

# Setja, efla or reisa kaupstad?

A critical reading of the Sagas on the origin of Trondheim in light of archaeological evidences

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## 1. Introduction

The origin of Trondheim is mentioned in a number of Old Norse sagas from the end of the 12th and the first half of the 13th century.<sup>1</sup> A striking feature of these texts is that they portray contradictory traditions about local town-formation. Their linguistic obscurity and ambiguous content have resulted in the role of royal power in the earliest origin of the town being given differing emphasis: from playing no part at all<sup>2</sup>, through a catalysing effect<sup>3</sup>, to being the initiating factor in urban foundation.<sup>4</sup> Recently, the results of urban excavations throughout Scandinavia have supported the last interpretation.<sup>5</sup> But the archaeological investigations have also shown that town formation was characterized by great regional variations<sup>6</sup> and we must acknowledge that our perception of the morphology of individual urban centres is still far from complete. A new reading of the sagas in the light of the physical remains from the towns may bring us somewhat closer to a deeper insight into the complex chronological and spatial dimensions of the urbanization process.

## 2. Town formation according to the sagas

On the basis of what the sagas tell us about the origin of Trondheim, two principal and divergent traditions can be distinguished:

a) one based on the knowledge (or at least the as-

sumption) of the existence of an earlier non-agrarian settlement at Nidarnes *before* Olav Tryggvason »founded the market town« (*salle kaupstaden*). This tradition formed the basis for the accounts in Teodorichus Monachus *Historia de antiquitate regum norvagiensium* (c. 1180), Ågrip (c. 1190) and the A-version of Odd Munk's saga of Olav Tryggvason (c. 1190), in other words, the earliest sagas mentioning the town.

b) a second tradition associating the origin of Nidarnes with a royal initiative for its foundation. This tradition is expressed, for instance, in the S-version of Odd Munk's saga of Olav Tryggvason but is particularly stressed in the rather later sagas of Fagerskinna (c. 1220), Snorre's saga of St Olaf (*Store Olavssaga*, c. 1230) and Heimskringla (c. 1235).

The existence of two different traditions has formed the basis for accounts about local urban origins, given further expression by the *terminological usage* in the sagas. In his investigation of 1976, the historian Helge Nilsen brought together the most probable interpretations of the various terms used in describing royal initiative in urban foundation (see Tables 1 and 2). This shows that the authors of the sagas used words in their accounts of the origins of the earliest towns which changed between significant ex-

Terminology	Source	Interpretation
<i>setja</i>	Odd Munks Olavssaga Morkinskinna Heimskringla Fagerskinna Sverressoga	put down, establish, locate
<i>efna</i>	Saga Olavs Konungs hins Helga Heimskringla (prologen) Fagerskinna	make preparations for
<i>hefja</i>	Fagerskinna	lift, raise, erect
<i>reisa</i>	Heimskringla Saga Olavs Konungs hins Helga	erect, restore
<i>efla</i>	Legendariske Saga Fagerskinna Morkinskinna	strengthen, support, substantiate
<i>byggja</i>	Håkons Saga	build, build on,

Tab. 1. Technical terms for urban foundation in Norse sagas (after Nilsen 1976:310ff)

tremes, mainly corresponding to the fundamental elements in the two narrative traditions:

- 1) the king founded an urban settlement *ex nihilo* (*setja, efna*).
- 2) the king built onto *an already existing settlement* (*efla*).

### 3. Implications of the interpretation

The ambiguity of the saga texts may be regarded either as a traditional technique, and therefore as a source-critical problem, or as the expression of a fundamental historical reality. In the latter case, *which* historical reality do the sagas describe or which is the description itself a part of?

In understanding the content of the sagas there is one point which, for example, Meulengracht Sørensen has emphasized;<sup>7</sup> the historical text should be analysed in a hermeneutic perspective as a *contemporary text*, thus as an historic account from the Middle Ages even though it partly dates from the pre-Christian period, and not solely as an *historical source*. It is important always to remember that the sagas were first and foremost reliant on oral traditions and that the narrative core in the traditions derived from local conditions, acquiring its form long before and in different social, political and ideological contexts from when the *texts of the sagas* came into existence. In other words, it must have been as difficult for the

Terminology	Source	Quotation
setja	Odd Munks Olavssaga (A)	»þar var nocquot þorp sett oc kaupstaðir.« <sup>1)</sup>
setja	(B)	»þa var sett nockot þorp i bœnom, oc let þat gera fyrst Olafr konungr.« <sup>2)</sup>
efna	Saga Olavs Konungs hins Helga	»þar haf i Olafr Tryggvason latit efna til kaupstaðar.« <sup>3)</sup>
efna	Heimskringla (prologen)	»let Olafr konungr Tryggvason efna til kaupvangs.« <sup>4)</sup>
efla	Fagerskinna	»Olafr konungr let æfla kaupstaðr i Nidarose sem a r var æin bœle.« <sup>5)</sup>

1) «...a farm was located there and a market town»

2) «...a farm was located in the markettown, which was originally created by king Olav...»

3) «...there Olav Tryggvasson had made preparations for a markettown...»

4) «...king Olav Tryggvasson made preparations for a marketplace...»

5) «...king Olav supported the markettown at Nidaros, where a farm previously was located...»

Tab. 2. Technical terms used in Norse sagas concerning the foundation of Trondheim (after Nilsen 1976:310ff)

authors of the earliest sagas to understand the historical conditions behind the complexes of oral traditions, just as today it is difficult for historians to understand the realities behind the accounts in the *texts of the sagas*. The question of what the sagas are really dealing with cannot, therefore, simply be reduced to an entirely source-critical problem. The formal and contextual ambiguity of the texts cannot only be interpreted as a reflection of the saga authors' multifarious possibilities of understanding the historical realities behind the oral accounts and problems with transferring and setting isolated oral and locally derived traditions into a comprehensive whole.

Against this background, it is not without interest to see that in the case of Trondheim there seems to be a *significant agreement* between the descriptions in the earliest sagas of a settlement at Nidarnes before Olav Tryggvason appeared on the scene, and the terminological usage in the later sagas which indicates that the royal initiative in foundation was primarily of »re-establishment« character. The »early texts« (see above) use as their starting point an unanimous tradition of an early, non-agrarian, settlement at Nidarnes which *in rudimentary and corrupt linguistic form reiterates the urbanization terminology of the later sagas (efla)*.

