



Håkon Reiersen

Master Thesis

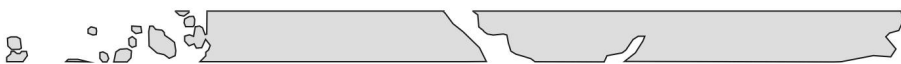
May 2009

The Central Place of the Avaldsnes Area, SW Norway

An Analysis of Elites and Central Functions along Karmsund 200 BC – AD 1000



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I. Preface

The thought of writing a master thesis about the Avaldsnes area as a central place in the Iron Age was conceived in May 2007, while I was an exchange student at Lund University in Sweden. When the field course at Uppåkra started, I had already written two term papers about the Avaldsnes area. At Uppåkra, the overwhelming experience of a location where bronze fibulas, gold foil figures and shreds of glass beakers from different periods were found scattered in the trenches by my fellow students, made me wonder if the Flaghaug, Grønhaug and Storhaug burials denoted a similar site. As little research concerning the Avaldsnes area had yet been published in English, I have written the thesis in English. In addition, I felt that few publications offered a sufficient overview of the local Iron Age material with illustrations of key finds and structures, and I have done my best to provide this. The task of gathering the material and writing the thesis has been both enjoyable and challenging. Without the results of the research project at Avaldsnes, this process would have been a lot harder. Above all, the redating of the two ship burials (Stylegar 2009), was of great importance for my thesis.

The first thanks goes to my supervisor, Knut Andreas Bergsvik, for his support and stimulating feedback in the writing process. Warm thanks go also to my fellow students in Bergen, Stian, Robert, Maryon, Stian, Inger and Yngve, for memorable years. Thanks also to Ole-Marius in Copenhagen and Marthe in Gothenburg, for reading parts of the manuscript. All remaining errors, factual as well as grammatical, are, of course, solely those of my own. The last month of the writing process was carried out while working at an excavation project in Bremanger. I would like to thank my colleagues for being understanding and helpful, thus making it possible to combine the field work with writing. Finally, I wish to thank my family. Thanks go to my brothers Steffen, who red the manuscript and redrew several figures, and Øystein, who red parts of the manuscript, and to my sister Elisabeth. As most children growing up watching Indiana Jones movies, I wanted to become an archaeologist. The last credit goes to my parents Marta and Lars, for encouraging me to choose the path of my dreams.

A hundred years ago, my greatest scholarly idol, Haakon Shetelig (1912), was the first to examine the local burials of the Roman Iron Age and the ship burials of the Late Iron Age in the same publication, and the first to fully appreciate the importance of the area in prehistory. Magnus Olsen (1916) writes:

'Professor Haakon Schetelig once asked me if I knew where Bergen was in the Early Bronze Age. I let him answer the question himself, and it was a brief and amusing: in Karmsund' (my translation).

As we shall see, this simple and elegant comparison of the area along Karmsund, to the modern-day regional centre in West Norway, is probably applicable also for the situation in parts of the Iron Age.

Bergen, 15 May 2009

II. Abstract in Norwegian / Samandrag

Området på vestsida av Karmsundet i Karmøy kommune, Rogaland, er kjenneteikna av rike funn frå fleire periodar i førhistoria. I den delen der Karmsundet er trongast ligg garden Avaldsnes, som er kjend frå fleire mellomalderkjelder som ein viktig vestnorsk kongsgard frå og med Harald Hårfagre. Oppgåva tek føre seg det jernaldermaterialet som finst i Avaldsnes-området, og drøfter på bakgrunn av dette om området kan kallast ein sentralplass i ulike deler av jernalderen. Avaldsnes-området er definert som 31 gardar ved Karmsundet, som danna kjernen i mellomalderens Avaldsnes skipreide. Tidsmessig er oppgåva avgrensa til perioden frå sein førromersk jernalder til siste delen av vikingtid. Medan kapittel 1 gjer greie for problemstillingar og avgrensingar, samt naturmessige og kulturelle føresetnadar for jernaldersamfunna her, viser kapittel 2 kva forskning som er gjort på jernalderen i området. Kapittel 3 og 4 drøfter teoriar og metodar som ligg til grunn for analysen, der det sentrale er påvising av kontinuitet og brot i sosiale strukturar, og nærvær av elitemiljø og sentralplassar i jernalderen. Kapittel 5 tek for seg det lokale jernaldermaterialet og somme relevante skriftkjelder. Då ei føresetjing for å snakke om sentralplassar er eit nærvær av stabile elitar, kartlegg det første analysekapittelet, kapittel 6, korleis maktlandskapet i Avaldsnes-området var gjennom jernalderen. Fokuset er her på om ein kan identifisere elitemiljø og sosiale strukturar gjennom å kontekstualisere materialet frå kvar av jernalderen sine periodar. Analysen tek utgangspunkt i dei mønstra som kjem til syne i distribusjonskart for kvar periode. Dei sikraste teikna på sosial stratifisering og nærvær av stabile elitemiljø er frå fleire rike graver på Avaldsnes i yngre romartid (særskild ca. 250-350 e.Kr.) og frå to skipsgraver i området kring Bø i sein merovingartid (700-talet e.Kr.). Merovingartidsmiljøet korresponderer delvis med tradisjonar frå fornaldersoger. Med utgangspunkt i desse elitemiljøa, tek kapittel 7 for seg kva moglege sentralfunksjonar som kan ha vore samla i Avaldsnes-området i eldre og yngre jernalder. Analysen er basert på distribusjonskart over ulike såkalla sentralplassindikatorar, som her blir sett som teikn på høvesvis økonomiske, ideologiske og militære sentralfunksjonar. Konklusjonen i kapittel 8 er at Avaldsnes-området fungerte som ein regional sentralplass ialfall innan høvesvis yngre romartid og sein merovingartid. Medan kjernen i sentret låg på Avaldsnes i romartid, ser fokuset i merovingartid ut til å ha skifta til Bø-valdet lenger nord. Grunna ein uklår situasjon kring materialet frå folkevandringstid, konkluderer eg med at det er uråd å vurdere om utviklinga viser kontinuitet eller brot frå romartid. I vikingtid ser det ut til at kongsgarden på Avaldsnes overtar dei regionale sentralfunksjonane. Det er avslutningsvis foreslått at ein kanskje bør snu forskinga frå eit einseitig fokus på garden Avaldsnes til å i større grad inkludere Bø-valdet i analysen. Dersom kjernen på sentralplassen etter yngre romartid har flytta seg frå Avaldsnes til området kring Salhusaugane, er det moglege at dei rike busetjingsspora som oftast blir assosiert med andre skandinaviske sentralplassar frå folkevandringstid og merovingartid, i staden er å finne i området kring Bø.

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Some abbreviations used in the text

BC	Before Christ	B/ BM	Cultural History Collections, Bergen Museum
AD	Anno Domini	S/ AmS	Museum of Archaeology, Stavanger
SA	Stone Age	C	Museum of Cultural History, Oslo
BA	Bronze Age	T	Museum of Natural History and Archaeology, Trondheim
IA	Iron Age	top.ark.	Topographical archive
MA	Middle Ages	R	Figure number in Rygh's (1885) <i>Norske Oldsager</i>
PRIA	Pre-Roman Iron Age	A-ID	ID in the <i>Askeladden database</i> (askeladden.ra.no)
RIA	Roman Iron Age	B#	Structure number on Bendixen's (1877) Reheia map
MP	Migration Period	m / g	Metre / Gram
MVP	Merovingian Period	O.No.	Old Norse
VA	Viking Age	No.	Norwegian

Translations of archaeological terms are based on Seeberg's (1999) *Dictionary of Archaeology*.

Direct quotations from texts originally in Norwegian, I have translated into English.

1. INTRODUCTION

The island of Karmøy is located at the southwestern coast of Norway, in the county of Rogaland (Fig. 2). In the Old Norse language the name of the island was *Kǫrmt* (of *karmr*), which means 'shelter'. As the harsh waves from the North Sea hit the western parts of the island, the main route of the passing maritime traffic has always been on the eastside of the island through the protected sea way of Karmsund ('sheltered sound'). This narrow and easily controllable point in the sea way along the west Norwegian coast represents an area with great strategic potential. The northern part of Karmøy, where Karmsund is at its narrowest, has yielded rich archaeological finds from several prehistoric periods. Based on these finds, archaeologists have interpreted the area as a centre of power in the Early Bronze Age, Early Iron Age and Late Iron Age (e.g. Ringstad 1986; Myhre 1998; Opedal 1998). Medieval sources describe the farm Avaldsnes, at the midpoint of Karmsund, as a royal estate in the 9th-14th century (Fyllingsnes 2000a). In the 13th century, the second largest stone church in Stavanger bishopric was built here, and the estate also had an associated harbour. In the post-medieval era, Avaldsnes was a local church centre with judicial functions and a harbour (Fig. 4).

Due to a research project at Avaldsnes the last fifteen years or so, much archaeological research has been carried out both regarding this farm as well as the district surrounding it. Settlement traces at Avaldsnes suggests the farm had a continuous settlement in prehistory at least from the Pre-Roman Iron Age until the Viking Age, when the farm is described in medieval historical sources as a royal estate (Hafsaas 2007). Furthermore, in the surrounding area there is evidence of richly furnished graves from the different Iron Age sub-periods, denoting high social status. The subject of this thesis is to carry out a long-term social analysis of 31 farms in the *Avaldsnes area*, to test the hypothesis that the area functioned as a *central place* in different parts of the period 200 BC – AD 1000.

Although several researchers have described the Avaldsnes area as a centre in the Iron Age, previous analyses have shown a tendency of being static in nature basing such claims solely on one or few rich finds within either the Early or Late Iron Age. While this study makes use of a similar static mapping of the area as a centre, concentrations of such central place indicators are interpreted in the light of the dynamic social changes observed in the material throughout the five sub-periods of the Iron Age. Thus, my analysis first attempts to reconstruct the social developments and changes in the Avaldsnes area throughout each Iron Age sub-period. This short-term analysis is concerned with a distributional analysis of each sub-period with a focus on signs of social stratification, mapping what I term the *landscapes of power* in the area. Subsequently, a long-term analysis of the area is done with a focus on continuities and discontinuities in the presence of powerful elites in the area. As the presence of elites is considered a basic feature of central places, this analysis is then used as a backdrop for a discussion of the Avaldsnes area's potential role as a *central place* in different parts of the Iron Age.

1.1.Problems for Discussion

The problems for discussion are divided into two groups. Firstly there are three problems (A-C) concerning the examination of each of the five sub-periods within the Iron Age and one problem (D) related to the long-term changes observed throughout these sub-periods. Secondly, there are two problems (1-2) related to the analysis of the area as a central place in different parts of the Iron Age. Thus, the basis of my study is the patterns interpreted from the chronological and spatial distribution of the archaeological material of the area within each sub-period, and then throughout the Iron Age. In this study, the archaeological material and its spatial component in the landscape are considered physical remains which illuminate different sides of Iron Age societies. In Ch. 6, each sub-period will be approached methodologically by analysing the changing *landscapes of power* in the Avaldsnes area (cf. Ch. 4.2). This includes examining changes in the spatial distribution of the material, changes in the use of ideological manifestations and the changing relations with other areas:

- A) Are there any clear patterns or changes in the spatial distribution of material within the area?
- B) Are there any clear patterns or changes in the use of ideological expressions within the area?
- C) Are there any indications of alliances or conflicts on a regional or supra-regional level?

With a basis in the changes observed in this analysis, I will discuss the social developments from the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age to the Viking Age and whether they show tendencies of break or continuity; especially regarding the presence of elites in the area and in the social structures they organised:

- D) Do the long-term changes in the local landscapes of power show continuity or discontinuity?

When the 'Avaldsnes Project' was initiated in the 1990s, Lillehammer (1995b: 6f) suggested that the term *central place* should be used to examine the developments in the Avaldsnes area in different periods of prehistory. The term central place, as it is applied here, was developed within south Scandinavian Iron Age research in order to describe a special type of settlement in which elites gathered central functions for a larger district (cf. Ch. 4.3). This understanding of the term central place forms the methodological framework of my analysis in Ch. 7. There I wish to evaluate the hypothesis that the Avaldsnes area functioned as a central place in the Early and Late Iron Age. Finally, I will compare the characteristics of the area to contemporary central places in Scandinavia, in order to trace possible variation between the different centres. Thus, the final two problems are:

- 1) Is it appropriate to term the area a central place in the Early and Late Iron Age?
- 2) Which features characterises the area compared to contemporary central places in Scandinavia?

1.2. Spatial and Chronological Delimitations

In the Middle Ages (hereafter MA) and later, the national naval system (O.No. *leiðangr*) was based on naval districts (O.No. *skipreiða*), which in times of conflict had to cooperate to prepare a longship for war. The present municipality of Karmøy was divided into a northern and a southern district, where the northern was *Avaldsnes skipreiða* (Bjørkvik 1999: 43). During the MA the southern boundary of the district probably went across the isthmus of Eide (cf. Fig. 3) (Fyllingsnes 2000b: 65), but I apply the boundaries documented in the 17th century as the basis for the spatial delimitations of my study. In order to delimit the study area to a size manageable within the frames of a master thesis, some of the farms most peripheral to Karmsund are excluded. The study area then covers 31 farms, at the archaeologically most find intensive core of the old naval district of Avaldsnes (Fig. 2, Table 1). This area stretches from Storasund in the north, Norheim and Moksheim in the east, Visnes in the west, to Vårå and Austevik in the south. The area includes parts of Torvastad and Avaldsnes parishes, and in the analysis it is referred to as the *Avaldsnes area*. In different contexts the area will be compared to other areas in the local region, and to other areas and central places in Norway and Scandinavia.

The chronology applied in this study (Fig. 1) is based on the five traditional sub-periods of the Iron Age (IA) in Norway as used e.g. by Solberg (2000). The Pre-Roman Iron Age (PRIA) could be divided into an early phase 500-200 BC and a late phase 200-1 BC (ibid: 38f). As known local material from the Early PRIA is sparse, the starting point of this study is set to 200 BC. The longest sub-period included in the study is the Roman Iron Age (RIA) from AD 1-400, which is divided into several phases from B1a-C3 (ibid: 72f). The Migration Period (MP), AD 400-560/570, could be divided into D1-D2b (ibid: 128f), but such a phase distinction is not applied in this study. The end of the MP also marks the transition to the Late IA. Traditionally, the Merovingian Period (MVP) between AD 560/570-800 has not been divided into phases (ibid: 184). This is also true for the subsequent Viking Age (VA) between AD 800-1030 (ibid: 218f). In the 10th century there is a decline of grave finds in the area. According to Snorri (Hkr: 172ff), king Olav Trygvasson used Avaldsnes as a royal estate c. AD 995-1000. This king actively promoted the new Christian religion, and Lidén (1999: 104) suggests he built the church which according to Snorri was in use at Avaldsnes about twenty years later. The establishment of both this new religion, and a more consolidated Norwegian kingdom, probably led to fundamental changes in the local landscapes of power within the study area. As the final phase of these changes is not a key focus of the study, the chronological ending point is set to c. AD 1000.

