



STAVIRIZER

Iglesias de madera en Noruega

Con el establecimiento del **Cristianismo** en Noruega **hace mil años**, la cultura de la Europa continental logró poner un pie en el país. El encuentro entre **la vieja cultura** y la nueva, impulsó a la **sociedad** noruega. Los edificios de las iglesias cuentan **parte de la historia** de esta **convergencia** cultural.

HÅKON CHRISTIE

Aunque ninguna de las 29 iglesias que han sobrevivido pertenece a la primera generación de iglesias noruegas, sabemos que esos edificios que son del siglo XI, primer período de conversión al Cristianismo, estaban muy próximos en su concepción a las iglesias de duelas. Las más primitivas eran de madera y tenían muros de postes verticales y tabloncillos. Sin embargo los postes estaban hincados en el terreno. Esto les proporcionaba suficiente estabilidad como entramado constructivo del edificio, pero provocaba que se pudrieran sus empotramientos. Restos de esta primera generación de iglesias pueden verse en forma de hileras de huecos de pilotajes profundos en yacimientos arqueológicos. Los restos de madera que permanecen en el fondo de esos taladros revelan el fracaso de esas construcciones. Aparentemente, la primera generación de iglesias no duró

más de 100 años. En el siglo XII la necesidad de construcciones más sólidas se hizo patente. El problema se solucionó mediante la introducción de durmientes, sobre los cuales descansaban los tabloncillos y los pilares, elevando los muros del terreno y protegiéndolos así de la pudrición. El método se demostró tan efectivo que las iglesias permanecen en pie todavía.

Este método de construcción es el que ha dado nombre a las iglesias. Un muro aduelado se forma con tabloncillos verticales con sus bases ensambladas a caja y espiga sobre una viga durmiente, y en su cabeza a un testero. En cada esquina se coloca un nuevo poste conectado igualmente con el durmiente y la carrera superior. Con este sistema, el muro aduelado presenta un sólido entramado de postes y testeros cuajado de tabloncillos verticales. Los durmientes de los cuatro muros forman una sólida estructura horizontal sobre la que descansa la totalidad del edificio. Las carreras conectadas entre sí forman el entramado horizontal superior.

Aunque se aprecian distintas soluciones, todas las iglesias responden a esta misma tipología. El tipo más común es un sencillo y relativamente pequeño edificio con una nave rematada por un estrecho presbiterio separado por una cancela y cubierto por un tejado inclinado.

La iglesia más grande y la más ornamentada es la de Borgund Church. Consta de una nave y un estrecho presbiterio el cual

The stave churches of Norway

With the **establishment of Christianity** in Norway **one thousand years ago**, the culture of continental Europe gained **its first foothold** in the country. The meeting **between the new culture and the old** gave rise to impulses which made **a considerable impression on** Norwegian society. Church buildings tell some of the story of this cultural convergence.

By Håkon Christie

Although **none of the 29 stave churches** that now survive belongs to the first generation of Norwegian churches, we now know that those built in the **eleventh century - during the early period of conversion to Christianity**, - were closely related to the stave churches. The **earliest ones** were built of wood and had walls of upright posts and planks. However, the posts were embedded in holes in the ground. This gave them **sufficient stability to function as the constructive frame-work** of the building, but it also caused their bases to rot. Traces of their first generation of Norwegian churches can still be seen in the form of rows of deep post-holes at archaeological sites, and decayed remains of wood at the bottom of the post-holes clearly reveal the fate of these early constructions.

Apparently, the first generation churches did not stand for more than about a hundred years. In the twelfth century the need for more solid constructions became obvious. The problem was solved by introducing sills, upon which the planks and staves rested, thus raising the walls above ground level and protecting them against rot. The method proved so effective that churches built in the twelfth century are still standing today.

It is their method of construction that has given the stave churches their name. A stave wall consists of vertical planks with their bases in a groove in the sill-beam, and their tops in a groove in the wall-plate. At each corner is an upright post connected to the sill below and the wall-plate above. Thus, a stave wall has a solid frame consisting of sill, wall-plate, and two corner posts. This sill is filled with vertical planks. The sills of the four walls form a solid horizontal frame on which the whole church rests. The wall-plates form a corresponding horizontal frame at the top.

Many different types of stave church have been built but they have one shared feature in that all have stave walls. The most common type is a simple, relatively small building with a nave and a narrow chancel. An even simpler construction is the long church, in which the nave and the chancel form a single, rectangular building of uniform breadth under a pitched roof. In these churches the chancel has been divided off from the nave by an open wall or chancel screen.