Something which complicates the picture is that

the later sagas give a completely different account of the king's role in the origin of the town, namely that it was founded *ex nihilo* by Olav Tryggvason. This account may be based on a tradition about the origin of the town different from that which the earlier sagas used. As far as the later sagas are concerned, there is apparently a conflation of two traditions: the earlier based on linguistics, the later on fact. Which historical reality lies at the base of a possible »dendritic« tradition development? And which interpretative consequences should we assume for our overall view of the process of urbanization?

One possibility is that the later sagas »under-communalized« the pre-urban settlement in order to attribute greater honour to the royal power in urban foundation than that given by traditional sources. This explanation is supported by the fact that many historians have interpreted both Heimskringla and Fagerskinna as »ideological texts« defending the interests of the royal dynasty. If that is the case, accounts of urban origins in the later sagas can be considered as products of their time, the final consequence of »dynastic propaganda«, telling more about the temporary use of royal power to strengthen the ideological basis of lordship than about the origin of Trondheim (or other Norwegian towns).

Another possibility is that there were in fact two parallel traditions. At the time when the sagas were being written they may have lived on as a combined tradition. The origin of many and partly different traditions about urban foundation may have arisen from urban origin itself, for example, the appearance of a »non-agrarian settlement« at Nidarnes may have occurred in different stages with which were associated particular characteristics which were then connected with traditional narratives because at the

same time there were more important events in the locality. Regarded in this way, all the saga traditions about the origin of Trondheim may be interpreted as *contemporary literature as an expression of the extended and phased character of urbanization*. The question posed below is if any of these interpretations have an empirical basis in the remains from the physical material itself.

#### 4. *Settlement topography as a starting point*

Trondheim developed from Nidarnes, a peninsula formed in post-glacial times where the Nidelv river flowed out into the wide and long Trondheim fjord. The archaeological starting point for the following account is a number of fences and ditches which had originally divided the earliest settlement area into small plots. The laying-out and marking of parallel boundaries using fences and ditches is not unique to Trondheim but occurs as a characteristic topographical settlement element in early Scandinavian towns. In Ribe the earliest parallel system was established in the first half of the 8th century,<sup>8</sup> in the Anglo-Saxon area<sup>9</sup> and Staraja Ladoga<sup>10</sup> at the end of the 9th century, in Svealand (Sigtuna)<sup>11</sup> and the Viken region (Oslo)<sup>12</sup> in the first half of the 11th century. In the Anglo-Saxon area the earliest plot division seems to have coincided with the establishment of Scandinavian settlement (for example, in York<sup>13</sup> and Lincoln<sup>14</sup>) whereas in Dublin the archaeologically proven plot division is connected with the Hiberno-Scandinavian term *garrdha*.<sup>15</sup> The presence of early plot-systems in central Scandinavian towns (for example, Ribe, Lund, Sigtuna and Trondheim) has been taken as evidence for royal initiative in the earliest origins of towns, and also indirectly as evidence for the existence of an early supra-regional

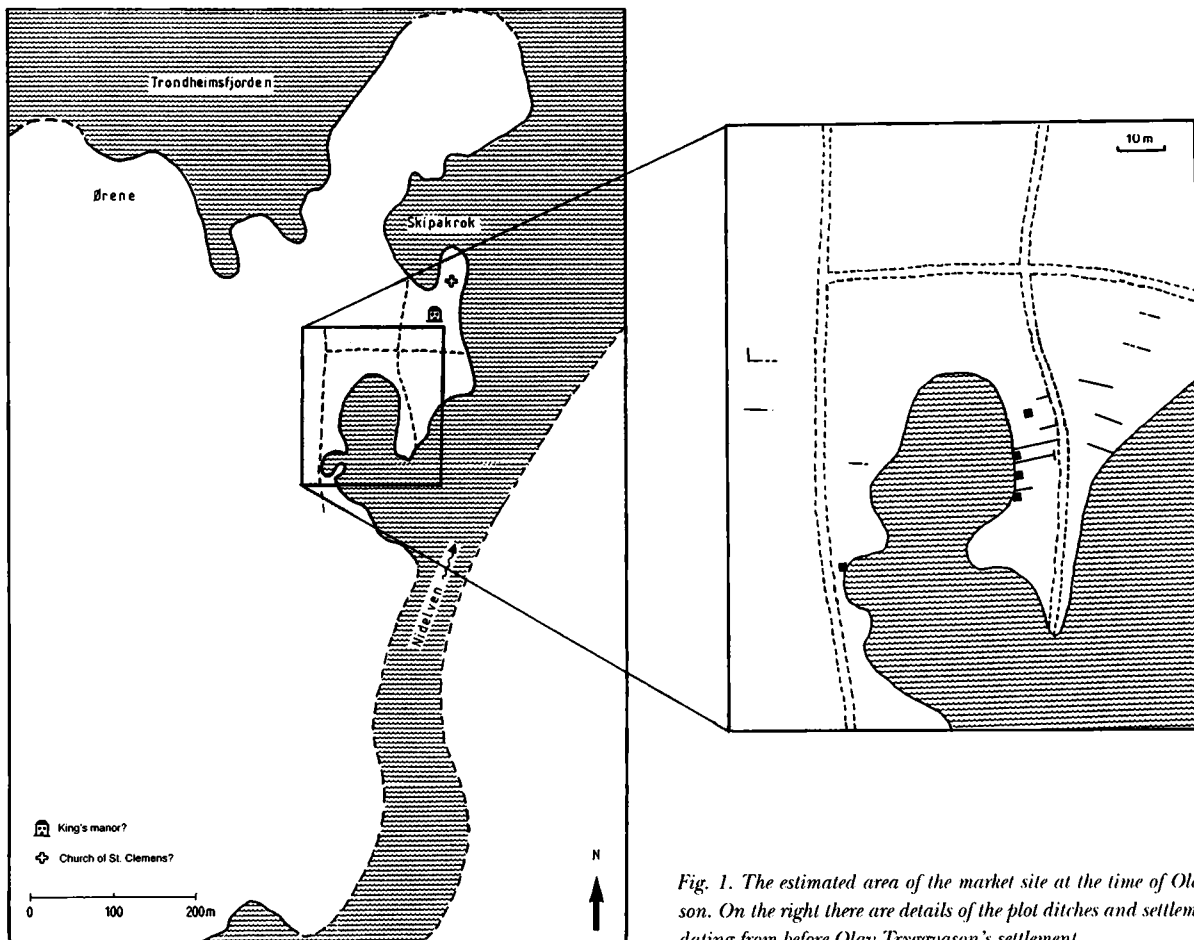
royal power.<sup>16</sup> But, as shown above, this phenomenon was widespread both spatially and chronologically, and outside the North was connected with many places colonized by Scandinavians. Thus, this particular form of spatial settlement-structuring must have been known and used not only in Ribe but also in the rest of Scandinavia long before the rise of centralized royal power at the transition to the historic period. This brings into question early urban plot-systems as evidence for the initiating role of centralized royal power in the origin of towns. Using the evidence from the origin of Trondheim as an example, the following pages present some aspects which may give a more nuanced interpretation of the background to the power-structure behind the earliest urban settlement.