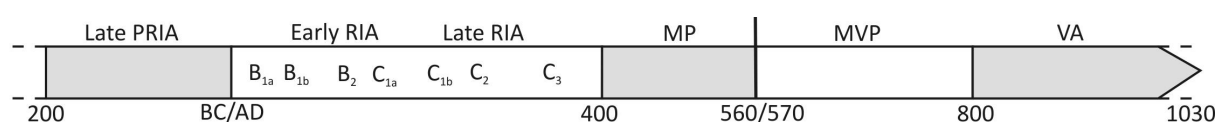


Fig. 1: The chronology applied in the study

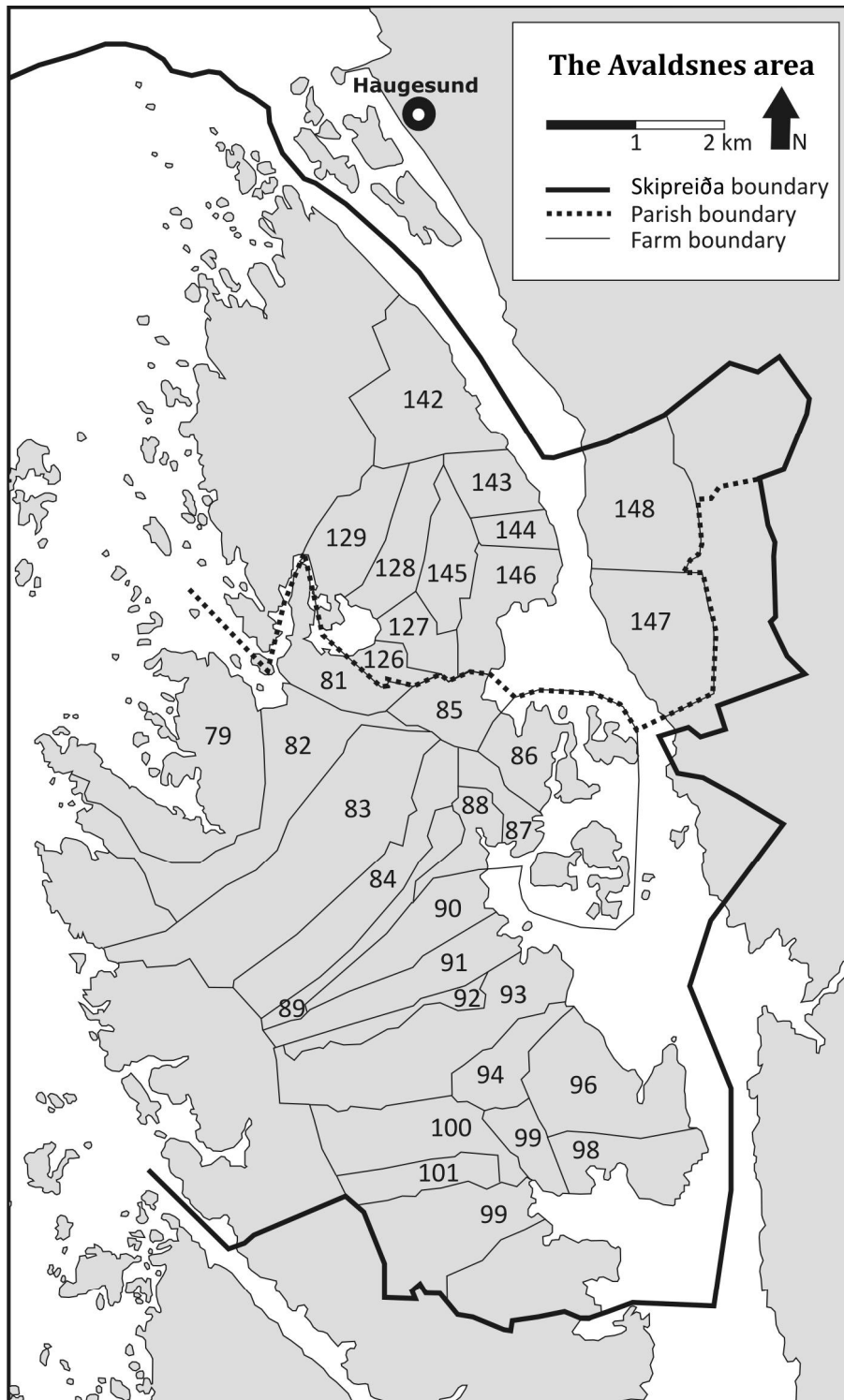


Table 1 (below): The farms of the study area depicted in Fig. 2; listed by parish and farm number

In Torvastad parish	
142	Storasund
143	Gunnarshaug
144	Nordbø
145	Øvrebø
146	Bø
147	Moksheim
148	Norheim
126	Vikshåland
127	Nedre Hauge
128	Hauge
129	Stange
In Avaldsnes parish	
79	Visnes
81	Landa
82	Hindaråker
83	Skeie
84	Våge
85	Utvik
86	Avaldsnes
87	Nordre Velle
88	Søre Velle
89	Søre Våge
90	Fiskå
91	Matland
92	Rygge
93	Kolstø
94	Meland
96	Håvik
98	Austevik
99	Vårå
100	Håland
101	Helgaberg

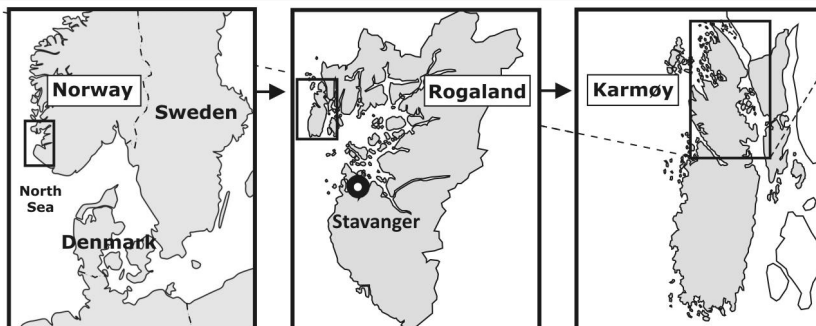


Fig. 2 (left): The location and delimitation of the study area (boundaries after Bjørkvik 1999: 12)

1.3. The Landscape and Resources of the Avaldsnes Area

The study area is located in the northern part of Karmøy, between the North Sea in the west and Karmsund in the east (Fig. 3). At Salhusstraumen current, where Karmsund is at its narrowest, only 175 m separates the island from the mainland farms of Moksheim and Norheim (O.No. *nór-*, 'narrow sound'). On the island the area measures c. 12 km from north to south, and the distance east-west at the narrowest point between the bays of Bøvågen and Haugavågen is c. 1.5 km. A kilometre or so south of the study area, the northern and southern parts of Karmøy is divided at Eide ('isthmus'). With few exceptions the landscape on North Karmøy is lowland (Lundberg 2000: 27). Today most of the island is cleared of wood, and the present heathland was established here at 200 BC (Prøsch-Danielsen & Simonsen 2000: 41). The possibilities to exploit land based wildlife and wood on the island were probably sparse in the IA, and such resources were most likely brought from elsewhere. In contrast, the coast line bordering on the North Sea made the area favourable for deep-sea fishing.

From a geological point of view, the northern part of the island of Karmøy is well suited for agriculture (Lundberg 1989: 19; 2000: 26ff). The bed rock, which is predominantly made up of greenstone, makes the soil fertile (Lundberg 2000: 26f). Compared to other possible IA centres in West Norway, the agricultural soil makes up quite a large percentage of the surroundings (Ringstad 1986, fig. 156). But even though the Avaldsnes area has good soil, there are areas with better agricultural prerequisites both southwest on the island of Karmøy itself, and at the large agricultural plains of Jæren in South Rogaland (Lundberg 2000: 28). Even today, most of the southwestern part of North Karmøy is uncultivated heathland landscape. Thus, Lundberg points out that even though the natural resources are quite favourable in the area, the most important feature in the local landscape is the communication line going through Karmsund.

This favourable aspect of the location was emphasised already by J. K. Christie (1842a: 322f). Although alternative routes were possible over portages further east in the fiords of North Rogaland or on the weather exposed west side of Karmøy, the sheltered route through Karmsund were probably the main sea way in the region during the IA (Elvestad 2005: 27). The strong currents through Salhusstraumen meant that many ships had to wait by the bay of Bøvågen for the current to turn, and the name Salhus (O.No. *sáluhús*) meaning 'traveller's inn' is not coincidental (Nordland 1950: 15f; Ringstad 1986: 264). Thus, at the midpoint of Karmsund between Avaldsnes and Salhusstraumen, the conditions for controlling the passing traffic were very favourable (Opedal 2001b: 9). Finally, it is worth noting that one of the largest copper veins in Northern Europe in the 19th century was located at Visnes. There is yet no evidence of prehistoric use of the copper, but if a use in the IA was proven, this would have altered the interpretations of local IA societies (cf. Hauken 1995: 44).

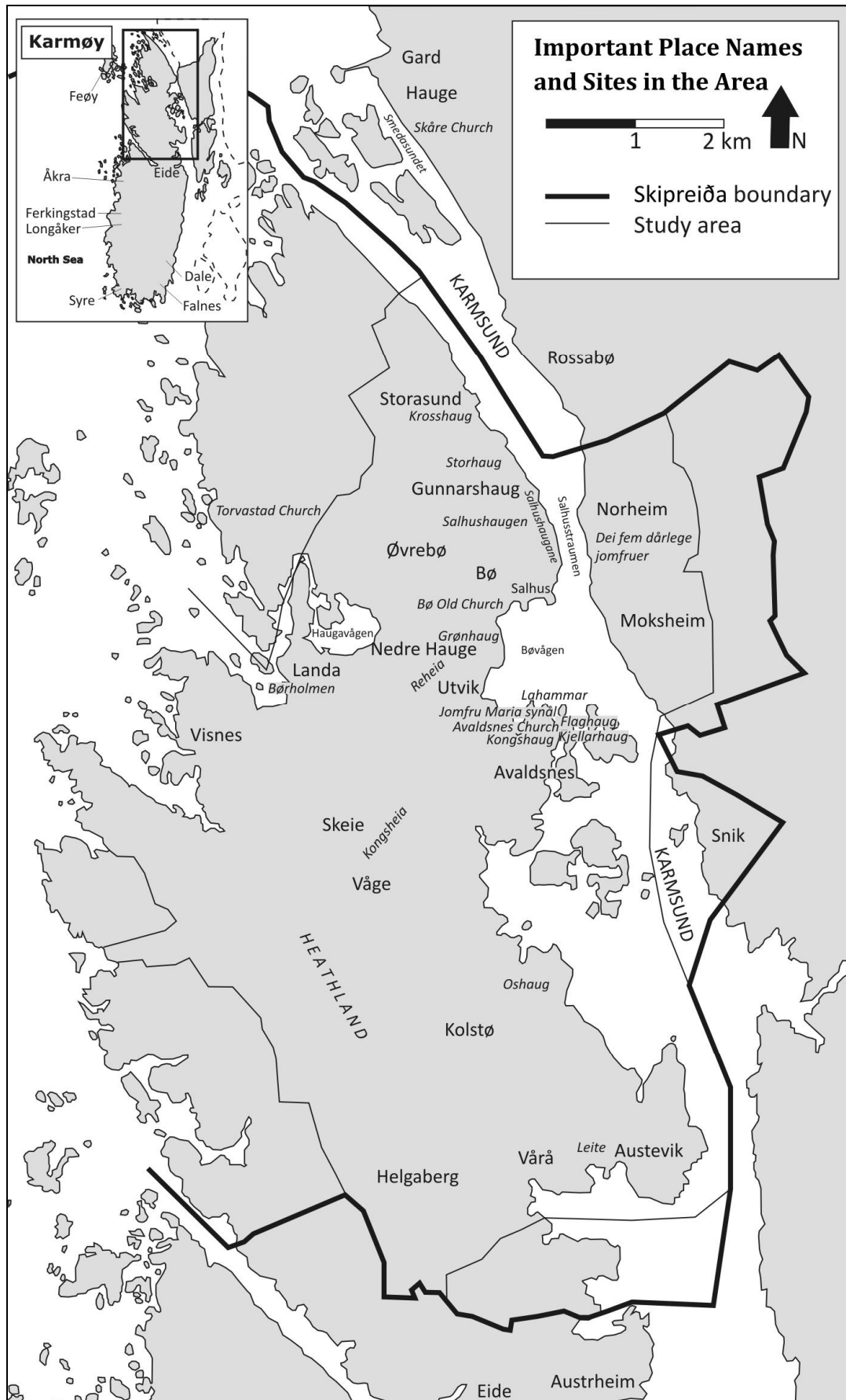


Fig. 3: Some of the most important place names and sites mentioned in the text

1.4.Prelude: The Avaldsnes Area in the Bronze Age

Although not a part of the analysis itself, it seems appropriate to take a brief look at how the area was used in the Bronze Age (BA), as this represents the cultural background at the threshold to the IA. A decade ago, L. N. Myhre (1998) carried out a study of the area along Karmsund throughout the BA. The focus of her study was several large burial monuments with rich grave finds. One of the most impressive collections of BA mounds in Norway is found on a high brink at Reheia, at the farms Utvik and Nedre Hauge (Hernæs 1997: 45; cf. Shetelig 1902a: 3). Some of these are now destroyed, but there were originally 7-9 large mounds, oriented in a straight line (Ringstad 1986: 56). Two other large mounds in the area revealed internal ship settings, which represent an uncommon monument type found almost exclusively in South Scandinavia (Myhre 1998, fig. 93). This symbolic use of ships in a ritual context reveals that transportation by sea was seen as an important ideological component for societies living along Karmsund in the BA. The importance of long-distance communication is underlined by the high number of imported objects of bronze and gold found in local BA graves.

Most of the local BA material stems from Montelius Period III (1300-1100 BC), at the end of the Early BA. With a basis in the concentration of burial monuments and imported objects, Myhre (1998: 193) interpreted the area as a social and political centre in Period III. According to her, the three most important parts of the area were Reheia, Gunnarshaug and Storasund (ibid: 199f). Here, the political, religious and military central functions might have been situated. At the end of the Early BA, she argues that the centre collapses. Nevertheless, there are several rich finds from later parts of the BA, including five status neck- and arm-rings (ibid: 185ff). Although the starting point of my study is set nearly a millennium after Period III, the monuments from this BA peak were an important part of the cultural landscape in the IA. The presence of large monuments in their local landscape would most likely have had symbolic relevance to later societies living in the area (cf. Bradley 2002: 12ff).

At the start of the IA, the landscape were already embedded with many material expressions of power, and these represented a potential for reuse in new ideological contexts (cf. ibid: 122ff). Therefore, it comes as no surprise that several older monuments were regarded as relevant for secondary ideological uses in the IA. For instance, the large BA mounds Knaghaug, Kjørkhaug and Resahaugen were used for secondary burials (Ringstad 1986: 62ff). During the IA, several monuments were probably raised alongside the BA monuments at Reheia, by Salhusstraumen and possibly also at Kongsheia (cf. Fig. 2). According to Hernæs (1999: 129ff), the main localisation trend of large monuments in the area seems to have shifted from the BA to the IA. While the BA mounds seem to be orientated so that they would be most visible for people situated on the island, the IA mounds were oriented towards the people passing through Karmsund (ibid.).

2. PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON THE AVALDSNES AREA IN THE IRON AGE

2.1. Describing and Unearthing the Iron Age Monuments 1711-1912

The earliest IA research in the Avaldsnes area was primarily concerned with describing and excavating some of the most impressive burial monuments here (cf. Fig. 4). Medieval sagas mention several monuments, kings and battles in the area and the first antiquarian descriptions of the local monuments associate them with the depictions of the sagas. The earliest antiquarian-topographical descriptions of the area includes those published by historian Torfæus in 1711, county governor de Fine in 1745 and topographer Kraft in 1829 (Torfæus 1711/2008; deFine 1745/1952; Kraft 1829).

