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»German« stove tiles in southern Scandinavia c. 1400-1600: evidence for importation or immigration?

Archaeological ceramics provide the primary source of physical evidence for the spread of Hanseatic urban culture across the Baltic to southern Scandinavia during the 15th and 16th centuries. Stonewares from the Rhineland, Lower Saxony and from Saxony were both traded in their own right and can be seen as a defining characteristic of the lifestyles of mercantile alien populations in the trading centres of the southern Baltic region. Finds of glazed ceramic stove-tiles, indicative of Continental-style heating technology and interior design, are equally widespread on urban, military and residential sites across the region, and provide a qualitative dimension to this material acculturation process.

During the course of an extended survey of traded ceramics excavated in eastern Denmark, southern Sweden, North Germany and along the coast of Poland, it was possible to identify groups of 15th and 16th-century stove-tiles and their moulds which occur on both sides of the southern Baltic sea. Many of the southern Scandinavian finds, are moulded with features such as maker's marks or names, royal or aristocratic portraits, or coats-of-arms, which indicate an origin for the original mould in northern Germany, particularly in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Saxony. Similar and mould-identical tiles to the Nordic finds have been recorded in Lübeck, Wismar, Rostock und Stralsund.

The finds provide evidence for an active trade in tiles and moulds made in Germany and shipped, like the stonewares, by Hanseatic merchants. They also represent the local production of stove-tiles employing moulds imported from the Continent. The discovery of moulds of German type in association with kiln-wasters in Lund, Malmö, Copenhagen and Stockholm confirm local manufacture, and suggest that German potters migrated to southern Scan-

dinavia to establish tile workshops for this very purpose. This hypothesis is supported by the survival of documentary evidence for large-scale German populations resident in these centres and for potters with German names working in these communities during the 16th and 17th centuries. The archaeological discoveries add a physical dimension to the migration not only of a Continental lifestyle across the Baltic to southern Scandinavia during the late Middle Ages, but also a new technology and a highly specialised craft industry.