### 5. *The earliest settlement*

About 11 per cent<sup>17</sup> of the central urban core of Trondheim has archaeological remains. This area includes many areas which have revealed extensive remains of early settlement. The earliest settlement has been located on the eastern edge of a small inlet on the west side of the Nidelven estuary. Excavations at the Library Site (*Folkebibliotekstomta*) which comprised most of a gravel ridge between the inlet and Nidelven, revealed scattered remains of buildings, a communication route, and ditches and wattle fences dividing the area into long and narrow plots situated E-W.<sup>18</sup> Other places in the centre of the town revealed shallow ditches which may be chronologically and typologically associated with the ditch system of the earliest phase at *Folkebibliotekstomta* (fig. 1). Radiocarbon datings suggest that foundation took place during the 10th century.<sup>19</sup> There is much evidence to support the opinion that these were fragments of

a more or less parallel plot-system around the inlet and along the central parts of the west bank of the river. The only definite remains of buildings have been found in some plots directly associated with the inlet; they consist of small buildings on piles in shallow water. Their size and situation suggest that they had not been ordinary dwellings but were types of »boat-houses«, perhaps used as warehouses (fig. 2). Permanent settlement within plots was found neither on the drier gravel ridge west of the inlet nor beside the river but, nevertheless, some early activity was also evidenced there: post- and palisade-holes, open-air hearths, pits, limited occupation layers with small quantities of food and manufacturing refuse, and objects showing that there had been activity here, although of a temporary and sporadic type.<sup>20</sup>

The basis of dating of the earliest occupation in Phase 1 of *Folkebibliotekstomta* is slight; there are few radiocarbon dates and they indicate the second half of the 10th century. In addition, there are seven certain dendrochronological dates from timbers earlier than AD 996 (the »foundation date« given by the written sources). The timber was secondarily used as lining for streets and therefore lasted into later phases, thus it gives dates between AD 845 and AD 996.<sup>21</sup> It is most likely that the timber derived from buildings which had stood on the site in Phase 1 or earlier, but it may have been from earlier buildings which were removed from their previous positions, so these dates alone cannot be taken as proof.<sup>22</sup> The quantity of finds of brooches, beads and other artifacts from the east of Nidarnes and dating from the Late Iron Age is particularly noticeable (fig. 3).<sup>23</sup> All this information suggests that there was activity in this area throughout most of the 10th century.



*Fig. 1. The estimated area of the market site at the time of Olav Tryggvason. On the right there are details of the plot ditches and settlement remains dating from before Olav Tryggvason's settlement.*

A new settlement (Phase 2) was built above the earliest settlement-phase. It differed greatly from the earlier phase through its intensity, extent and permanence. The thin cultural layers and the fragmentary artifactual material and the sporadic settlement remains which characterized Phase 1 are in sharp

contrast to the dense, permanent cluster of buildings, the massive accumulation of cultural deposits and the very complex assemblage of artifacts in Phase 2. Nevertheless, there was continuity between the two phases through the physical coincidence between the plot ditches of Phase 1 and property