Author J. K. Christie (1842a) carried out the first study of the prehistory of the area with a basis in the archaeological material. Central to his study were the finds from the mound Flaghaug, situated next to Avaldsnes church, which was dug in 1834-35 and 1840 by the local priest Brun (cf. Neumann 1842; Christie 1842b). The *Avaldsnes find* revealed the richest Norwegian RIA grave (Fig. 5), which had the negative effect that many other mounds were dug out by hopeful local farmers (Hernæs 1997: 102). Early surveys in the area were done by county governor W. F. K. Christie (1832-41), and antiquarian Nicolaysen (1862-66: 340ff, 805ff; 1868: 99ff). Among the many mounds and memorial stones they encountered here, three larger grave-fields were mentioned; Reheia, Kongsheia and Salhusaugane. Although the large BA mounds at Reheia were mapped and examined already in the 1820s and 30s (cf. Vedøe 1832), the teacher Bendixen (1877) was the first to examine the minor monuments at Reheia. He concluded that most of these monuments could be dated to the Early IA (ibid: 110).

In the late 19th and early 20th century, Bergens Museum excavated several mounds in the area. Curator Lorange excavated the large Storhaug at Gunnarshaug in 1887 (Lorange 1887; Opedal 1998: 14ff). Although the mound was largely destroyed before the excavation, the mound yielded a ship burial with rich grave goods. A second ship burial in the mound Grønhaug at Bø was excavated by curator Shetelig in 1902 (Shetelig 1912: 220ff; Fig. 7). Both of the ship burials were thought to date to the VA. While on Karmøy, Shetelig also mapped a part of Kongsheia (Fig. 6). In 1906, Shetelig excavated several grave mounds at the farm Gunnarshaug. In one of these he found what he interpreted as a rare double inhumation grave, and to secondary urn graves, from the PRIA (ibid: 13ff). At the same farm, he also started excavating the large mound Salhusaugen (Ringstad 1986: 66). The excavation was continued by Brøgger in 1908 and finished by Shetelig in 1912. The lack of grave goods in the central parts of the mound led to an interpretation as a cenotaph and it was given an uncertain dating to the VA. Except from some scattered excavations by curators from Stavanger in the first part of the 20th century, and rescue excavations at the grave-field of Leite, Austevik in the 1960s (Møllerop 1964), little more IA material was scientifically unearthed in the area before 1992.



Fig. 4: 'Avaldsnes 1710'. Thing site and harbour at Gloppe in the forefront (Langhelle 1999: 208)

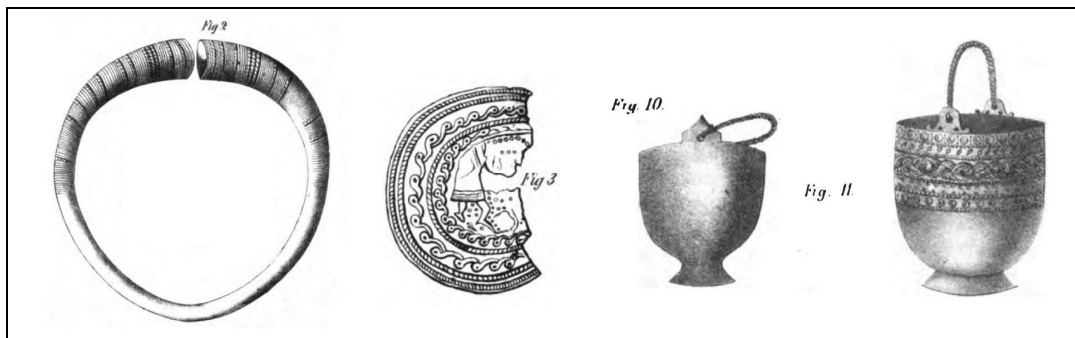


Fig. 5: Finds from Flaghaug, close to the church in Fig. 4 (Urda II, 1842, pl. XIV: 2, XV: 3, I: 10-11)

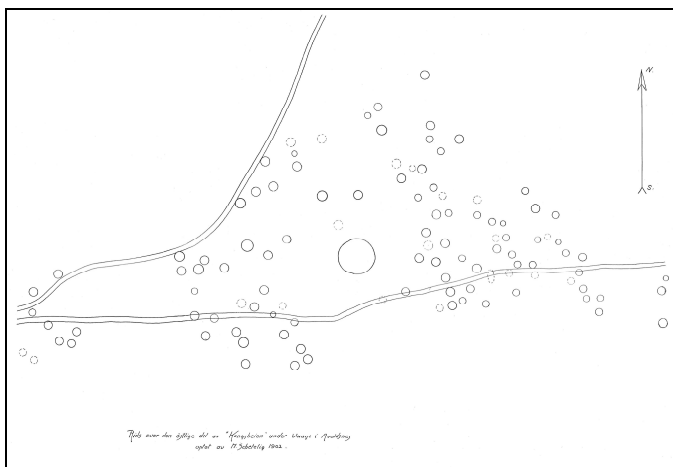


Fig. 6 (left): Sketch of the eastern part of Kongsheia (Shetelig 1902b)

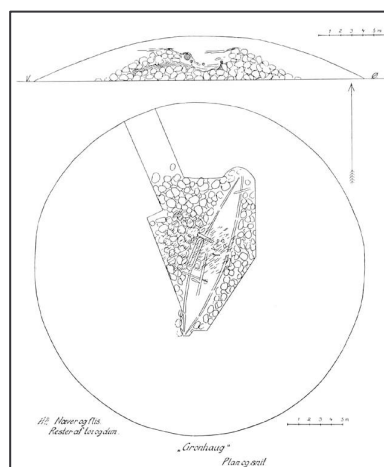


Fig. 7 (right): Documentation from Shetelig's excavation of Grønhaug (Shetelig 1902a, fig. 1)

2.2. Interpreting the Burial Evidence 1912-1992

In his classical study of the west Norwegian IA graves, Shetelig was the first to carry out a comprehensive study of the burial material from the Avaldsnes area. Shetelig (1912: 13ff), used the Gunnarshaug grave as a rare example to show that the inhumation tradition was used, also in the PRIA. The Flaghaug grave was considered as a sign of foreign influence and possible immigration to West Norway in the RIA (ibid: 53ff). Furthermore, the concentration of graves with Roman bronzes in the Avaldsnes area suggested this was a nodal point for spreading prestige goods (ibid: 58ff). Shetelig interpreted the ship burials in Storhaug and Grønhaug as a direct consequence of Harald Fairhair's presence at Avaldsnes from the late 9th century, when the east Norwegian Yngling traditions supposedly was brought to the area (ibid: 220ff; cf. Myhre 1965: 84f). Shetelig also considered the Salhusaugen mound as a reflection of the same social milieu as the ship burials.

The following decades, several local historians examined different aspects of the IA material. Øvrebø and Lindøe published several articles about memorial stones in the area (Øvrebø 1926a; 1926b; 1926c; 1926d; Lindøe 1939). Of special importance were the large memorial stone by Avaldsnes church and the triangular cairn with five memorial stones at Norheim. H. R. Skre (1935), made use of these memorial stones, as well as other prehistoric structures and sacral place names from the area, and correlated these to cardinal points to make a system of 'ley lines'. These supposedly shed light on prehistoric cult in both the Avaldsnes area and the surrounding region. In more general examinations of the prehistory of the area and the larger region, several authors discussed the IA material of the Avaldsnes area (e.g. Olsen 1916; Petersen 1935; Lindøe 1938; Skadberg 1950).

From the 1960s, there was a reinforced research interest in the burial material from the area. Slomann examined the find context of the Flaghaug graves (Slomann 1964; 1973), and discussed the importance of this find in both a supra-regional (1961) and regional (1968; 1972) perspective. Likewise, B. Myhre re-examined the ship burials (Myhre 1965; 1966; 1980). Until his studies of the ship burials, they were both thought to date from the VA like the other Scandinavian ship burials. Myhre questioned such a dating of the ship burials, and proposed a pre-VA dating, mainly because these were rowing ships. Later, Myhre (1987a; 1987b) used RIA graves from the area in an analysis of Early IA chiefdom territories. In a similar manner, Ringstad (1986; 1992) viewed the concentration of large mounds like Flaghaug, Salhusaugen, Grønhaug and Storhaug as an indicator of a centre in the area in both the Early and Late IA. Two contributions from the Museum of Archaeology, Stavanger, examined the concentration of power in the Avaldsnes area in different periods of prehistory and early history (Bang-Andersen 1979; Sør-Reime 1989). The publication edited by Sør-Reime termed Avaldsnes 'Norway's oldest royal estate' – a phrase later widely used in the presentation of the area.

2.3. New Investigations – The Avaldsnes Project 1992-2009

To motivate archaeological research on the local material, Karmøy municipality and the Museum of Archaeology, Stavanger, initiated the 'Avaldsnes Project' in the 1990s (Lillehammer 1995a). Extensive initial excavations at Avaldsnes 1992-2006 revealed traces of settlement all the way back to the PRIA (Hemdorff 1995; Hafsaas & Hemdorff 2005; Hafsaas 2005; 2006; 2007). Several new grave-fields were also revealed (Sjurseike 2000; Hafsaas 2007). In addition, locations at Avaldsnes, Bø and Utvik were surveyed as potential IA and MA harbour sites (Elvestad & Opedal 2001; Opedal et al. 2001). Hernæs (1997) carried out a systematic study of Karmøy's prehistory, where most of the IA material were discussed. The ship burials were investigated in comprehensive studies carried out by Opedal (1998; 2005). She gained ¹⁴C-dates for the Storhaug and Grønhaug ships to the early 8th century AD and first half of the 10th century AD (Opedal 1998: 64f). A very recent dendrochronological analysis of the ships instead suggests a dating to the late and early 8th century AD, respectively (Stylegar 2009).

In their discussions of the less find intensive MP and Early MVP, both Hernæs and Opedal made use of MA legendary sagas (No. *fornaldersoger*) to suggest the presence of elites in this period. This positive view on applying uncertain saga material in the interpretations has a background in local historical examinations of the area, and the approach is supported by local historians like Utvik (1995) and Veia (1999; 2004). Contrary to this, Løken (2001: 6f) has argued that there is no evidence of a continuous concentration of power in between Flaghaug and the ship burials. The present dating of Flaghaug is set to c. AD 250 (Mydland 1994: 16), and until recently it was considered the oldest among the highest status IA graves in the area. However, Haavaldsen's (1999; 2000) redating of a grave from Kolstø to the 2nd or 1st century BC, makes this the richest contemporary weapon grave in the country, thus representing a 'missing link' between the rich BA and RIA graves in the area.

Between 1993 and 2004 the 'Karmøy Seminar' seven times gathered researchers to discuss historical topics relevant to the area (e.g. Veia & Naley 2001). Furthermore, several recent publications on the Norwegian IA have termed the Avaldsnes area a centre in Early and Late IA (Solberg 2000; Hedeager & Tvarnø 2001; Magnus 2002; Myhre 2002; Hedeager 2004). The new visitor centre at Avaldsnes exhibits results from the research which has been carried out since the 1990s. Since 1995, some of the finds from Salhusaugen, Grønhaug and Storhaug have been on permanent display in the VA [sic] exhibition at Bergen Museum. Recent exhibitions, both domestic and foreign, have displayed the rich Flaghaug finds in relation to other important contemporary finds (Jørgensen et al. 2003; Løken & Myhre 2008). Currently, an excavation project based on the latest settlement studies at Avaldsnes is being planned by the University of Oslo. The project is primarily concerned with the identification of the VA and MA royal estate at Avaldsnes, but it will also include analyses of the local IA material.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. Post-Processual Perspectives

In the investigations of the 'Avaldsnes Project', one applied several perspectives often associated with the so called post-processual traditions in archaeology. Similar approaches will be used in this study. *Post-processual archaeology* is not a fixed set of theoretical and methodological approaches, but a collective term that includes a diverse range of different traditions and perspectives (Johnson 1999: 101). The post-processual traditions were first developed in the late 1970s and 1980s as an alternative to the eco-functionalistic *processual archaeology* (Trigger 2006: 444). Although there is no scholarly unity within post-processualism, the different sub-traditions share some general theoretical views. Johnson (1999: 102ff) list some common post-processual perspectives. Among these are the rejection of a sharp border between theory and data, and the awareness that doing archaeological research is interpretative practises based on the researcher's theoretical and political background. Furthermore, when interpreting archaeological material and prehistoric or early historical societies, post-processualists stress the importance of including both functional and symbolic aspects to reconstruct a contemporary context. If possible in the given context, it is often a wish among post-processualists to include the actions of individuals as a variable in the analysis of the larger society.

In the following Chs. 3 and 4, the theoretical framework and methodological approaches of the study are presented. Because of the recognition of a close connection between theory and data, I also view the distinction between theory and method as somewhat arbitrary, as these are overlapping and closely related. With a basis in the local burial material, as well as other material categories in the study area and historical sources describing relevant IA events, I will attempt to reconstruct different historical contexts in the area. Social analyses of the burial material will be applied to shed light on some of the leading individuals of IA societies and indirectly on the organisation of the society as a whole. The analysis of the spatial distribution of the archaeological material is an important method in the study. In post-processualism, landscapes are seen not as a passive background for cultural activity, but as space embedded with cultural meaning derived from the thoughts and actions of societies (Knapp & Ashmore 1999). The landscape can actively be used or manipulated by different social groups, and the landscape embedded with such meanings might in turn influence society. For instance, the leaders of society might attempt to establish, legitimise and reproduce their power symbolically through rituals and ideological expressions that visualises the social structures in the landscape. Thus, a spatial analysis of the material distribution, and of changes in this distribution, might shed light on the spatial components of social structures. These insights lie as a basis for the use of distribution maps in order to interpret social structures, in the analyses in Chs. 6 and 7.

3.2. Societies and Social Change in the Scandinavian Iron Age

According to current sociological theory, societies are said to be reproduced in a relationship between the individual agent and the larger social group structure. In my study of the developments and changes in the Avaldsnes area, I will attempt to observe both some of the active individuals as well as the larger structures of the local society. Within post-processual archaeology, the work of Giddens and Bourdieu is often used as theoretical frameworks for understanding individuals and society (Johnson 1999: 104f). The *Structuration theory* of Giddens, suggests that the structures of society are formed or structured by the actions of individuals, and that these structures in turn form or structure the individuals (Giddens 1984). Although some larger social changes are said to happen episodically, Giddens argues that changes in social structures most often happen gradually.

According to Bourdieu (1996), rituals, in particular, are essential for communicating, reproducing and changing the structures of society. Historian Braudel (1980: 27ff) recognises three types of historical time cycles, or scales of structural change. He distinguishes between slow changes in structures of *longue durée*, semi-slow changes of *conjonctures* and rapid structural changes of *events*.

The analytical tools of Giddens, Bourdieu and Braudel, are applied to some extent in my discussion of short- and long-term social change in Ch. 6.6. These tools are used to illuminate local trends of social change, breaks and continuities observable throughout the sub-periods and ultimately the IA. Thus, for instance the ritual making of a monumental burial mound represent a rapid change of an event in prehistory, where a larger society together with leading individual actors, bury a deceased actor. The larger social structure and the importance of the deceased actor might be visible in the actions interpreted from different components of the burial material (cf. Ch. 4.1). If the material trends in the area within a longer period of time show continuity, this structure might be assumed to have had an endurance at least of a conjuncture. Breaks or continuities in these social structures might in turn be observed in the centuries-perspectives of long *durée*. The actors most visible in the archaeological material are those who got rich burials and probably were leaders of society with significant power.

Giddens (2008: 375) defines *power* as 'the ability of individuals or groups to make their own interests or concerns count, even when others resist it'. In archaeological research, power is usually given a meaning as the ability to control resources and people in social, economical, political, judicial or religious contexts (e.g. Hauken 1995: 43). Powerful positions in society are not static, and when obtained, such positions have to be dynamically reproduced within society. In the interest of the leaders of society, ideology is often used to portray the existing social structures as 'natural' (Bourdieu 1996: 44f). Gaining an understanding of the use of ideological manifestations in the local landscape in a given period, might therefore shed light on the contemporary local social structures.

