

Faroes – usually taken from Anders Sørensen Vedel's *Hundredvisebog* and to a lesser extent from Peder Syv's collection. There seem to be two possible reasons for this, the first abstract and my own guess: that the Faroese refrains express the national psyche better than the Danish ones – they are native to the islands and an expression of the view of life there; – the second suggested by Hjalmar Thurén being again that the ballad melodies are dictated by the melodies of the refrains. There are not so many melodies as texts, he points out, and this results in the refrain becoming the fixed point in the ballad. Thus, he says, a Faroese will rarely say that such and such a ballad is sung to the tune of the Ballad of Sverker, but he will tell you which refrain is being used, by which he will immediately indicate the melody.

There is at all events a close relationship between the long refrain and the emphasis of the ballad, which is emphasised by the relationship between the long refrain and the actual musical structure, the verses moving without a break into the refrain and thence, also without any pause, into the next verse. All is closely linked to the dance, with its regular and simple steps which in their turn give the dancer the opportunity to express his emotions in his movements and his mime. The ancient cultic significance of the dance is apparent here.

All in all, the Faroese ballad as it stands today bears every sign of being a living tradition, a vehicle for emotion, for a sense of epic grandeur, for a sense of the brevity of life, and, not least, for enjoyment. There is every sign that, to keep to Erik Dal's definition, it still expresses a valid view of life.

Knap of Howar, Papa Westray, Orkney 1973

Anna Ritchie

Papa Westray is a small and fertile island in the northern part of the Orkneys. On the west coast of the island is the site known as the Knap of Howar, the visible remains of which consist of two well-built stone houses lying side by side. The

site was first excavated in the early 1930's by Traill and Kirkness (Traill and Kirkness 1937), but no dating evidence was found and the architecture of the houses has remained unique. New excavations were begun in August and September 1973 on behalf of the Department of the Environment, and the results obtained already show that the site is of considerable importance. It is the first domestic settlement in Orkney which has yielded neolithic pottery of the Unstan class, and the range of associated artefacts widens our understanding of the cultural background against which many of the Orcadian chambered tombs must be set.

Work in 1973 was concentrated on the southern part of the site. The better preserved of the two houses was re-excavated, a section cut through its wall on the south, and two trenches were dug to explore the midden outside the house.

New information about the internal layout of the house included details of the main entrance, which was carefully paved with two massive slabs and had a sill-stone between the jambs at the inner end of the passage. The floor in the front room was partially paved in order to level it. The house was divided into two by upright stone slabs, and two post-holes for substantial roof-supports were found between the slabs on either side. The back room appears to have functioned as the main working area, for it contained the hearth in a shallow pit and two large saddle-querns. Shallow grooves in the floor on either side seem best interpreted as bedding-sockets for wooden benches - an echo perhaps of the stone-built platform uncovered by the original excavators in the front chamber. The floor was simply the surface of the natural subsoil.

The wall of the house consisted of an inner and an outer skin of drystone masonry, with a solid core of midden material. The inner wall-face lay directly on the natural subsoil, but the outer face ended some 0.36 m higher than the inner and rested on pre-existing midden. It was clear that this midden had originally extended over the entire area of the house, and that, when the house was built, the midden inside its area had been removed and used as filling for the wall. A total of 93 artefacts were found in the core of the wall, most of which can be

matched among the finds from the midden outside the house.

The house therefore post-dates the midden, but probably not by a significantly long period of time. The objects found in the house by the original excavators, and the few artefacts recovered this year from undisturbed areas of the house, all appear to belong to the same cultural horizon as the contents of the midden. It is hoped that a series of radiocarbon dates from samples of animal bone taken from both house and midden will solve the problem of the precise relationship between the two.

Although it shows no signs of having been redeposited, the midden appears to extend over a very large area and is only 0.34 - 0.60 m thick. Its nature and contents were uniform in both trenches dug 9 m apart. The midden is now covered by wind-blown sand – as was the entire site prior to 1930 – but this is a relatively recent alteration of the landscape, for the basal layer of midden lies immediately on top of a thin old land surface covering a clay subsoil.

The midden proved to be rich in artefacts, animal bones and shellfish, but despite the use of flotation techniques and wet and dry sieving no plant remains were recovered. As yet there is no direct evidence for agriculture – the two querns need not be connected with the grinding of grain. The animal bones have still to be examined in detail, but cattle, sheep, pigs and deer are certainly present. Shellfish would appear to have played a significant part in the diet; oysters and limpets are predominant, but there are also scallops, whelks and quantities of razor-shells. The inhabitants of Papa Westray still eat razor-fish today - they make very good eating if they are not boiled for too long.

Pottery forms a large proportion of the artefacts from this year's excavation. 296 separate deposits of sherds were found, of which more than one sixth are rims or are decorated, mostly by the stab-and-drag technique. All the identifiable pottery, apart from a few possible beaker sherds, belong to the Unstan class of neolithic ware and can be paralleled by finds from Orcadian chambered tombs. There are also links with the pottery from domestic sites at Ness of Gruting in Shetland (Calder 1956), and Eilean an Tighe (Lindsay Scott 1951) and

Northton (Simpson 1966) in the Hebrides. There are no real resemblances between the Knap of Howar assemblage and those from the Orcadian neolithic settlements of Skara Brae and Rinyo, either amongst the pottery or the bone and stone tools.

The rest of the artefacts include flint scrapers, a leaf-shaped arrowhead and a plano-convex flint knife. The bonework consists predominantly of simple awls, but there are also more exotic artefacts such as whalebone mallets, a finely carved whalebone spatula, and a distinctive new type of bone gouge. There are also examples of an unusual stone tool apparently used for drilling holes.

Radiocarbon dates for comparable assemblages include Unstan ware from Northton (Burleigh *et al* 1973) and Ness of Grutin (*Radiocarbon*, 13(1971), 177) have indicated a potentially long date range from the mid-third millennium at Northton to the mid-second millennium at Gruting. Six samples have been submitted for radiocarbon analysis at the East Kilbride laboratory, and it is hoped that the results will show where in this date range the domestic settlement at Knap of Howar should fall.

REFERENCES

- Burleigh, R, Evans, J G and Simpson, D D A 1973 'Radiocarbon dates for Northton, Outer Hebrides', *Antiquity*, XLVII (1973), 61-4.
- Calder, C S T 1956 'Stone Age house-sites in Shetland', *Proc Soc Antiq Scot*, LXXXIX (1955-6), 340-97.
- Lindsay Scott, Sir W 1951 'Eilean an Tighe: a pottery workshop of second millennium BC', *Proc Soc Antiq Scot*, LXXXV (1950-1), 1-37.
- Simpson, D D A 1966 'A Neolithic settlement in the Outer Hebrides', *Antiquity*, XL (1966), 137-9.
- Traill, W and Kirkness, W 1937 'Hower, a prehistoric structure on Papa Westray, Orkney', *Proc Soc Antiq Scot*, LXXI (1936-7), 309-21.