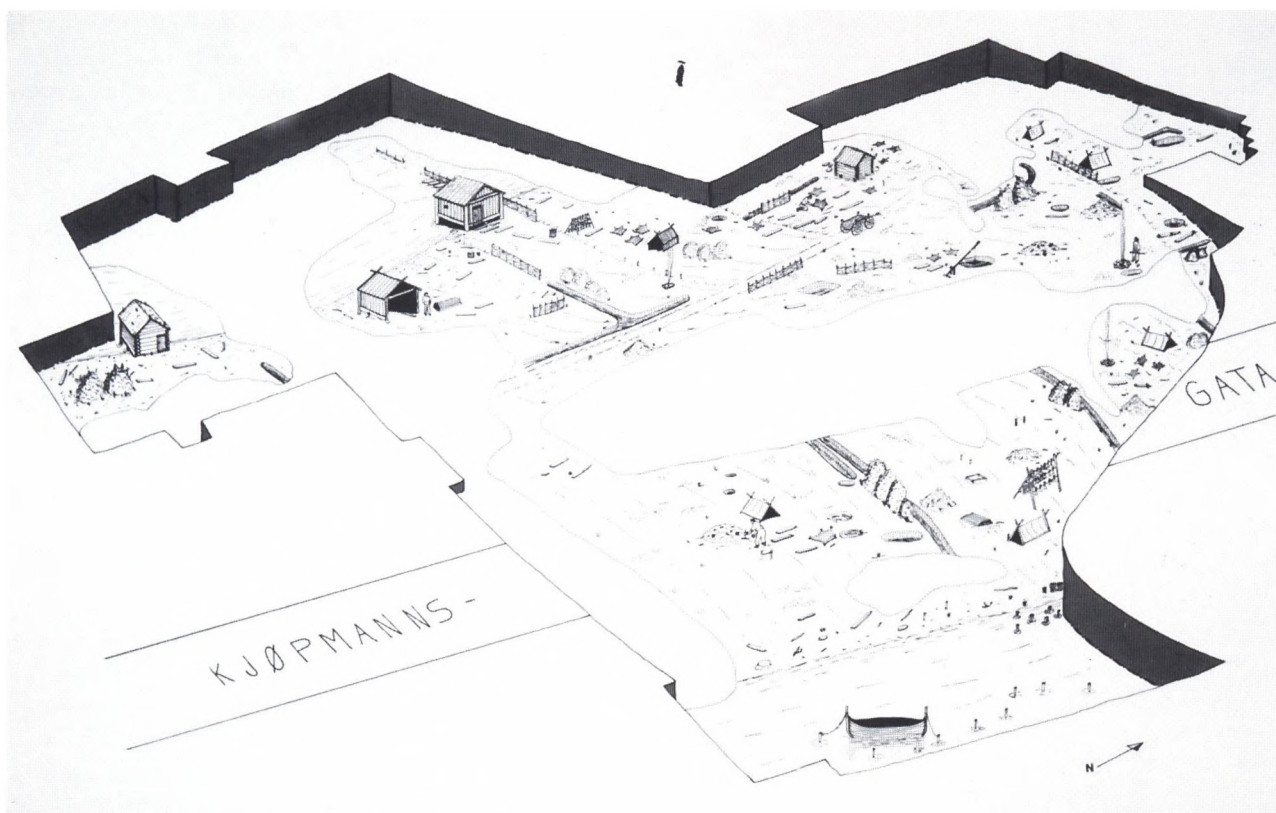


Fig. 2. Folkebibliotekstomta Phase 1. Second half of the 10th century.

boundaries (eavesdrips etc.) of Phase 2. The settlement of Phase 2 was spectacular in comparison with the previous phase, consisting of a number of sand and gravel terraces built out above the high-water mark on the east side of the inlet. Large lafted buildings with dwelling rooms and annexed store rooms were constructed on the terraces (fig. 4). Workshops producing, among other things, small bronze and silver crosses were laid out against the street. Den-

drochronological dates for many of the terrace buildings and the passages between them indicate that the development along the east of the inlet in Phase 2 happened fairly rapidly on either side of the turn of the century.<sup>24</sup> It is reasonable to assume that the permanent and greatly intensified occupation in Phase 2 can be identified with Olav Tryggvason's foundation of the market town on Nidarnes as described by Snorre in *Heimskringla*, »King Olav went





Fig. 3. This richly ornamented object (N 93500/FU 431) originally formed the centre of a »mankestol« but was secondarily used as a weight (c. 214g = 1 mark) because of its lead content. It has been dated stylistically to about the middle of the 10th century but was found in a late 11th-century context. Photo: Per E. Fredriksen, Vitenskapsmuseet, UNNT.

with his army to Nidaros. He allowed houses to be set up on the slope by Nidelva and ordered that there should be a market town there. He gave people plots on which to build houses, and a royal manor was built on Skipakrok. He took from the harvest everything which could support the winter and maintained many people there«.

The interaction between archaeological and written sources suggest the following possible interpretation of the historical reality behind the royal founda-

tion-initiative. When Olav Tryggvason came to Nidarnes there was already a scattered seasonal settlement around a small natural harbour at the mouth of the Nidelven. In his *Historie on de gamle norske kongene* (c. 1180) Tjodrek Munk (Teodorichus Monachus) relates that there was a settlement on Nidarnes before Olav Tryggvason's arrival, and that it consisted of *quidem pauculae domus diversorum negotiatorum...* (a few merchants' dwellings). The settlement remains discovered through archaeology, the »warehouses« along the inlet in Phase 1, may be the same as those used as a basis for Tjodrek's reference. In that case we have a hint of the possible function of these buildings: warehouses for saleable commodities. When Snorre mentions that in 997 Olav Tryggvason »gave people plots to build on« he must have meant that *the plots already existed* and on which there were seasonally used warehouses (fig. 5). We must believe that the king confiscated these plots and laid them out or designed them anew. Consequently, in a physical sense Olav's foundation initiative must be defined as a *type of regulation*. But how can this be interpreted as the background for the early »pre-urban« settlement traces at Nidarnes?

### 6. The pre-urban phase

The plot-division in the tract of land around the inlet and the middle part of the course of the river shows that the area had belonged to a social group larger than that represented by the prehistoric layout on Nidarnes. Without having firmer chronological and functionally established bases than those referred to above, I shall suggest that the first, fragmentary, traces of occupation are the remains of a »market place« for the exchange of commodities, established at the mouth of Nidelven at some time