In this study, the related terms 'leader', 'elite', 'chieftain', 'regional king' and 'king' are used without any further definition. However, the leaders of the Early IA are often termed chieftains, while the highest leaders of the Late IA are termed kings. Anthropologist Earle (1997: 3ff) has examined how chieftains in different societies came to power. According to him, there are four variables that lead some aspiring leaders to success, and others to failure. If aspiring leaders wanted to gain power and control the resources, Earle claims the key sources to such power were through an active use of social relationships, economic power, military might and ideology. Leadership based on an associated warband, and social alliances with other leaders through gift exchange, is known from different Germanic societies throughout the 1st millennium AD (Kristoffersen 2000: 38ff; Myhre 2002: 160f).

Within processual and post-processual archaeology there have been several attempts to analyse the long-term social developments in IA Scandinavia on a supra-regional level. Processual archaeology adopted numerous models from anthropological theory, and one of these were the idea of four evolutionary stages in social change from bands to tribes, chiefdoms and states (e.g. Service 1971). The stages of tribes, chiefdoms and states were often associated with the three economical spheres acknowledged by Polanyi (1944); reciprocal, redistributive and marked economy (Mogren 2005: 26f). In a highly influential study by Odner (1974), for instance, the chiefdom stage with a redistributive economy was applied to explain the Early IA of West Norway. In his examination of the Danish IA, Jensen applied the neo-evolutionary model with developmental stages to some extent, although he showed awareness of the problems of this approach (Jensen 1982: 256). Even though several researchers are still influenced by such neo-evolutionary views on prehistoric societies (e.g. Thurston 2001), today the analogies for the development of Scandinavian IA societies are usually obtained from contemporary historical records describing societies in Northern Europe (cf. Näsman 1988).

The last twenty years, in particular, several larger research projects have addressed the long-term social developments throughout the Scandinavian IA. This research forms the starting point for the understanding of social changes in my study. From medieval sources we know that the Scandinavian kingdoms were formed in the VA and MA, and similar processes of state formation are recorded also in the bordering Anglo-Saxon and Frankish areas (ibid.). The most important Scandinavian research projects concerning IA societies, were the Danish project 'From Tribe to State' (e.g. Mortensen & Rasmussen 1988; 1991; Hedeager 1992; Näsman 1991), the east Swedish project 'Svealand in the Vendel and Viking Periods' (e.g. Norr 1997) and the south Swedish 'Uppåkra Project' (e.g. Larsson & Hårdh 1998; 2003; Helgesson 2002). Several researchers have also discussed similar social processes in Norway (e.g. Myhre 1987a; 1987b; 1992; Skre 1998; Opedal 1998; 2005; Iversen 2004). The link between different forms of economies, and types of social organisation, is apparent also in this later

research. Hence, important aspects of the social processes of the IA were probably the formation of central places established by chieftains, and eventually early towns founded by kings (cf. Fig. 8).

In the following, a generalised overview of the supra-regional social developments in IA Scandinavia is outlined with a basis in the above mentioned research. The understanding of IA social changes which are sketched here, form the interpretative framework of the analyses in Chs. 6 and 7. With regard to the PRIA in South Sweden, Helgesson (2002: 216) argues that the period 500-100 BC showed a large continuity of traditions from the preceding period. According to Myhre (2002: 116f), this was probably true also for the Norwegian areas, where the agricultural expansion of the Late BA continued. In the 1st century BC however, the situation seems to have changed here (ibid: 117). While the material of the Early PRIA showed signs of egalitarian, kin-based societies, around 100 BC the settlement and burial material indicates changes towards tendencies of an increasing social stratification. Näsman (2006: 227) argues that in the Early RIA, South Scandinavia was made up of multiple ‘tribes’ with chieftains recognised archaeologically from graves reflecting the location of their residences. Myhre (2002: 116ff) agrees that the stratified societies visible in the Norwegian material especially from AD 200, probably were formed in the 1st and 2nd century AD. This also appears to have happened in South Sweden, where ‘tribal societies’ with powerful elites emerged between 100 BC – AD 300 (Helgesson 2002: 216). Mogren (2005: 26) criticise this use of the term ‘tribe’, when this is what anthropologists would rather term ‘chiefdoms’. As I agree with Mogren, I most often apply the term ‘chiefdom’ instead of ‘tribe’ in my analysis.

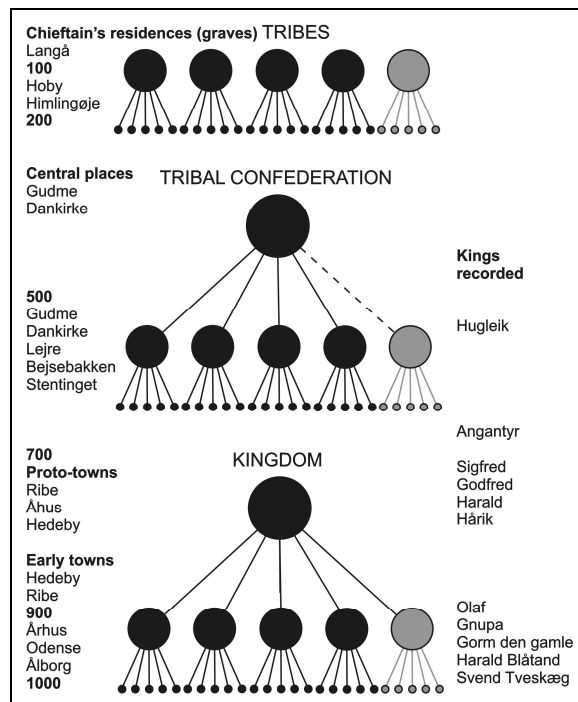


Fig. 8: Näsman's three phases in the formation of a Danish kingdom (redrawn after Näsman 1998)

According to Näsman (2006), in the period AD 200-700, between the Late RIA and the Early MVP, some of the tribes (i.e. chiefdoms) of South Scandinavia obtained hegemony over others and formed confederations. This was achieved in a phase of stress, war and competition between the different groups (ibid.). According to Mogren (2005: 10), the stress was at its maximum between AD 200-500, with ever increasing power manifestations such as the formation of central places. The first central places appear at about AD 200, and according to Helgesson (2002: 216) the Late RIA and MP, AD 300-550/600, were the classic period of central places in South Sweden. In Norway, Myhre (2002: 138ff) argues that the IA farm structure was fully developed around AD 200, increasing the importance of property. At this time the first central places appeared in Norway (Solberg 2000: 121ff). Traditionally, the decrease in burial material on the transition between the MP and MVP have been interpreted as a crisis (Mogren 2005: 11f). This has been explained as a population decrease because of climate change leading to a severe fall in production, or as plague or war leading to large casualty numbers. While it is hard to judge if there in fact was a crisis, it seems clear that the transition to the Late IA is marked by a gradual reformation of social structures. While the leaders of the MP societies probably ruled loosely defined chiefdoms where the power over people was most important (cf. Kristoffersen 2000: 38ff), the leaders of the Late IA showed an increased interest in power over territories.

Myhre (2002: 181ff) argues that the decrease in burial monuments in the 6th and 7th century, should be seen as signs of centralisation of power, stronger leaders and larger social differences. Mogren (2005: 13f) claims that Scandinavian manor structures were formed from the middle of the 1st millennium AD, and that this, as well as the formation of central places, should be associated with contemporary developments in early medieval Europe with increasing 'aristocratisation' and 'urbanisation'. In several parts of Norway, manor structures from the last half of the 1st millennium AD have been identified (e.g. Skre 1998; Iversen 1999; Stylegar 2001). Näsman (2006) argues that an early Danish kingdom was formed in the period AD 700-1000, and that early towns with an early form of marked economy were founded by its kings. This kingdom eventually also included the south Swedish areas (Helgesson 2002: 216). A formation of early kingdoms also seems to have happened in Norway in the MVP and VA. According to Myhre (2002: 212), the number of political territories were reduced in Norway between AD 500-800. From the 7th century AD, Myhre recognises regional kingdoms in Southwest Norway, by the Oslo Fjord in East Norway, in the Trøndelag area and in North Norway (ibid.). In the 8th century, early kingdoms in West Norway and East Norway seem to have had some hegemony over other areas, eventually leading to the formation of a consolidated Norwegian kingdom in the Early MA. In East Norway, social changes analogous to those in South Scandinavia are shown in the transition from a regional leader's central place at Huseby to the establishment of the early town of Kaupang, probably founded by Danish kings about AD 800 (Skre 2007a; 2007c).

4. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

4.1. The Social Analysis of Burial Material

Burial material makes up the major part of the local IA material. When a person died, the subsequent burial rituals were important, socially embedded practices that often gathered large parts of society (Østigård 2006). Interpreting variations in the burial material in terms of actual social difference might therefore shed light both on the deceased as well as the society honouring him or her. While social interpretations of burial material are widely used to reconstruct social structures in prehistory, making such assumptions on social aspects from burial material is not necessarily straightforward (Dark 1995: 90ff). Social analysis of burials very often attempt to reveal the social meaning behind the different kinds of burial material, and then try to correlate this material with a special social rank or status for the deceased or those honouring him or her in the burial ritual.

According to Østigård (2006: 10), there are three main variables in the burial material which might function as a starting point for social analyses of graves. The first variable is the way the dead body has been treated (whether the body was burnt or not), the second variable, the presence or absence of grave furnishing, and the third variable, if the burial has been given a visual marker above ground. If the burial was given a monumental marker, the choice of location is seen as an aspect important for the interpretation (cf. Gansum 1999: 467). Furthermore, Østigård (2006: 11ff) recognises twenty factors that can be analysed based on these three variables. Among these factors are the identity and status of the deceased and those left behind, the power of those carrying out the rituals, the use of burials as property claims, and the use of burial places as sacred places before and after the burial.

The main method applied in the study for analysing the social developments throughout the IA, is to distinguish between graves interpreted as reflecting people of relatively high or low social status. As this study deals with the burial material from five different IA sub-periods, which material categories are considered as rich grave furnishing, and what is considered a large grave mound, necessarily differs. Categories such as status rings, rich dress furnishing, imports of precious metal, and a high quantity or quality of weapons, are the usual types of rich grave furnishing. The evaluation of which categories are status laden in a given sub-period is done through comparisons with objects in status graves in comparable areas, as well as with the objects found in other local graves. If the grave ritual varies from what is typical of the sub-period in question, the innovative aspect in the ritual might be status indicating. An example is the use of mounds or inhumations when this is not common. In the analysis the approximate mound volume is used to compare the largest mounds. The mathematical formula for the volume of a perfectly spherical mound with a radius (r) and height (h) is given as $\pi h(r^2/2 + h^2/6)$ (Ringstad 1986: 18f). An average day's work might represent c. 1 m³ mass per day.

4.2. The Analysis of Changing 'Landscapes of Power'

The term *landscapes of power* (No. 'maktlandskap') is applied as an overarching term in the analysis of the shifting social structures in the Avaldsnes area in each of the IA sub-periods. What I call an analysis of the landscapes of power, is a distributional and chronological analysis of the material in the study area, with a focus on the expressions of the upper social strata of society and their use of the landscape. This analysis is carried out in Ch. 6, and the term separates it from the subsequent analysis of the area as a central place in Ch. 7. Before I discuss the analysis of landscapes of power, I will try to clarify the differences between the perspectives of Chs. 6 and 7. As both perspectives in principle analyse the same material, same area and same period, there is necessarily some overlap. The analysis in Ch. 6 could be described as an analysis of the developments in the social structures of the area, where a total spectre of available archaeological material and historical sources, are applied to trace the developments in the local society throughout each of the IA sub-periods. The foremost goal of this analysis is to search for traces in the local material of social stratification, and to gain an understanding of if, when and where elites might have resided in the area. As a central place by definition is a place where elites gathered central functions (cf. Ch. 4.3), the analysis in Ch. 7 of the area as a central place is dependant on the insights from the analysis in Ch. 6. The analysis of the possible central functions gathered by elites in the area in different parts of the IA, is based on the distribution of a selection of applicable 'central place indicators', and not the total available material.

As mentioned above, post- processualists understand 'landscapes' as space embedded with meaning which are manipulated by different social groups (Knapp & Ashmore 1999). The term 'landscapes of power' has been used in several studies, but its denotation is debated. Heidinga (1999: 410) writes: 'It sounds like a metaphor, rather than a useful concept, but, in my opinion, it is indeed useful, if we take 'landscape' not too literally and 'power' not only in a political sense (...) The expressions of power in space, whether on a local, a regional or a supra-regional level, created landscapes of power (...)'. A central question is 'Where did power dwell in the landscape?' (ibid: 411ff) . In *Landscapes of Power, Landscapes of Conflict*, Thurston (2001) analysed social structures in IA South Scandinavia on local, regional and supra-regional levels. She writes: 'In assessing cultural change, several "types" of cultural landscape may be considered: the socio-political landscape, the economic landscape and the sacred landscape' (ibid: 31f). In my study, it is seen as an advantage that the term *landscapes of power* is ambiguous and might include both metaphorical and concrete meanings. This allows an analysis on several levels which might include different aspects of expressions of power in a spatial and chronological context. In the analysis, the most concrete meaning of the local 'landscape' equals the geographical limits of the study area. To achieve a systematic and equal study of the landscapes of power in each sub-period, Ch. 6.1 - 6.5 are examined according to a standard of three problems:

- A) Are there any clear patterns or changes in the spatial distribution of material within the area?
- B) Are there any clear patterns or changes in the use of ideological expressions within the area?
- C) Are there any indications of alliances or conflicts on a regional or supra-regional level?

Question A) deals with the trends of the general distributional patterns within a given sub-period.

Are there any indications of power in the area, such as status graves or other power manifestations?

Does the distribution show patterns which might suggest where the power in the area was situated?

Secondly, question B) deals with the ideological expressions identified in the area. What were the burial practices in the given sub-period? The question focuses on monumental expressions and how power was shown ritually through investment of resources in power manifestations in the landscape.

Thirdly, question C) considers material which might reveal external relations in the political landscape on a regional or supra-regional level. Which relations did the area have with other areas? Finally, the long-term changes observed throughout the IA are discussed in Ch. 6.6, with a basis in the problem:

- D) Do the long-term changes in the local landscapes of power show continuity or discontinuity?

Question D) is concerned with tendencies of stability or change in the landscapes of power. When and where do elites occur in the area? Is the centralisation of power stable or fragile, and does the localisation of elites change? Which scales of social organisation do these elites indicate compared to Näsman's model (Fig. 8)? The discussion applies the theoretical framework discussed in Ch. 3.2.

4.3. The Identification of a Norwegian 'Central Place'

The analysis in Ch. 7.1 examines the hypothesis that the area might be termed a *central place* in the IA. In the early 1990s, the term central place was introduced to south Scandinavian IA archaeology (Fabech 1999: 455f). The term stems from a theory by the German geographer Christaller (1966). His theory was based on spatial and functional relationships between economic centres of different sizes in South Germany in the 1930s. The theory suggests that in landscapes without physical obstacles, one would expect a regular pattern of evenly distributed central places, surrounded by a hierarchy of satellite centres (Renfrew & Bahn 2001: 178f). The theory was applied by archaeologists already in the 1960s, but a direct use of the theory was met with criticism (Dark 1995: 102). In Scandinavian archaeology, the term central place has been modified to denote a special type of IA settlement, first recognised at Gudme and Sorte Muld (cf. Watt 1991; Thomsen et al. 1993). Here, central places are defined as elite led settlements with functions in judicial and ritual practises, which were also nodal points in distributing objects of trade and handicraft (Näsman 1991: 169). Furthermore, military functions are often associated with central places (cf. Näsman 2006: 216).

