of the relevant archaeological material while reading this book. However, overwhelming quantities, great variations, and old records explain why it is just not possible to present all the material the way it deserves in this book. Nor is it possible to argue in detail for which material is included and which is left out. This would lead to endless commentaries. However, this book is an attempt to contribute to the demonstration of this material's great potential by addressing questions of importance for the history of religion and Norway.

The main manuscript was finished in 2008 and since then only editing and minor additions have been added. I was given the opportunity to write this book by receiving a postdoctoral fellowship from the University of Bergen in 2003 at the Centre for Medieval Studies (CMS). This represented a pleasant opportunity to study what I had wished to study more sincerely since I was a student: the