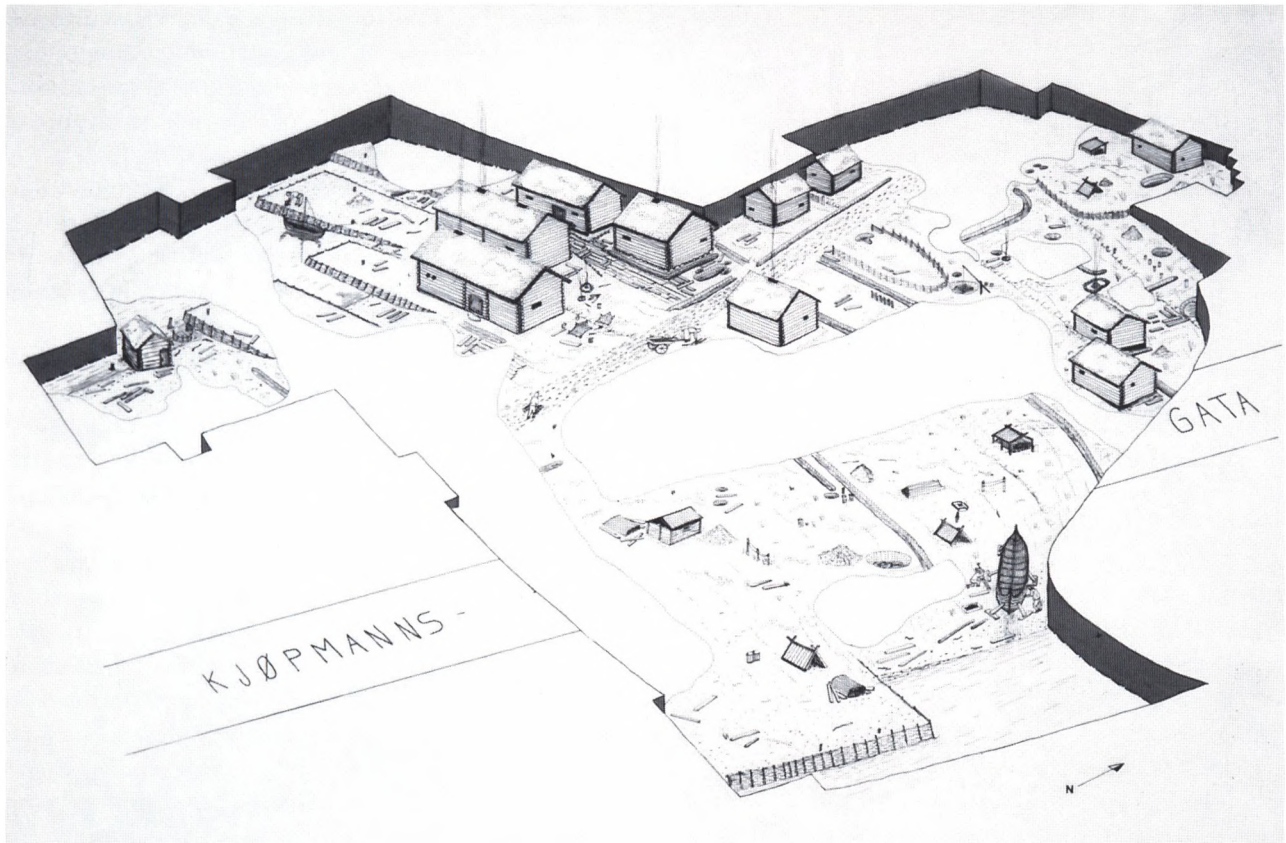


Fig. 4. Folkebibliotekstomta Phase 2. Early 11th century. Drawing: Snorre Bjeck, Riksantikvarens Utgravningskontor, Trondheim.

after c. 870 when the Lade manor (*Lade gård*) was confiscated by Harald Hårfagre (Harald Fairhair) and given, with the rest of Strind *fylke* (Strind county), to Håkon Grjotgardsson as a reward for supporting the king in his conflicts with the local Trøndelag nobles. The establishment of a central place for the collection and exchange of goods under the direct control of the *jarl* may be seen as an

attempt to gain control over the regional distribution systems in which, for example, iron, furs and other commodities from different ecological zones in the resource area around Trondheim, circulated. In addition, the motive could have been to secure some of the direct surplus as extortion from those who sought sites for settlement, another form of tribute. In this context, I think that the establishment

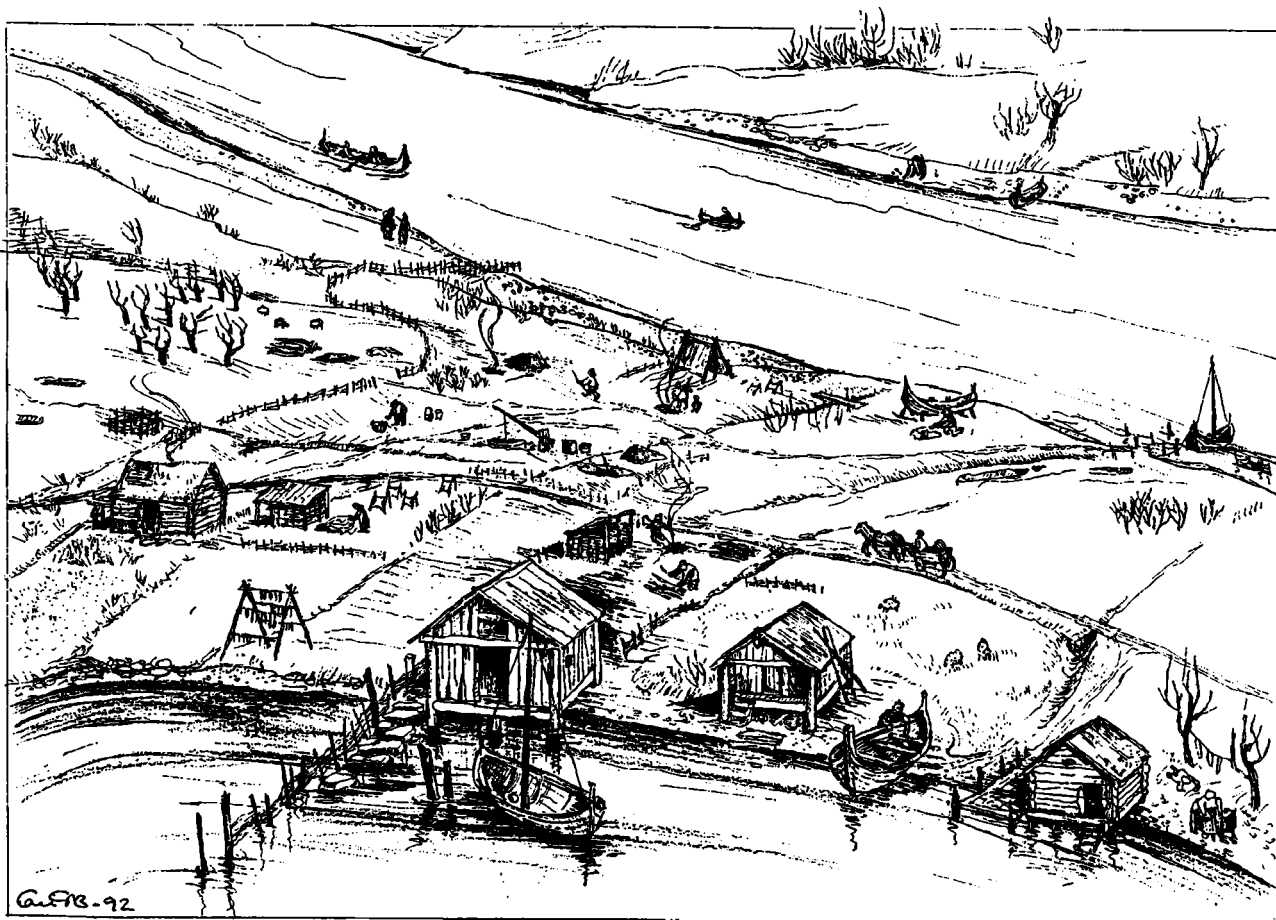


Fig. 5. Reconstruction of Folkebibliotekstomta Phase 1 showing the character of the pre-urban settlement along the inlet. Nidelven in the background. Note the wattle fence marking the plot boundaries stretching out into the water: At low water much of the inlet was dry and boats were grounded. Cf. Figs. 1 and 2.

of a plot system was the tool for the carrying out of such a strategy. In the following pages I shall review some specific examples which may support this idea.