According to Brink (1996: 238), a central place should not be understood as an exact location, but as a complex spread over a larger area. The first central places emerged in the RIA and such sites are found until the VA, but several of these also show continuity into the MA as elite manors (ibid.; Fabech 1999; Näsman 2006: 215ff). There is regional variation both in the dating of central places, and also variation in which central functions were represented at the different types of centres. Hårdh & Larsson (2007: 10) argues that among the sites that have been examined since the 1990s and termed central places, some should be understood as rich manors, some as centres of trade and handicraft, and a few as regional pre-urban centres. Fabech & Ringtved (1995) have developed important methodical tools for identifying possible central places. These are material categories which might indicate the presence of central functions for a larger region, which are crucial features for terming a location a central place (cf. Skre 2007b: 49f). The most important of such *central place indicators* are extensive finds of precious metal and production waste within a settlement area, the presence of larger structures as hall buildings and landing sites, a strategic position in the cultural landscape as well as the presence of early churches, denoting structural continuity in the MA. The presence of sacral and organisational place names have been examined as potential central place indicators by Brink (1996). A list of south Scandinavian MP central place indicators is given in Table 2.

The two problems considered in Ch. 7.1 and 7.2, respectively, are:

- 1) Is it appropriate to term the area a central place in the Early and Late IA?
- 2) Which features characterises the area compared to contemporary central places in Scandinavia?

The first question considers if the Avaldsnes area had central functions for a larger region in the Early and Late IA, interpreted on the basis of the central place indicators present in the area. Mapping central place indicators is not a goal in itself, and these should not be seen as a static checklist to judge if the area could be termed a central place. Rather, these 'indicators' suggests possible central functions which must be contextualised and interpreted in the light of the other contemporary developments of the area, as examined in Ch. 6. The second question opens up for a comparison of the features of the Avaldsnes area with features of central places in the rest of Scandinavia. A selection of Norwegian and Scandinavian central places, most notably Borre, Spangereid, Himlingøje, Gudme, Helgö and Uppåkra, is used as the comparative material. Even before such comparisons are made, one must assume that there existed some regional variance between south Scandinavian and Norwegian areas throughout the IA. The investigation of the Avaldsnes area as a Norwegian central place might therefore have to apply additional central place indicators. Consequently, some other potential central place indicators specific to the Norwegian area, and the use of such categories in previous examination of other Norwegian central places, are discussed in the following.

During the IA, the areas of South Scandinavia and the Norwegian areas were different both regarding landscape and natural resources, as well as concerning their distance to other European centres. While some of the indicators listed in Table 2 might be applicable also in the Norwegian areas, as mentioned above, other indicators specific to the Norwegian context must be considered as well. According to Grimm (2006: 211), 'there is agreement about which central place indicators may be used in Norwegian archaeology. These indicators are, most notably, richly furnished graves (...), large grave mounds (...), court sites (...) and medieval stone or wooden churches.' Both richly furnished graves and large grave mounds indicate strong social elites. Early analyses of the distribution of Norwegian IA centres on the basis of rich graves and large mounds have been carried out by Myhre (1987a; 1987b; 1992) and Ringstad (1986; 1992). In the analysis of centres, richly furnished graves are most often defined as graves containing imported status objects. A few Late IA graves include boats or ships as grave furnishing. Myhre (2000b: 40ff) considers this type of special burials as a Norwegian central place indicator. Objects of special symbolic quality, such as serpent head rings and shield bosses of precious metal, have been applied e.g. by Solberg (2000: 94) to identify RIA centres.

Several structure categories which might be associated with military functions have been suggested as Norwegian central place indicators. The so called 'court sites' is one of the Norwegian central place indicators mentioned above in the quotation from Grimm. As the term court sites imply, such settlement structures have sometimes been associated with judicial functions, but today a possible military function of court sites is stressed (Løken 2001; Solberg 2002). It has been suggested that such sites were used as barracks for warriors. Given the large distribution of court sites in North Norway, this is often seen as a central place indicator particularly applicable here (Myhre 2000b: 40ff). In addition to court sites, both large boat houses and hill forts might sometimes be related to the military functions of central places. According to Myhre (1997a: 181), large IA boat houses tend to be distributed near the centres identified on the basis of rich graves and large mounds. In his study, Grimm (2006: 211) therefore argues that concentrations of large boat houses is relevant as a central place indicator. Although hill forts are not always located directly at the centre core, Myhre (1997a: 181) suggests hill forts within a larger region might be linked to central places in this region.

The religious functions of central places have been stressed in recent research (Hedeager 2002; Sundqvist 2004; Zachrisson 2004). Hedeager (2002) and Sundqvist (2004) claims that some central places might have been organised in accordance with ideals from contemporary mythology. Thus, it seems appropriate to search for structures by the central places which might be understood as physical expressions for mythical beliefs. I will propose triangular monuments as a potential central place indicator. Recent studies carried out on the Swedish material, suggest that such monuments with raised memorial stones or wooden poles might be linked symbolically to Yggdrasil, the world

tree of Norse mythology (Andrén 2004: 390, 407ff). Yggdrasil held a special position in the Norse world view as an *axis mundi*, the centre of the world. Using monuments symbolising Yggdrasil might be a strategy to ideologically legitimate a site as the 'centre of the universe' (cf. Hedeager 2002: 11). As few triangular monuments have revealed any graves, Andrén (2004: 414) argues that the monuments were primarily ritual places. However, if graves occur, Andrén considers these as the graves of ritual specialists. Triangular monuments are found e.g. at the Swedish central place Helgö and at central places in Halland, West Sweden (Nicklasson 2002, fig. 8; Zachrisson 2004: 350f). A similar monument is found e.g. at the MVP central place of Borre, East Norway (Myhre 1992: 414; Andrén 2004). Here, the monument is located between many very large grave mounds (Fig. 10). In Norway, concentrations of such monuments only appear in Trøndelag and Rogaland (Ellingsen 2003: 1). Recent studies of triangular monuments here, suggests that these monuments might be linked to places where power dwelled. In both areas some of the monuments are found near court sites (ibid: 84, 105; Myhre 2005b: 8; 2005c). Another, chronologically later, category of religious structures is the Norwegian stone crosses of the Late VA (Solberg 2000: 326f). As many of these might have been erected as monuments by converted elites, this might work as a Late IA central place indicator.

There have been several attempts by Norwegian researchers to identify and analyse specific central places. At Borg in Lofoten, grave-fields, boat houses and court sites indicated the presence of a centre (Johansen & Munch 2003, fig. 1.3). The farm at Borg was interpreted as a chieftain's farm and excavations revealed a Late IA long house of 83 metres length, which contained a room identified as a hall. The well-known concentration of very large mounds at Borre in Vestfold underlines the areas importance as a centre especially during the MVP (Myhre 1992). As previously mentioned, this grave-field also included a triangular monument. In 2007 a georadar survey revealed two probable hall buildings at Borre (Trinks et al. 2007), and these are indicated in Fig. 10. Another hall building have also been identified at Huseby in Vestfold, nearby a large grave-field and the Early VA town of Kaupang (Skre 2007a; Skre 2007c). Two recent master theses by Nordgård (2006) and Teigen (2007) studied possible central places at Eid in Nordfjord, Tune in Østfold, Åker in Hedmark, Hov in Oppland and Veien in Buskerud. In South Rogaland, Myhre (1997b; 2007) examined two central places from the Late RIA and MP at Hove and Lye. Here, central functions are indicated by place names, rich archaeological finds, grave-fields and military structures like court sites and hill forts. At Spangereid, Vest-Agder, there is a concentration of south Scandinavian and Norwegian central place indicators (Fig. 9). These are hill forts, a court site, grave-fields with large mounds and boat burials, special place names, a medieval church, a canal and possibly also a hall and a landing site (Stylegar & Grimm 2005). Spangereid's strategic location by a protected sea way inside Lindesnes resembles that of the Avaldsnes area along Karmsund, and my analysis is influenced by the studies of Spangereid.

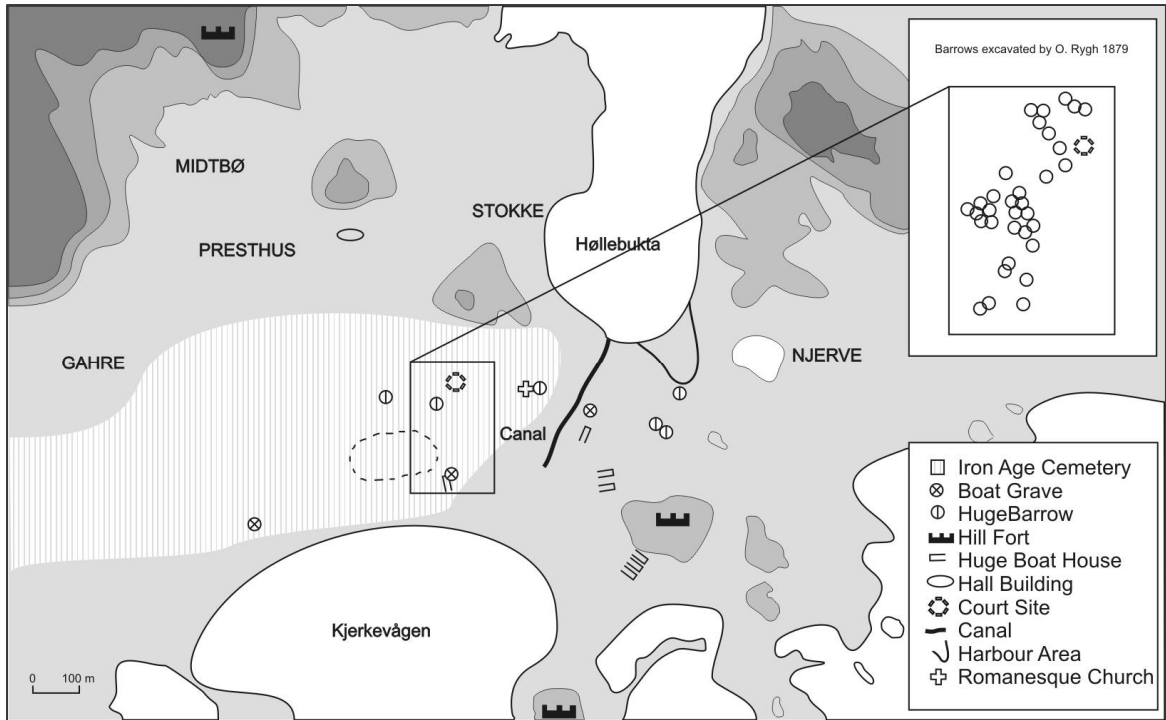


Fig. 9: Spangereid, South Norway (redrawn after Stylegar 2006, fig. 4, without structure numbers)

Archaeological Finds
Continental gold objects
Gold bracteates
Gold foil figures
Golden sword mountings
Finds from workshops (precious metal)
Scrap-silver hoard
Weapons
Archaeological Structures
Hall building
Larger contemporary settlement
Larger cemetery
Landing site
Positions in Cultural Landscape
Position in relation to communication
Favourable position in relation to resources
The settlement and its different functions dispersed over a larger area
Place Names
Sacral
Organisational
Structural Continuity
Runic stones
Silver treasure
Early Romanesque churches (magnate church)
Chapels
Manor houses
Royal estates
Manorial estates

Table 2 (left): Indicators of central places in the MP (Ringtved 1999, fig. 5)

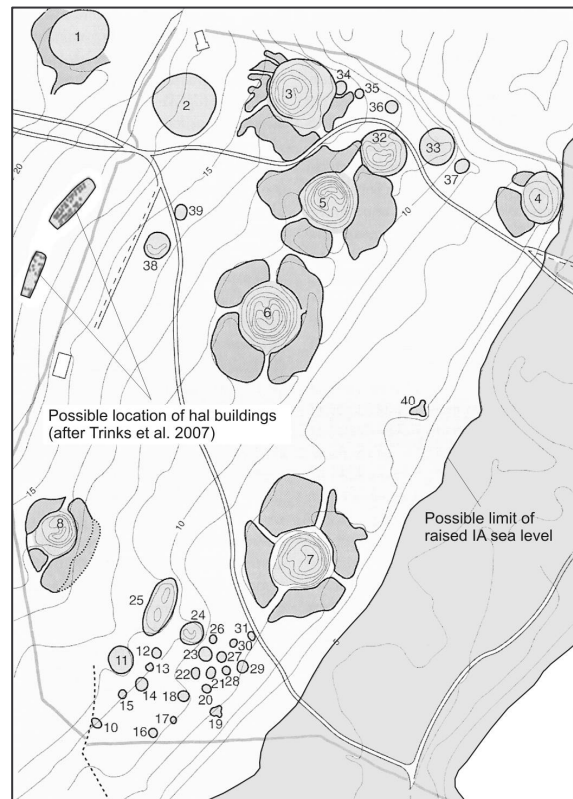


Fig. 10 (above): Borre, Southeast Norway (after Myhre 2005a: 51, with added sea level and halls)

4.4. Methods and Problems in Gathering and Analysing the Material

Within the limits of a master thesis, there has been no time to examine the IA material physically. The presentation of the material is therefore based solely on observations from pictures, and on previous examinations carried out by other researchers. To get an overview of the material, different lists of the relevant material, and material analyses, were sought in the museum catalogues and in relevant research publications. Additional information was gathered from topographical archives (top.ark.) at Bergen Museum (BM), Museum of Archaeology, Stavanger (AmS) and Karmsund Folkemuseum in Haugesund. Furthermore, an overview of local newspaper articles of archaeological relevance was found at the public library in Haugesund. The photo archives of the museums in Bergen and Stavanger, provided photos and drawings of the key material used in the analysis.

To the extent it has been possible, key finds are depicted in the material presentation in Ch. 5. In addition, distribution maps and material lists are used in both Chs. 6 and 7 in order to show the chronological changes in the material distribution throughout the IA. As a rule, the material has been dated by applying the most nuanced analysis of the dating available from previous studies. In addition, I have attempted to typologically date parts of the material by the use of typological charts. An overview of the chronology has been given in Ch. 1.2. As the borders between the sub-periods are modern constructions, the sub-periods and their sub-phases are by nature overlapping. This makes the dating and analysis somewhat difficult, as there are clear material similarities not only within each sub-period, but also between these. Thus, the material of the Late PRIA and Early RIA resembles each other, just as there are similarities between the material of the Late RIA and MP, and between the material of the MVP and VA. Consequently, parts of the material might be discussed within the wrong sub-period. Material which is only dated roughly to the IA in general causes further problems. The material which cannot with any certainty be dated to a specific sub-period is discussed in Ch. 5.6.

Several aspects of the validity and representativeness of the material applied in the study might be criticised. For instance, in the analysis I make use of lost finds mentioned in uncertain sources, and finds with uncertain datings. I have chosen to use this material as I think it might have some research value, and as it has rarely been used in previous analyses. Nevertheless, it is problematic that a large part of the material is probably lost, that little of the material stem from archaeological excavations, and that the find contexts for most of the material are poorly documented. Although these problems regarding the validity and representativeness of the material preserved from the IA societies in the area must be admitted, it is my belief that a critical examination of the preserved material should be adequate to shed light on these societies. I will make use of some historical sources in the analysis, and aspects of textual criticism are discussed in the presentation of historical sources in Ch. 5.8.

5. PRESENTATION OF THE MATERIAL

In this chapter, a presentation of the relevant local IA material is given. Grave finds, stray finds and different categories of structures are presented within each sub-period (Ch. 5.1 - 5.5). Further, some of the material with uncertain dating is reviewed in Ch. 5.6, and the settlement material in Ch. 5.7. The relevant historical sources and place names are described in Ch. 5.8. In the following chapter, the *R*-number refers to a figure number in *Norske Oldsager* (Rygh 1885). Further, *B*-numbers refer to the catalogue numbers and catalogue entries of Bergen Museum, *C*-numbers to Oldsakssamlingen, Oslo, *S*-numbers to Museum of Archaeology, Stavanger and *T*-numbers to Vitenskapsmuseet, Trondheim. Finally, *A-ID* refers to an ID number and entry in the *Askeladden database of cultural monuments and sites*, while the *B#* refers to a structure number on Bendixen's map of the Reheia grave-field (Fig. 20).