The largest and most ornately designed stave church in Norway is Borgund church. This consists of a nave

tiene un añadido semicircular y un ábside en su lado Este. Sin embargo su característica diferencial es la diferencia de altura entre la nave y las alas. Además existe una galería exterior que rodea toda la iglesia. Estas galerías eran comunes en todas estas iglesias. La parte alta de la nave es soportada por pilares exentos, separados cada 2 m y desplazados alrededor de 1 m del muro externo. Esta hilera separa la nave central de las laterales. Algunas iglesias adueladas tienen sólo una hilera de pilares exentos, colocada en el centro de la nave y llegan hasta el techo. Estas iglesias se parecen a las de tipo simple, pero su construcción es más compleja. Estas iglesias son construcciones de gran calidad, ricamente decoradas con tallas, especialmente en los marcos de las puertas. Esta tradición de rica ornamentación aparece como una referencia a las tallas de animales de la época vikinga. Los dragones se han realizado primorosamente y se transformaron progresivamente en otras criaturas fantásticas, enlazadas con tallos y hojas de parra. Los elaborados diseños se realizan con gran habilidad pero son difícilmente coherentes con la iconografía cristiana o las imágenes evangélicas. Los interiores de las iglesias son oscuros con escasos puntos de luz, apenas unas aberturas redondas bajo el tedio que producían una penumbra crepuscular en el interior. A pesar de todo, los tallistas embellecieron también el



interior. En algunos casos los pilares rematan con capiteles, en clara referencia al estilo románico del momento en piedra.

Iglesia de Haltdalen

La mayoría de las iglesias eran pequeñas, simples naves rematadas por tejados de tejas de madera y al igual que los muros, embreados. Internamente, el espacio se prolonga hasta la cumbre. Como el espacio pequeño no puede ampliarse con el aumento de los fieles, particularmente tras la introducción de los bancos de asiento.

La iglesia de Haltdalen ha sido trasladada al Ecomuseo de Trøndelag de Sverresborg, cerca de Trondheim, donde ha sido restaurado hasta su aspecto original y puede estudiarse con detenimiento.

and a narrow chancel, but in addition the chancel has a semicircular extension, or apse, at the east end. However, the distinguishing characteristic of this type is that the central part of the nave is higher than the aisles. The latter must not be confused with the external galleries which surround the entire church. External galleries were common in all types of stave churches, and are, therefore, not characteristic of any particular type. The higher section of the nave is supported by free-standing posts, spaced about two metres apart and placed approximately one metre inside the outer walls. These separate the aisles from the central nave.

Some of the stave churches have only one free-standing post, placed in the middle of the nave and reaching right up to the roof. These central-most pillars resemble most closely the pillars of a simple type with a nave and a narrow chancel, but their system of construction is more complex.

The stave churches are constructions of high quality, richly decorated with carvings. In virtually all of them the doorframes are decorated from top to bottom with carvings. This tradition of rich ornamentation appears to go back to the animal carvings of the Viking age. The dragons are lovingly executed and transformed into long-limbed creatures of fantasy, here and there entwined with tendrils of vine, with winding stems and serrated leaves. The elaborate designs are executed with supreme artistic skill. The stave church doorways are, therefore, among the most distinctive works of art to be found in Norway. However, it is difficult to connect them with the Christian gospel.

The interiors of the stave churches are dark. The only original sources of light were small, round openings high up under the roof, which shed a meagre light on the lofty room. Nevertheless, the wood carvers made some embellishment in the interior. In some of the churches the posts are equipped with capitals, giving associations with the contemporary Romanesque stone churches. The obvious wish was to decorate the stave churches in the same way as the best known stone churches of the day. The basic construction of the stave churches, so intimately linked to the properties of wood, has, however, been preserved intact.

Haltdalen stave church

Most of the Norwegian stave churches were small, simple buildings with a short nave and a narrow chancel. The roofing was usually wooden shingles, and both the roof and the walls were torred. Internally the room extended right up to the ridge of the roof. As the churches were small they could not accommodate the growing congregations, particularly after seating was introduced. Most of the stave churches of this type were demolished, or extended and rebuilt. Haltdalen church has been moved from its site to the Trøndelag Folk Museum at Sverresborg, near Trondheim, where it has been restored to its original appearance.

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