### 7. The plots

As mentioned above, the plots vary greatly in width, from 6 to 16m. Similar variations in plot width are not unknown in other sites where early plot-divisions have been proved. On the contrary, it seems to have

been normal.<sup>25</sup> Thus we seem to have here a general phenomenon, the reason for which should be sought in conditions which were common to sites in the pre-urban phase.

We know that in the High and Late Middle Ages the possession of plots in towns was connected with the payment of taxes and tributes. It is not impossible that equivalent conditions were entailed on a much earlier inherited/use of a specific area of the market place. All other functions and possession could give the plots a shape, situation and size corresponding to the area. In her investigation of some Late Medieval properties in Ribe, Ingrid Nilsen concluded that »one of the legally instituted parcelling-out of land resulted in unequal distribution... So, differential sizes of properties cannot be used to establish a lack of overall organization«. <sup>26</sup> This example underlines the concrete connection between variable plot-area, quantity of tax, and an administrative organization. Such a connection has no certain empirical proof from the High Middle Ages but it is not equivalent to discounting the possibility that there may have been some form of tribute for the occupation/use of certain areas in the central localities of pre-urban origin. For Trondheim, the historian Nils Hallan wrote an article in 1975 which presented some previously little considered thoughts which may illuminate this problem more clearly. In Heimskringla, Snorre mentions *Torgeir Avråðskoll*, a farmer, who »was extremely wise and so old that he had lived on Nidarnes when Earl Håkon was murdered«. <sup>27</sup> Hallan argues convincingly that Torgeir had acquired his nickname »because it was he who had claimed in *avrad*«. <sup>28</sup> Hallan takes »avrad« to mean an ancient customs/land tax, this is interesting as it might have been specific to the gathering and exchange of

commodities; but this is uncertain. <sup>29</sup> Hallan set Torgeir's function as tax collector in connection with Olav Tryggvason's foundation of the market. But the nickname could equally well go back to an inherited function which Torgeir and his family performed long before Olav Tryggvason arrived on the scene. Seen from a *power-structure* point of view, the family who had for generations occupied Nidarnes *gård* had also possessed the necessary social authority to act as local tax gatherer for an overlord.

### 8. *Towards a synthesis*

Behind the organization of the activities of the earliest pre-urban occupation on Nidarnes we can glimpse the representatives of the great dynasty of the Lade jarls. The sagas refer to the Lade jarls as the foremost leaders in Trøndelag and from the historical texts Lade stands out as a powerful *regional political-cultic power centre*. But the view of Lade as an early cultic-political power centre of the outer Trønderlag county (*fylke*) has recently been rather modified. <sup>30</sup> A view which has acquired general acceptance is that Lade first obtained its dominating position after Harald Hårfagre's struggles against the lordship of Trøndelag when he confiscated the farms and converted them to a royal manor, thus making a political power-centre in Strindfylke (county). According to one tradition, Harald transferred control of the royal manor, and then the whole of Strindfylke (county), to the powerful jarl Håkon Grjotgardsson, certainly in an attempt to establish a centrally located political-military bridgehead in the Trøndelag region (fig. 6). <sup>31</sup> Conclusive evidence for this conclusion is the strategic situation of the farm beside one of natural harbours on the Trondheim fjord: the mouth of Nidelven. But this cannot be the whole ex-

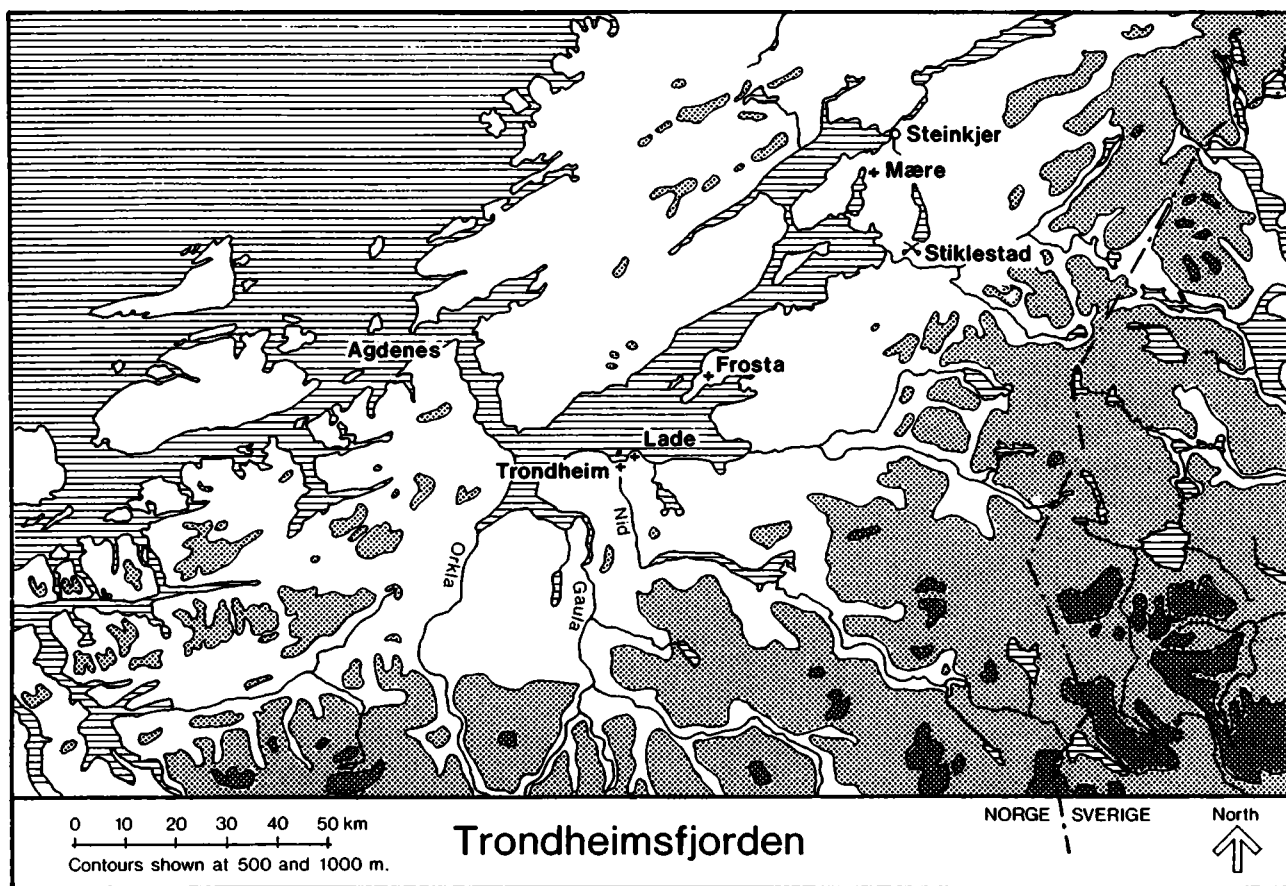


Fig. 6. The Trondheim fjord with the surrounding countryside and central sites mentioned in the sagas. Drawing: Riksantikvarens Utgravningskontor, Trondheim.