5.1. The Material of the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age

The first grave finds in the area to be interpreted as Late PRIA graves, were two inhumation graves (B6054-c) and two secondary urn graves (-a-b), found in a grave mound (A-ID 54164-1) excavated at Gunnarshaug by Shetelig in 1906 (Shetelig 1912: 13). The urn graves were of similar form as R363 and R354 respectively, and had been disturbed by previous digging in the mound. In one of the inhumation graves parts of the skull and skeleton was preserved due to stone slabs over this grave (Fig. 11). Only teeth fragments were preserved from the other inhumation grave, and neither of the two graves had any preserved furnishing. The mound was 1.65 m high and 21.50 m in diameter, and it was situated just north of Salhusaugen. There has been some debate concerning Shetelig's PRIA dating of the inhumation graves, as no other inhumations are known. Nybruget (1978: 136f) criticised the stratigraphic dating of the graves as uncertain, and the graves are not included in Pilø's (1989: 39ff) list of west Norwegian PRIA graves. However, Haavaldsen (2000: 12) supports a dating of these graves to the Late PRIA. The clay pot type R354 stems from the PRIA (Solberg 2000, fig. 6a), and Hernæs (1997: 78) dates the secondary urn graves to the transition between the PRIA and RIA.

A grave find from Kolstø was originally interpreted as a moderately furnished Late IA grave, but it has later been reinterpreted by Pilø (1989) and Haavaldsen (1999; 2000) as a richly furnished Late PRIA grave. According to Haavaldsen (2000: 10f) it isn't possible to give the grave a more precise date than to somewhere within the time span 200-1 BC. The preserved grave furnishing includes pieces of a single-edged sword of iron (S1857; Fig. 12: I), a chape of iron (S1861; Fig. 12: II), a cooper's knife of iron (S1858; Fig. 12: III), a spearhead of iron (S1860; Fig. 12: IV), some pieces of flint (S1862-S1863) and fragments of putty for a vessel (S1864) with bottom diameter 40 cm (Haavaldsen 1999: 461f). In addition, a fragment of iron (S1859; Fig. 12: V) might possibly stem from a neck ring (Haavaldsen

2000: 11f). This grave is the only known west Norwegian PRIA weapon grave (Pilø 1989: 20f), and it might be the only weapon grave in the country with a certain dating to the PRIA (cf. Nybruget & Martens 1997: 85f). It was unearthed in 1894, and based on information Haavaldsen got from the locals, it was assumed to stem from the large mound of Oshaug (Haavaldsen 1999: 465). A note in a newspaper in 1897 about additional finds from the mound (cf. Ch. 5.5) mentions earlier finds that might be this grave, thus linking the grave further to Oshaug (Haugesunderen 1897). Oshaug (A-ID 54196-1) might have measured 2-3 m in height and 23-25 m in diameter. Though no older grave has yet been found in the mound, Haavaldsen (pers.com.) considers the PRIA grave as a secondary grave.

Another interesting find from the farm of Avaldsnes itself, which has seldom been taken notice of, might probably also be considered in a Late PRIA context. The find is now lost and it is only documented through drawings by the teacher Sagen from 1803, 1812 and sometimes after 1825 (Sagen undated; Bakka 1971). These drawings were later published by Nicolaysen (1868; cf. Fig. 13a). The two face masks of bronze, c. 10 cm and 12 cm in height respectively, and the bronze ring, were reportedly found at the same spot 'deep in the soil' at Avaldsnes (Bakka 1971). The finds were sent to, and confirmed received by, Kongens kunstkammer (today the National Museum) in Copenhagen (ibid.). These are now lost (Axboe pers. com.). Nicolaysen (1868) interpreted the two masks and the ring as rare finds from the Early IA with a possible function as fittings. A hundred years later, Bakka (1971) examined the drawings and proposed a new interpretation. Bakka thought the style of the masks pointed towards a Celtic origin and interpreted these as 8th century Anglo-Irish work. He interpreted the ring and masks as a handle and handle fittings for a vessel. Although the Celtic origin and the function as vessel handles seem probable, I find a dating to the Late IA less convincing. Recently, Stylegar (pers. com.) and others have proposed a dating to the Late PRIA. This seems more probable as the masks show similarities in style and size to masks on south Scandinavian PRIA vessels (cf. Fig. 13b). Two other PRIA metal vessels are known in Norway (Nybruget & Martens 1997: 86). Both contained burnt bones and came from grave mounds. Even if similar south Scandinavian vessels are mainly found in bogs, the lost vessel might stem from a mound as it was found 'deep in the soil'. Nevertheless, the tradition of sacrifices of artefacts in bogs is documented elsewhere in the study area. Just 500 m west of Avaldsnes, ridging ploughs (S6785) thought to date from the PRIA were found at the bog Tungemyrå (A-ID 44411-1), Utvik (Møllerop 1961; Hernæs 1997: 83f). Furthermore, Early IA clay pot shreds (S5761) and two hones of quartzite (S5762) have been found in a bog at Landa (Hauken 1995: 53). As mentioned in Ch. 1.3, pollen analyses suggests the island of Karmøy was in large parts deforested by c. 200 BC (Prøsch-Danielsen & Simonsen 2000: 41). The intensification of farming activity is also documented through the ridging ploughs from Utvik, and by the first certain traces of farming settlement at Avaldsnes, ¹⁴C-dated to c. 300 BC (Hafsaas 2007; A-ID 115870-1).

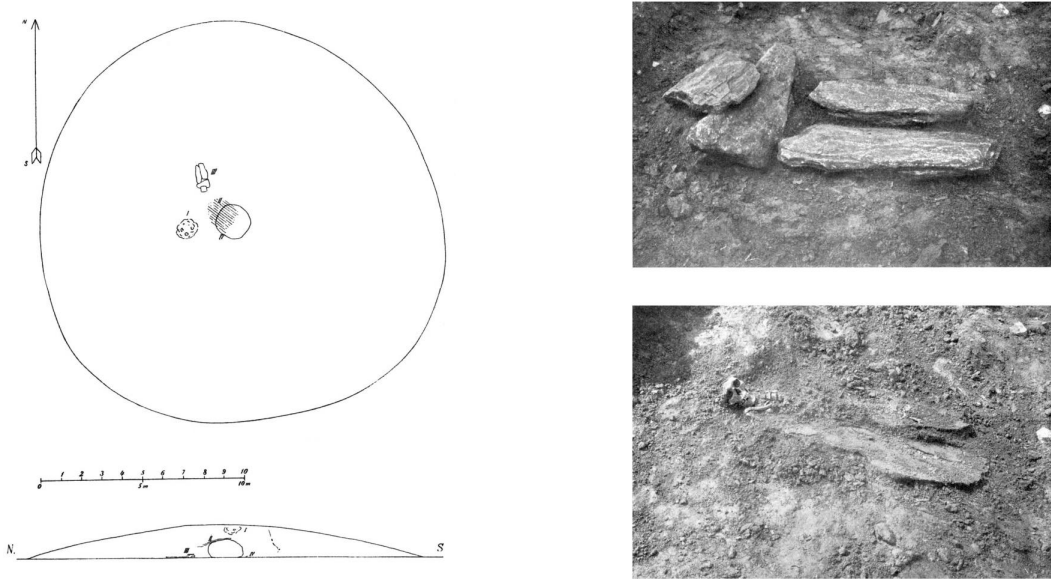


Fig. 11: The preserved inhumation grave with stone slabs, Gunnarshaug (Shetelig 1912, figs. 15-17)

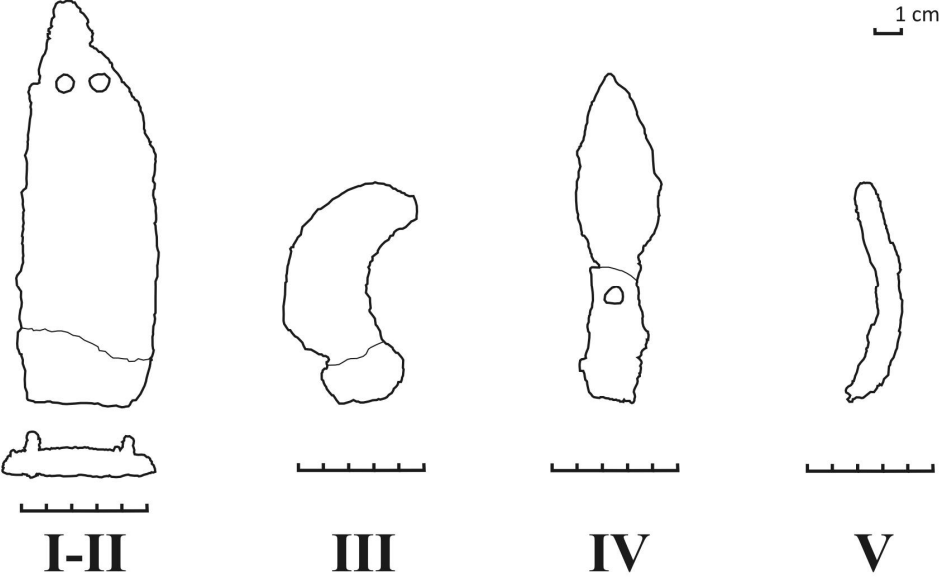


Fig. 12: Late PRIA grave furnishing from Oshaug, Kolstø (redrawn after Haavaldsen 2000, figs. 1-2)

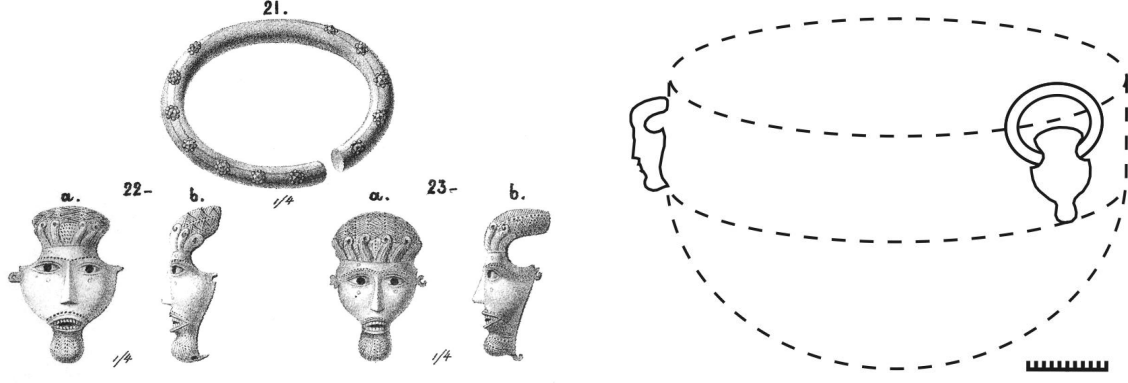


Fig. 13: Lost finds, Avaldsnes (Nicolaysen 1868, figs. 21-23), with a possible reconstruction (right)

5.2. The Material of the Roman Iron Age

The earliest RIA finds in the area dates from B2. Slomann (1972: 30) lists three local grave finds from this phase. The first of these is a cooper's knife of iron (B1597; Fig. 14: I). According to Christie (1842b: 397), the knife was found in the 1820s among other artefacts in a stone chamber in one of the grave mounds at Reheia (A-ID 34378). Hauken (1995: 45) claims that the find stems from mound B#36 at Reheia, but I doubt the accuracy of this claim, as such information is not documented in her references to Christie (1842b: 397ff) and Lorange (1875: 74). Two artefacts from the late Early RIA were found in soil stemming from the large BA grave mound Knaghaug (A-ID 44409-1) at Bø. These probably come from a secondary RIA grave in the mound (Hauken 1995: 45). The first artefact is a berlock of gold (B5754; Fig. 14: IIa), 9.4 g, found in 1903. Furthermore, the bottom fragment of a Roman serving dish of bronze (B6050; inside depicted on Fig. 14: IIb), probably similar to R349, was found in 1906 (cf. Hernæs 1997: 94f). The last B2 grave find is a fragmented fibula of bronze with a string of silver (S7345, Fig. 14: III), found in 1948 at Tuhaug (A-ID 44439-1), Austevik (ibid: 95).

From Vårå a grave, probably from C1b, was unearthed in 1909 beneath a stone slab in a small mound (Hauken 1995: 47). Shreds from a clay pot (S3196-a, Fig. 14: IVb) with a handle were found in soil mixed with charcoal, 60 cm from fragments of gilded silver, silver filigree and bronze stemming from a fibula (-b-f; only b-d depicted on Fig. 14: IVa). According to Lund Hansen (1995: 213f), the fibula is of the rosetta type, which was only produced in C1b. Shreds of two clay pots (B5177), with handle (No. *hankekar*) and spout (No. *tutekar*) respectively, was found at Skeie. In 1905 a comb of bone (B5944-b), shreds of a clay pot with spout (-a) and burnt bones (-c) were found at Norheim. The grave probably stem from C3 (Slomann 1972: 35). The same year, a burnt mosaic bead (B5954) was found among charcoal in the top of the large BA mound Kjørkhaug (A-ID 23744-1) at Gunnarshaug. The mound was 2.5-3 m high and 30-35 m in diameter. According to Hauken (1995: 46), the bead is from the Late RIA. A lost spiral-shaped ring of gold is supposed to have been found in the mound, and even though both Ringstad (1986: 64) and L. N. Myhre (1998: 100, 212) suggest this lost ring originally belonged to the BA grave, it could be noted that similar rings are also found in the Late RIA.

A finger ring of gold of serpent head type (B2774; Fig. 14: VI), weighing 42.9 g, was found in the area around 1852 (Andersson 1993a: 158). Even though the actual find context is unknown, the majority of the type of finger ring in question (Type 39c) stem from C2 (Andersson 1993b: 85). The ring was handed in to Bergen Museum in 1872 along with several other finds, and the original information states that the ring was 'found some inches down in the soil, nearby a rubbish heap at Avaldsnes by crofter Hans Hansen Kolstø' (Hysing 1873: 67f). When Lorange the following years started working at the museum and published the first index of the artefacts of the museum, this information was

changed to 'found 1852 at Kolstø in Avaldsnes parish some inches deep in the soil' (Lorange 1875: 74). In my view, the information given by Lorange seems like a misinterpretation of the original information he had at hand. It would probably have been in Mr. Hansen's own interest to claim that he had found the ring at his own farm at Kolstø. When the original information from 1872 states that he found it by a heap (mound?) at the farm Avaldsnes, this is probably a fact which was easier to admit twenty years after it was originally found. Thus, in this study the finger ring is treated as from Avaldsnes. An undecorated, smooth finger ring of gold (B5903; Fig. 14: V) weighing 12.8 g, was found in 1904 near Bøvatnet at Bø (Andersson 1993a: 158f). Andersson (1993b: 44) thinks this ring is of the Type 5, which in Norway and Sweden predominantly dates to the Late RIA (C-periods). If it is a finger ring of Type 5, it is the weightiest ring of this type in Norway (ibid, fig. 59). To me the form of the ring seems more like a Type 4, which has a concentration to the C1-periods (ibid: 41). A C1 date is applied in this study. In 1940, a pendant of gold weighing 4.4 g (S6810; Fig. 14: VII) was found at Kongshaug, Avaldsnes (Andersson 1993a: 158; 1995: 174). It probably dates to C1b-C2 (cf. Slomann 1972: 32).

