4.2.4.20 Bag handles

Edited by Tomáš Vlasatý, based on:

Fourteen finds were discovered in the harbour of Haithabu, whose function had not been known for a long time (OG 119; Taf. 59: 1-4). They are elongated and flat objects with a length of 181-496 mm, thickness of 7-13 mm and width of 29-52 mm in the middle part. Their semi-circular ends have a diameter of 31-61 mm and are drilled through in the centre (these holes have a diameter of 7-10 mm). The upper side is wavy (Taf. 59: 1), or has notches (Taf. 59: 2-3), while the lower one is almost straight. All objects have oblong holes by the lower straight side that were used to fix a textile to them, according to documents made during excavations.\(^{126}\) Used wood include ash (5 pieces) and maple (5 pieces).

Sami ethnographic material makes it clear that these objects are probably bag handles.\(^{127}\) A preserved Sami bag is attached to two identical antler handles (Abb. 67). Handles from Haithabu could be used in the same way. The bag was fixed into the oblong holes. A rope or cord, which served as a shoulder strap, was stretched through holes at the ends of handles. Two curved handles from Haithabu\(^{128}\) formed a pair couple, so it is possible that other finds could be initially paired as well.

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\(^{126}\) Fabric remnants have not survived to the present day.

\(^{127}\) See the exhibition „Sapmi - Das Land der Jäger, Fischer und Rentierzüchter“ (Sapmi - *The Land of Hunters, fishermen and reindeer breeders*), which was held in the Archaeological State Museum in Schleswig. In this regard, I thank to Dr. I. Gabriel from Schleswig.

\(^{128}\) HbH.119.001-002.

Abb. 67. Sami leather bag with antler handles.
Taf. 59. Handles from Haithabu.
1 HbH.119.014; 2 HbH.119.013; 3 HbH.119.012; 4 HbH.119.003
All types of handles found in Haithabu. Some of them have not survived to the present day. Taken from: SCHIETZEL, Kurt (2014). "Spurensuche Haithabu," Neumünster – Hamburg, p. 256.
Bag handle found in the harbour of Birka in August 2014. The shape is similar to shapes of handles from Haithabu.

In Sweden, there are at least 5 Sami bone or antler handles from the 10th to 17th century (SHM 20415:7; SHM 15052:7; SHM 17684; SHM 34358 (196); SHM 21682:VIII:628). Taken from the catalogue of Historiska.se.
Selection of iconography from the 9th to 12th century: various forms of bags and satchels.