planation because a farm stood on the Nidarnes peninsula (cf. note 19) and it was in a strategic position relative to the natural harbours. Why did Lade *gård* and not »Nidarnes« *gård* become the royal manor? Decisive for the choice of Lade as a royal manor and jarl's seat that was that before the arrival of the Lade

jarls it probably already had important sacral central functions. It was a definite strengthening of Lade as the royal manor that enabled the Lade jarls to uphold their power<sup>32</sup> and that they made it »on behalf of the king«, as Snorre expresses it.<sup>33</sup>

But a decisive point for this situation is that through most of the 10th century Lade *by no means* acted as a local bridgehead for the progressively more dominant Norwegian royal dynasty, the Hårfagre dynasty. The Lade jarls *did not* act unambiguously as the allies of Norwegian royal authorities. Rather, it was the contrary; they stood out as the primary opponents of the ruling royal dynasty and under Jarl Håkon they adopted a rival position over the Pretender to the throne of the Håfagre dynasty and this continued until Trøndelag came under Danish overlordship.<sup>34</sup> The sagas portray the Lade jarls as the most powerful leaders of Trøndelag who formed the background of a comparatively deeply rooted local power basis. This can be interpreted as that the establishment of a Jarl's seat at Lade did not involve changes in the legal domination in the area. They carried forward (and strengthened) an already existing power structure, and appear to have been the local representatives and foremost defenders of the pre-state social organization.<sup>35</sup>

We do not know when the earliest occupation on Nidarnes took place, but it must have happened in the course of the 10th century, most probably around the middle of the century. It is difficult to believe other than that the initiative for this was taken by the jarls of Lade, presumably Jarl Håkon who at one time was the regent of the country and the vassal of Harald Bluetooth (Blåtann). If this is right, political, economic, cultic (and possibly judicial) central functions must have existed in the region around the mouth of the Nidelv long before Olav Tryggvason's urban settlement saw the light of day around the turn of the millennium.<sup>36</sup> In that case, the pre-urban settlement on Nidarnes should not be regarded as an isolated »central locality« but as a single element

in a cohesive *central area* (fig. 7). A central area is a type of cultural landscape characterized by its »polycentric conglomeration of functions« (*polycentrisk konglomerat av funksjoner*).<sup>37</sup> In other words, it is a spatial structure which arose organizationally and was held together by the centrifugal powers which emanated from a local power-political centre. It is possible that the »wealth centre« (*rikdomssenter*) of Åker by Hamar, and the great mounds at Borre by Tønsberg<sup>38</sup> are elements in equivalent »central areas« of the Oslo fjord and the interior of Østland. Basic prerequisites for such a spatially extensive organization of the political, economic, cultic (and judicial) central functions were stable rule and a continuing presence of a physical power structure. As such, polycentric regions build on a type of rule-relationship

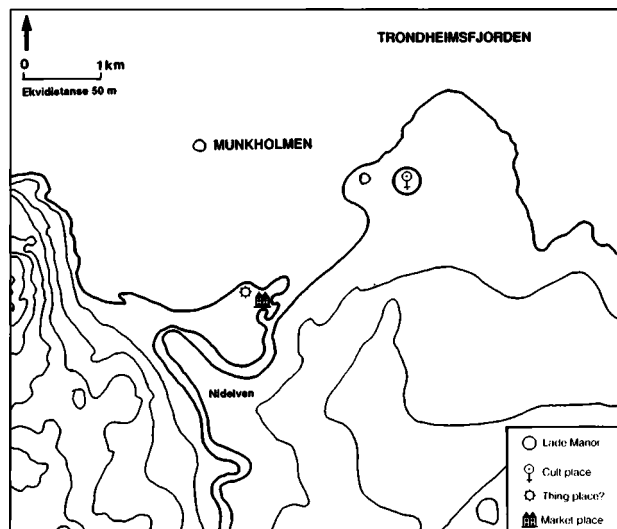


Fig. 7. The central area at the mouth of Nidelven showing the location of the central functions. Drawing: Riksantikvarens Utgravningskontor, Trondheim.





Fig. 8. Olav Tryggvason's manor at Nidarnes as it may have been seen from the heights on the east of the river. To the left, some of the market town around the south of the inlet. Note the inlet in the north, probably the »Skipakrok« of the sagas. Drawing: Kari Støren Binns, Vitenskapsmuseet, UNIT.



which on the one hand made it possible (even if not necessary) to exert control over greater territorial entities than a single occupation region, but on the other hand not in possession of (and had no need for) »supra-regional« influence (for example, beyond the boundary of Trøndelag county).

There is evidence for a thorough going spatial restructuring c. 1000. All the early central functions (political, economic, religious/cultic, judicial) in the region were concentrated in a restricted area of the north-east part of the Nidarnes peninsula which was placed under the direct control of royal power. The changed rule which the intervention of the central royal power in the region stood for was underlined by the physical appearance of a royal manor and a church in the market town (fig. 8). The establishment of the new urban centre at the mouth of the Nidelv where the Lade jarls had previously organized a periodically occupied exchange site, was a decisive link in the strategy of royal power for the construction of a central power- and administrative structure in Trøndelag, and a blow to the Lade jarls who, immediately after Olav Tryggvason's death at Svolder, tried to defend their position in the more anti-royal areas in Inner Trøndelag by the foundation of a »market« in Steinkjær. Against this background, the royal initiative behind the town foundation on Nidarnes appears as a more thorough going happening than »superficial« settlement-history would have us believe. The development from a central area around the Nidarelv estuary to a central locality on the Nidar peninsula involved the replacement of the functions in the area. But this is only one part of a much greater historical scenario in which systematic violence, burning of temples, Christian missions and constantly changing political alliances between local

lords were at home, a scenario which was played out against the background of the royal aspirations of the aristocracy to exercise supra-regional political (legal/administrative), economic and ideological control.