A Roman, Hemmoor type bucket of bronze (B314; Fig. 14: VIII) stems from Flaghaug grave 2 at Avaldsnes. It is dated to C2 and did originally contain burnt bones and three smooth finger rings of gold (of Types 1-5), but these are lost (Hauken 1995: 46). It is possible that the grave stems from a triangular grave chamber (cf. Shetelig 1912: 54). Another quite similar Hemmoor bucket (B5759-a; Fig. 14: IX) was found at Norheim. As this bucket shows clear traces of wear damage, it is interpreted as deposited in a grave somewhat later in C2 than the other Hemmoor bucket (Hernæs 1997: 113). The bucket itself was packed inside birch bark, and inside the bucket, burnt bones (-d) and burnt bear claws (-c) were further packed in pieces of fine cloth (-b). The grave was found in the centre of *Dei fem dårlege jomfruer* ('The Five Bad/Foolish Virgins') – a triangular cairn with two memorial stones in the centre, and further one memorial stone in each of the three corners of the cairn (A-ID 34377, cf. Fig. 35). The tallest of the five memorial stones measures 4.7 m. The third grave in Flaghaug at Avaldsnes contained a Roman, Westland type cauldron of bronze (B605-a; Fig. 14: X). The cauldron is dated to the latest part of the RIA, C3 (Hauken 2005: 83). It contained at least two burnt gaming-pieces of bone (-b), and burnt bones (-d) were wrapped in a coarse woollen cloth (-c). In 2000, three very simple, burnt graves, probably from C3, were found next to the large Kjellarhaug at Avaldsnes (Sjurseike 2000). A grave find unearthed in 1905 at Storasund was dated to C3 by Slomann (1972: 35), but to the MP by Hauken (1995: 49). It contained fragments of a knife of iron (B5908-a) similar to R145, pieces of a cruciform brooch of bronze with a pin of iron (-b) similar to R243, pieces of an agraffe brooch with six buttons (-c) and pieces of a cloth of wool and burnt bones (-d). These were found in a stone chamber in a mound. According to Hauken (1995: 47), a weapon grave containing various iron artefacts (3152-b; cf. Table 3) from mound B#30 at Reheia dates from the Late RIA.

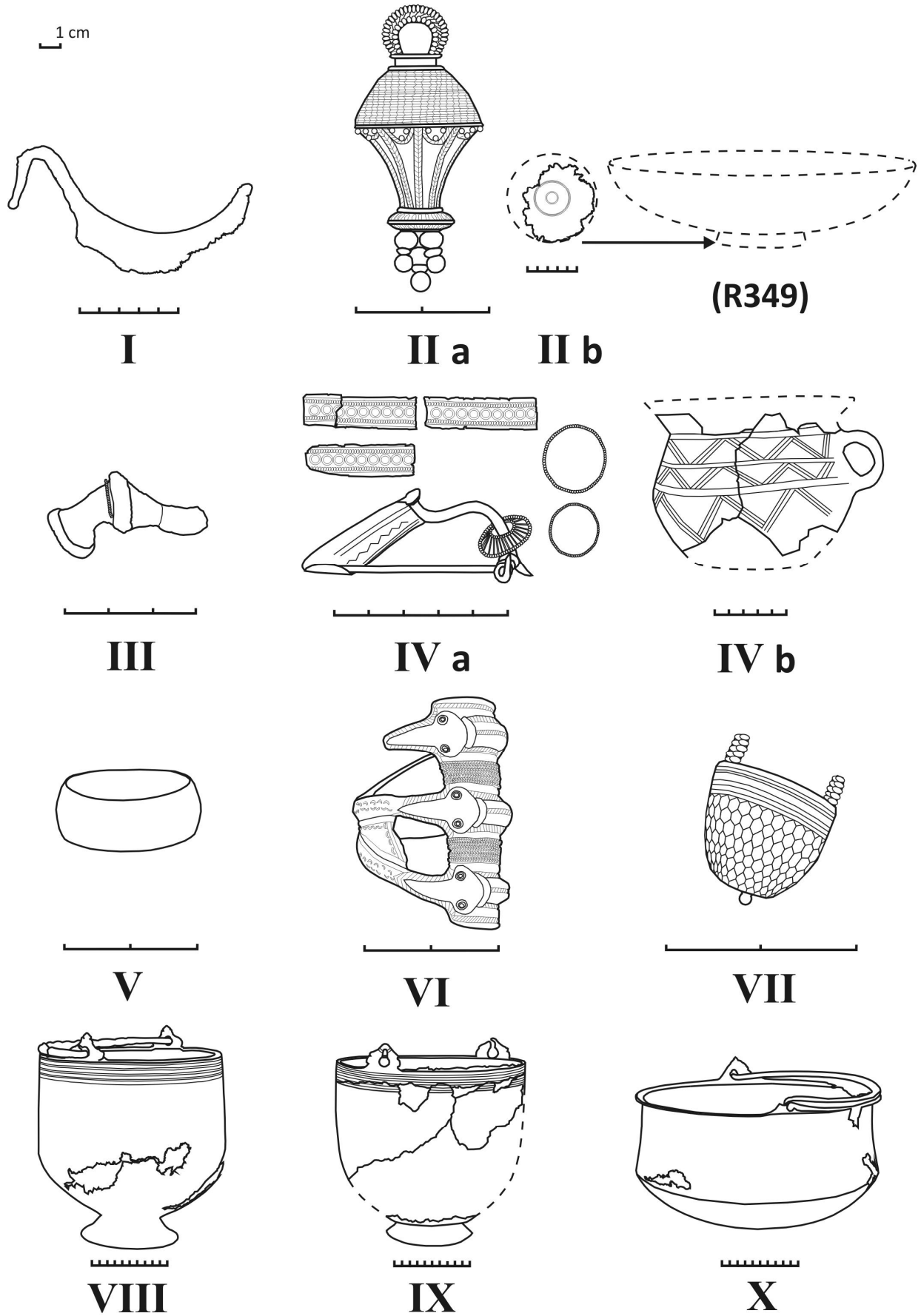


Fig. 14: Key finds from the RIA. Further references in Ch. IV

The Flaghaug grave 1 needs some special attention (cf. Fig. 15). About 614 g of gold is preserved in two status rings from the grave. A large neck or arm ring (C718) weighed 590.3 g, and a finger ring (B614) 24.1 g. While the finger ring is Scandinavian (Type 18), the origin of the neck ring (Type R301) is unknown (Andersson 1993b: 66). In addition, lost finds of gold includes a dress pin, 2" (5.2 cm) long (Type B124? Cf. B10890-Ia, Sveio), and three finger rings described as of 'common façon' (probably of the smooth Types 1-5) (Slomann 1964: 13). Furthermore, the grave included a set of status weapons. Preserved is a two-edged sword similar to the Roman gladius type in a wooden scabbard with fittings of gilded silver (B612, B610), and fragments of a shield boss of silver. A pommel-knob of silver stems from either the sword or the shield boss (Carnap-Bornheim & Illkjær 1996: 294), and a circular gold-foil (B611) with ornaments similar to those on the scabbard might stem from a button for bandoleer (Slomann 1964: 12). Written sources also mention a lost set of lancehead and spearhead (ibid.).

Roman-produced wine-drinking equipment were also an important part of the grave furnishing. These included a bronze bucket of Hemmoor type with silver ornaments (B607), a strainer of bronze (B606) and a hanging dish of bronze with three lion-shaped handles (B608). According to Slomann (1973: 524), the reconstruction of the hanging dish in Eggers' Type E86 is wrong. Likewise, Eggers' E176 which is based on Shetelig's (1912) figure 132 is wrong. Here, the previously mentioned pieces of a shield boss of silver were wrongfully combined with a ring of silver to reconstruct a drinking cup. The ring of silver does not belong to the shield boss and might in fact be the rim of a drinking cup, perhaps of glass (Slomann 1964: 13; Mydland 1989). The last part of the drinking set are fittings and a strap end of silver for a drinking horn (B609) of Scandinavian origin. In addition, the grave included c. 32 gaming pieces of black and blue glass (B615, T25), a silvered bronze mirror and a rope (B617). A balance of bronze (B616; Fig. 25: V) for a pair of scales is most often associated with the grave, but it might in fact stem from a VA secondary grave, and it is thus not considered here (Vea pers. com.).

The grave stems from a large wooden coffin in a stone chamber in Flaghaug, a mound with original dimensions c. 43 m in diameter, 5 m in height (Slomann 1964: 12). Despite uncertain find contexts, the grave is interpreted as a male inhumation grave; a *Fürstengrab* (cf. Carnap-Bornheim 2006: 111). While some of the finds suggest a dating to C2, Andersson (1993b: 66) claims the shield boss, the sword chape, the Hemmoor bucket and the finger ring might all stem from the C1-periods. Although he admits a wide C1-C2 dating is probable, he supports Lund Hansen's (1987: 438) dating to C2. In this study the dating is set to the beginning of C2, c. AD 250 (cf. Mydland 1994; Carnap-Bornheim 2006: 111). The name of the mound is also debated, and Utvik (1999: 54f) suggests that the name 'Flaghaugen' should be used. My study applies the indefinite form 'Flaghaug'. Ringstad (1986: 15) interpret the first part of the name as O.No. *Flagð*, which means 'troll'. In addition to the two above mentioned secondary graves, the mound also hid a circular chamber filled with birch bark (ibid: 56).

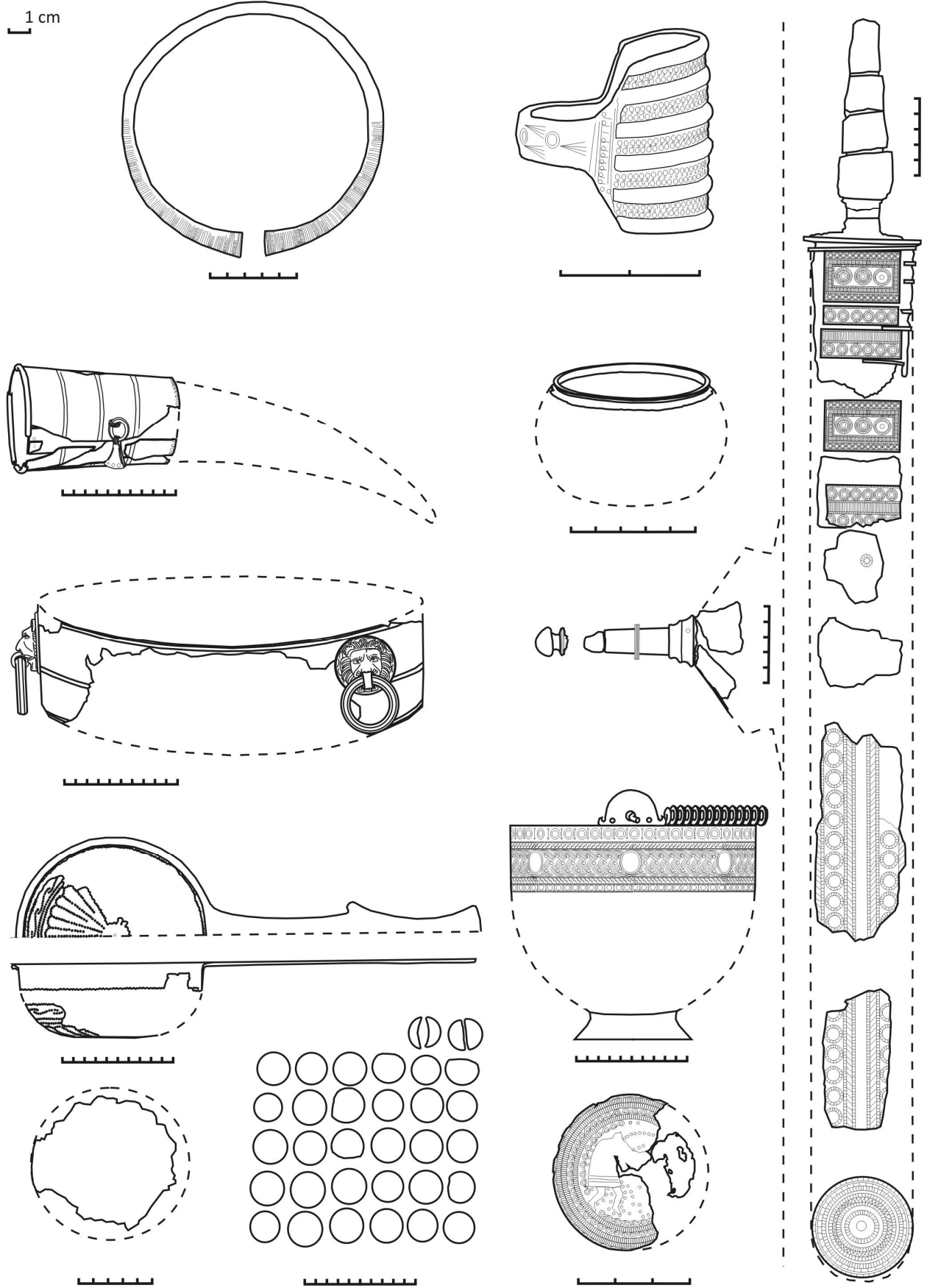


Fig. 15: The preserved grave furnishing from Flaghaug grave 1. Further references in Ch. IV

5.3. The Material of the Migration Period

As there is a large degree of continuity in the material categories from the Late RIA to the MP, the dating of the material is somewhat difficult. For instance, bucket-shaped pots, cruciform brooches and Westland cauldrons are categories often associated with the MP, but early types occur in the Late RIA (cf. Hauken 2005; Engevik 2007). Examples are the above mentioned Westland cauldron from C3 in Flaghaug grave 3, the cruciform brooch from a grave at Storasund probably from C3, and shreds of a bucket-shaped pot (S3220) from Vårå which might date to C3. The same is probably true for shreds of a bucket-shaped pot (B6276) found at Gunnarshaug in 1909. According to the finders, there had previously been a small mound at the find-spot where a lost 'pot' of bronze was found (Hauken 1995: 48). Nevertheless, the majority of finds of the above mentioned find categories, stem from the MP and is therefore examined here. Four beads of glass, three reddish brown and one green in colour (B6419-a) were found at Stange in 1911 along with pieces of burnt bones (-b). The beads and bones were found in the remains of a destroyed grave mound, and a bucket-shaped pot containing burnt bones was reported to have been found earlier at the find-spot (ibid: 49). Another bucket-shaped pot (B5176; Fig. 16: I) with burnt bones was found at Søre Våge in 1895 (ibid.).

At Austevik, shreds of three bucket-shaped pots (C16941), two beads of amber, six beads of glass (C16942) and two girdle stones (C16943, C16944) were found in 1892 in Tuhaug (A-ID 54190-1, -2), together with burnt bones. Although the original find context is unknown, Hauken thinks these are the remains of two graves with a girdle stone and a bucket-shaped pot each, and a grave with beads and a bucket-shaped pot (ibid: 48). During excavations in 1963 in a grave mound at Leite (A-ID 14728), Austevik, three graves (S8958) were identified (ibid.). Shreds of a bucket-shaped pot (-Ia; Fig. 16:II), some shreds of a clay pot of coarser quality (-Ib), the blade of a knife of iron with textile fragments (-Ic), some small pieces of iron (-Id) and some flint (-Ie) were found in connection to a 3 m long grave chamber. Furthermore, a collection of burnt bones (-III) was found just southwest of this grave chamber. A spindle whorl (-IIa) was found in a similar grave chamber from the Early IA (ibid: 51). Excavations of four other grave mounds (Alnor #1,4,6,7) and a test-pit at Leite, Austevik in 1968 revealed fragments of clay pots (S9423, S9426-S9429), all probably from within the Early IA. A girdle stone (S8951) was found somewhere in the Håvik school district around 1963 (Hernæs 1997: 128).