The Christian mission and establishment of »urban centres« in strategically important regions were vital to the realization of this project. Olav Tryggvason's attempts to consolidate and develop the Nidaros market-place can be regarded as the background to his winning power in Trøndelag. But the overwhelming aim, both for Olav Tryggvason and the other Pretenders to the throne of the Håfagre dynasty, was to win (and then preserve) the total lordship of the whole territory which the rune stone from Kuløya (on Nordmøre), erected some decades after the Battle of Svolder,<sup>39</sup> calls »NURIKI« – the empire of the Northmen.

#### Notes

1. Nilsen 1976, 102ff. Where no other reference is given this article is based on Nilsen's survey of saga texts containing information on the origin and early development of Norwegian towns.
2. The so-called »beach-market theory« (*strandstedsteorien*) was long dominant in research into Norwegian urban history. The beach market was the forerunner of the centralized town, a type of spontaneously developed market and trading place which was subsequently provided with market privileges. Cf. Munch 1849; Nicolaysen 1890; Bugge 1916; Koth 1921 (1919).
3. Royal power has always, in one way or another, been included in the discussion of urbanization factors, but it is the *relative importance* of the influence of royal power in comparison with other factors (particularly the role of trade and the development of merchandise) which has caused disagreement. Cf. Bull 1918, 1922, 1931, 1933; Holmsen 1961; also to some extent Helte 1977, 1980.
4. Earlier historians include Storm 1899 as an exponent of the so-called »royal-manor theory« (*kongsgårdsteorien*).

5. Andrén 1983, 1985; Christophersen 1980, 1989a, 1989b, 1992; Schia 1989, 1992; Tesch 1989, 1990.
6. Andersson 1982, 55ff.
7. Meulengracht Sørensen 1989, 140.
8. Bencard *et al.* 1990, 155f.; Jensen 1991, 5ff.
9. Bencard *et al.* 1990, 155f. and the references cited there.
10. Kirpitsjnikov *et al.* 1991, 16f.
11. Tesch 1991.
12. Schia 1987, 151ff.
13. Hall 1984, 49f.
14. Perring 1981, 43ff.
15. Wallace 1987, 277f.
16. Tesch 1990, 30f.
17. Christophersen 1988, 8ff.
18. Christophersen 1988, 1989a, 1992.
19. The radiocarbon dates are AD 891-1018, AD 890-1000, AD 890-1010. Calibrated according to Stuiver and Pearson (2 sigma).
20. A more detailed review of the character, activities and functions of the pre-urban occupation of Trondheim can be found in Pettersen, A. 1995, 135ff.
21. The dendrochronological series is AD 845, 847, 935, 954, 981, 996.
22. This interpretation differs from that given by Christophersen 1992, 73f. in which the current author and ass. professor Terje Thune (Botanisk Institutt AVH/UNIT) undertook a new survey and critical evaluation of dendrochronological samples in September 1992. Of the 36 samples dated before AD 996, only seven were certain. For all the other samples the earlier periods were missing.
23. Lunde 1977, 132ff.
24. Three buildings have been dated 975, 1004 and 1011 respectively, but their associated passages were laid out during the period 980-1013. Christophersen 1992, 71f.
25. In Viking Age Fishamble Street, Dublin, fourteen plots have been excavated, 3.0-9.4m in width, on average slightly narrower than those at Trondheim (Wallace 1987, 274f.). At Gamlebyen in Oslo the plot width varied between 11 and 21m (Schia 1987, 216f.); in Bergen, between 4.2 and 18m (Helle 1982, 224f.).
26. Nilsen 1985, 133f.
27. Heimskringla, 4. The Old Norse name-form is *Torgeiri af rá skoll*.
28. Hallan 1975, 30f. Hallan's interpretation conflicts with G.A. Blom's interpretation, »he who paid tax«. Blom uses this as an indication that Torgeir was a tenant farmer on a farm belonging to Lade *gård* (Blom 1956, 25, 1976, 10). The discovery of a dagger and a ring-brooch from the Nidarnes peninsula, ploughed out from a weapon-grave, may be associated with the saga records of an earlier farm on Nidarnes. Weapon-graves of the Merovingian period are clearly status burials. In addition, botanical investigations of the development of vegetation on Nidarnes show that there was cultivation on Nidarnes as far back as the Merovingian Period. Thus, the farm must be regarded as a freehold property and not as a tenant farm of Lade (Christophersen 1988, 22f.). Blom's interpretation of the name Avradskoll seems to have no historical foundation.
29. Hallan 1975, 3.
30. Sandnes 1967, 18.
31. This interpretation is disputable, cf. Scheiner 1928/1967, 341f. who argues that Håkon controlled Lade before the arrival of Harald Hårfagre. Blom 1956, 26 is of the contrary opinion. Sandnes 1967, 18 seems to support Blom's view.
32. In Sigurdsdrápa, Kormak Ogmundsson Sigurd (Lade jarl) is mentioned as »lord of the temple« (*hovets herre*), and in the saga of Håken the Good says that Sigurd Ladejarl »found it difficult to sacrifice, as did his father«. Meulengracht Sørensen 1991, 235.
33. *Snorres kongesagaer* (ed. by A. Holstmark and D.A. Seip 1980, 90). Snorre's description of the organization and ritual of the sacrifices in Håkon the Good's saga have often been debated. It must rely on early Swedish and pre-Christian traditions. Meulengracht Sørensen 1991, 238f.
34. Sveaas Andersen 1992, 13ff. Sawyer 1991a, 279, 1991b 7f.
35. Christophersen 1994: Power and impotence: political background of urbansation in Trøndelag 900 1000 AD. *Archaeologica Polona* vol. 32:1994 pp. 95-108.
36. There is, however, some controversy about the age and function of the *Øretinget*. Sandnes 1967, 15f.
37. This term was coined by Ulf Nåsman (1991, 171).
38. Excavations of the Borre project show that the cemetery was in use c. 650-990. Myrhe 1991, 37ff.
39. Pettersen 1991. The stone was erected in connection with the construction of a nearby wooden bridge, dated by dendrochronology to 1034. Hagland (1987, 157ff.) places this date in the wider runological debate concerning the occurrence of the inscription. Hagland concluded that the stone was raised at about the same time as the wooden bridge (*ibid.* 162).

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