In 1902, several artefacts were handed in from Skeie. These had been unearthed by digging at different times in a mound at Skeisvoll, and the artefacts might stem from several graves. The finds include shreds of three bucket-shaped pots (B5767-a-c), shreds of a clay pot with handle (-d), a strap buckle of bronze (-e) and a spindle whorl (-f) (Hauken 1995: 49). Spindle whorls and hones not found in grave contexts, are further discussed in Ch. 5.7. From Vikshåland several artefacts with uncertain

find context arrived at the museum in 1911 (ibid: 50). These were two spearheads of iron (S3446-a-b) similar to R208, a hone of quartzite (-c) and shreds of a bucket-shaped pot (-d). A spearhead found in Oshaug, Kolstø (B5619-a) might also date from the Early IA (Gustafson 1897-98). Before 1831, a lancehead of iron (B916-b) and another piece of iron (-a), possibly a spearhead or a reed, were found at Avaldsnes. The first of these (Fig. 16: III) resembles Illerup lancehead Type 19 or Fett's lancehead Species I, dated to the MP (Fett 1940: 25; Illkjær 1990: 143). In 2005 a small ingot of gold (S12222; Fig. 16: IV), 1.8 g, was found at Kongshaug, Avaldsnes. It probably stemmed from soil from another part of the farm (Hafsaas & Hemdorff 2005: 13). The dating might be Late RIA or MP. Sixteen red and orange glass beads (S2000) from Vårå, probably also stem from the Early IA (Hauken 1995: 51).

There is documentation of two lost bronze vessels found in the area, which Hauken thinks might have been Westland cauldrons (ibid: 52). Both of these were described as copper vessels with ashes and burnt bones. The first of these was found in a mound called Jøneshaugen at Norheim (ibid.). The priest Kaurin of Torvastad parish wrote in the 1830s or 1840s that several 'urns and antiquities' interpreted as of foreign origin had been found at Norheim nearby Dei fem dårlege jomfruer already before that time, possibly including this lost vessel (Øvrebø 1926c). The other lost 'copper vessel' stems from B#4 (A-ID 4901-1) at Reheia, Nedre Hauge (cf. Table 3). A couple of other lost finds are also reported from the same mound, namely a clay pot, unburnt bones and pieces of a sword (Hauken 1995: 52). This probably represents an inhumation grave from the Early IA, and then most probably from the MP. Bendixen reports that a clay pot, burnt bones and pieces of bronze was found in a grave mound in a small chamber at Vårå (ibid.; cf. A-ID 34395). When he later dug in the mound, he indeed found potsherds, burnt bones, charcoal and some melted pieces of bronze he interpreted as from a cruciform brooch. As mentioned above such brooches are predominantly from the MP.

The large Salhusaugen (A-ID 14702-1) dates either from the Late MP or Early MVP (Fig. 17). Prior to Shetelig and Brøgger's excavations it measured 4 m in height and 43 m in diameter, and was built on top of another grave mound. The excavations revealed no clear traces of a burial, but the centre of the mound contained less stones than the rest of the mound as well as a concentration of charcoal. In the centre, one also found many wooden spades, mattocks and other wooden tools (B6053-a-q, B6651-b-f), presumably from the initial building phase. In addition, the excavations revealed some clay pot shreds of black colour ornamented with plain linear patterns (B6651-g), now thought to be lost, a hone of quartz (-h), a spindle whorl of soapstone (B6277), a circular stone slab (B6263), and four presumably secondary deposited Late IA arrowheads (B6651-a). A spade was ¹⁴C-dated to AD 520±90 (Ringstad 1986: 66). The sample was later recalibrated with 63% probability to AD 530-660 (Opedal 2005: 47). Another test has been carried out, but has not yet been published (BM top.ark.). Consequently, I will use the published recalibration and a rough dating to the Late MP or Early MVP.

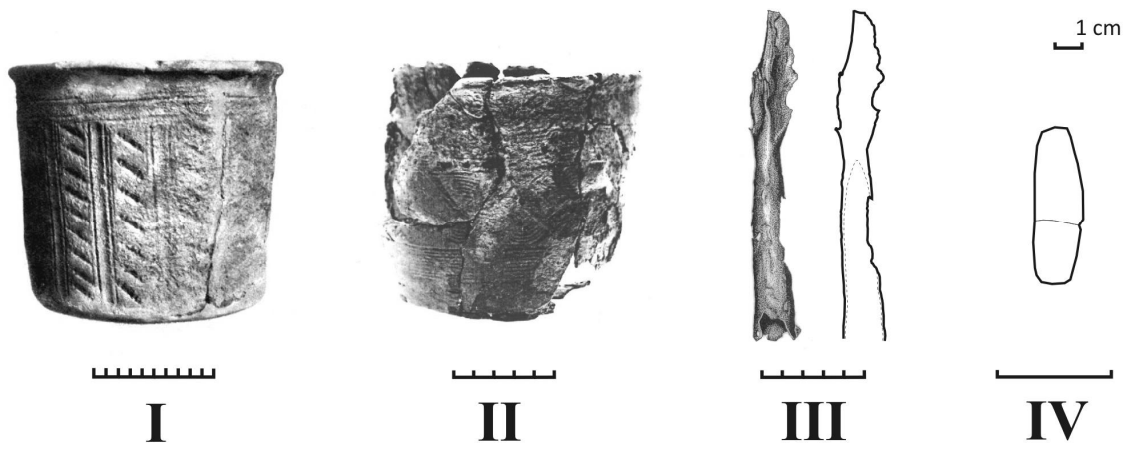


Fig. 16: Some of the preserved MP finds. Further references in Ch. IV

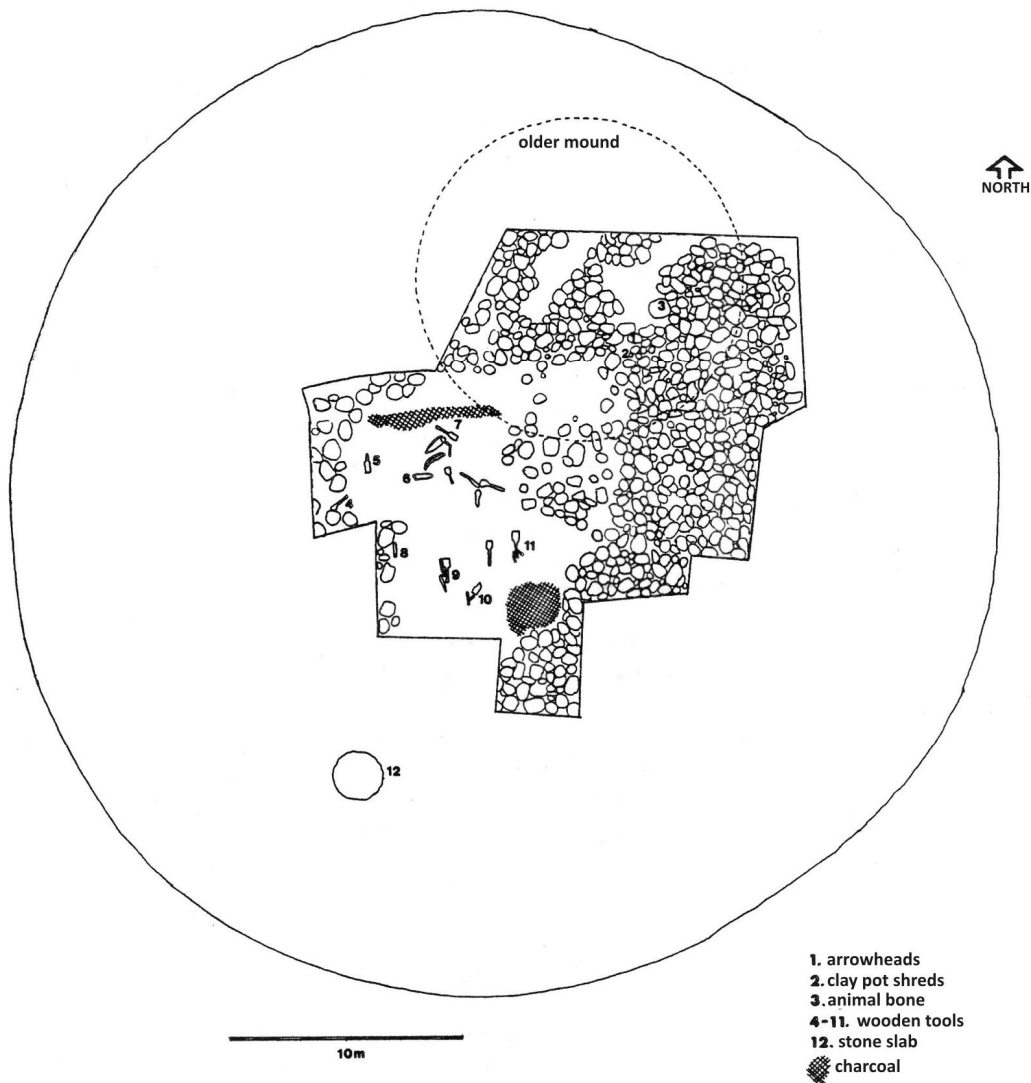


Fig. 17: Salhusaugen, Gunnarshaug (after Ringstad 1986, fig. 27a, with my translations)

Hill forts is a structure category traditionally assumed to stem mainly from the Late RIA and MP (Skre 1998: 266). The only known hill fort in the study area is Børholmen or Bårholmen at Visnes (A-ID 34355-1; Fig. 18). It is situated at a strategic point at a small island in Visnesvågen bordering the farm of Landa, by the entrance leading to Haugavågen where the road on land is at its shortest across the northern part of the island to Bøvågen (cf. Fig. 3). According to Hernæs (1997: 138ff), it might have had a function as a control post by a harbour at Visnesvågen/Landanes, and also controlling the road across the island. An undated boat house is also found nearby (Myhre 1997a, fig. 1; A-ID 44390-1). Although outside my study area, a possible hill fort just south of the area might also be mentioned, as its location resembles that of Børholmen. An article in *Haugesund Dagblad* (1952) mentions a possible hill fort at Valberg, Austrheim – a good location for controlling traffic over the isthmus Eide.

The concentration of memorial stones in the Karmsund district is large (Lindøe 1939), and many of these might probably stem from the MP. According to Knutzen (2006: 95), the practise of raising memorial stones in West Norway first occurred in the Late RIA and MP, and then later in the Late VA and Early MA. By Avaldsnes church, the so called *Jomfru Maria Synål* (literally: *Virgin Mary's Sewing Needle*; A-ID 34379#2; Fig. 19) is leaning against the church wall with its 7.25 m above the ground. Even though it previously had a runic inscription, it is thought to originally have been raised in the Early IA – that is either the Late RIA or MP. Snorri mentions that there were more than one memorial stone at Avaldsnes, and two other memorial stones are reported in later sources (Slomann 1964: 7f). The first of these is preserved only as a fragment of another very tall memorial stone (Hernæs 1999: 125; A-ID 34379#4). It has been suggested that these memorial stones originally formed a stone setting, perhaps similar to the one at Norheim (cf. Ch. 5.2) which has a dating to the Late RIA (Hernæs 1997: 212). A reconstruction with five memorial stones was proposed by Hernæs (1999, fig. 11), while Myhre (2005b: 9f; 2005c: 30f) thinks the three documented stones formed a triangular monument (cf. Fig. 26). Three similar triangular monuments are also found at Stava, West Karmøy.

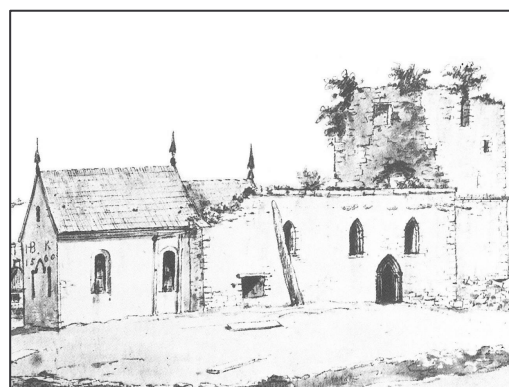
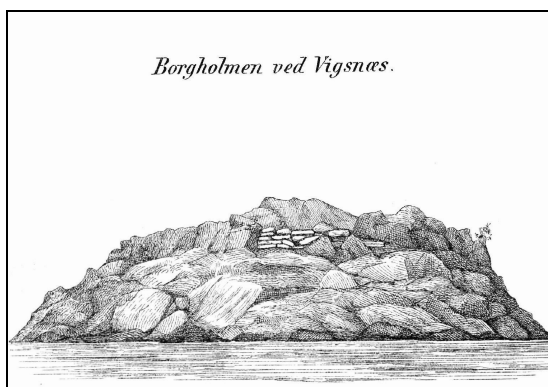


Fig. 18 (left): The hill fort of Børholmen (Ross 1887: 45)

Fig. 19 (right): Jomfru Maria Synål by the church. Detail of a picture by J.C. Dahl (Lidén 1999: 124)

An additional, lost memorial stone at Kongshaug, Avaldsnes is mentioned by Nicolaysen (1862-66: 806), and another memorial stone from Norheim, 2.5 m tall, was found in a fence during a survey of rock art (cf. A-ID 4882). Two or three memorial stones are known from Vårå (A-ID 34395-1, A-ID 54188-1, A-ID 24554). Only one of these is standing today, 2.8 m tall (Øvrebø 1926b; A-ID 34395-1). At Kolstø, a fragment of a memorial stone (A-ID 65643-1) is known. Another memorial stone, Håvard- or Håmandssteinen (A-ID 34372-1), was situated by Bø Old Church (cf. Fig. 24). According to W. F. K. Christie (1832-41: 7), the stone had originally been taller and it stood in a quadrangular monument called Håmandshaugen. Nicolaysen (1862-66: 349; 1868: 101) reports that in addition there were two mounds here, as well as another memorial stone and another quadrangular monument called Borgarhaug (cf. A-ID 44408). The last memorial stone within the study area is found at Reheia, Utvik (A-ID 34378#2; B#8). Øvrebø (1926a) highlights the fact that the stone is situated by a road which was a main road in the area before the 1870s (cf. Fig. 20). An interesting detail only mentioned by J. F. Christie (1842a: VI) in the errata of his article about Avaldsnes, is that the memorial stone originally was situated in the middle of a small quadrangular stone-setting. This is especially interesting as Bendixen in 1876 identified seven quadrangular monuments at Reheia (B#14-17,21,33-34), of which five were aligned nearby the same road as the memorial stone.

L. N. Myhre (1998: 91) suggests the quadrangular monuments at Reheia could be dated to the BA, but I instead think these stem from the Early IA. Nicolaysen (1862-66: 347) claims that a sicle of iron was found in one of the quadrangular monuments. The link between quadrangular monuments and memorial stones both at Reheia and Bø indicate that these categories might be contemporary. This is in accordance with Bendixen (1877), who dug many of the smaller circular and square mounds at Reheia, and dated these to the Early IA. Viebe-Müller (1987: 73ff) gives an overview of quadrangular monuments in Norway, Denmark, Sweden and North Germany. While such monuments occur in the BA in Sweden and North Germany, the Norwegian monuments which are dated stem from the Early IA (ibid: 73). These are of the same character as those at Reheia, and often found near small mounds. Furthermore, at Reheia, seven structures, which probably were cooking pits, were identified while farmers were digging a trench in 1951, and Petersen (1951a) gathered charcoal samples (S7826) from these. Five structures of the same type had also been observed further to the west, and some similar structures were also reported from Nedre Hauge, c. 200 m to the north of Reheia (A-ID 54152, cf. entries for S3993, S4097 and S7826). Larger fields of cooking pits are associated especially with the RIA and MP (Skre 2005: 221f). As mentioned above, Early IA graves were found in mound B#4 and B#30. All probable IA finds from Reheia are listed in Table 3, and some are also discussed in Ch. 5.6. Only one of these, with unknown find context, is undoubtedly from the Late IA. Thus, although Reheia was first used in the BA, this grave-field was probably intensively used also in the Early IA.

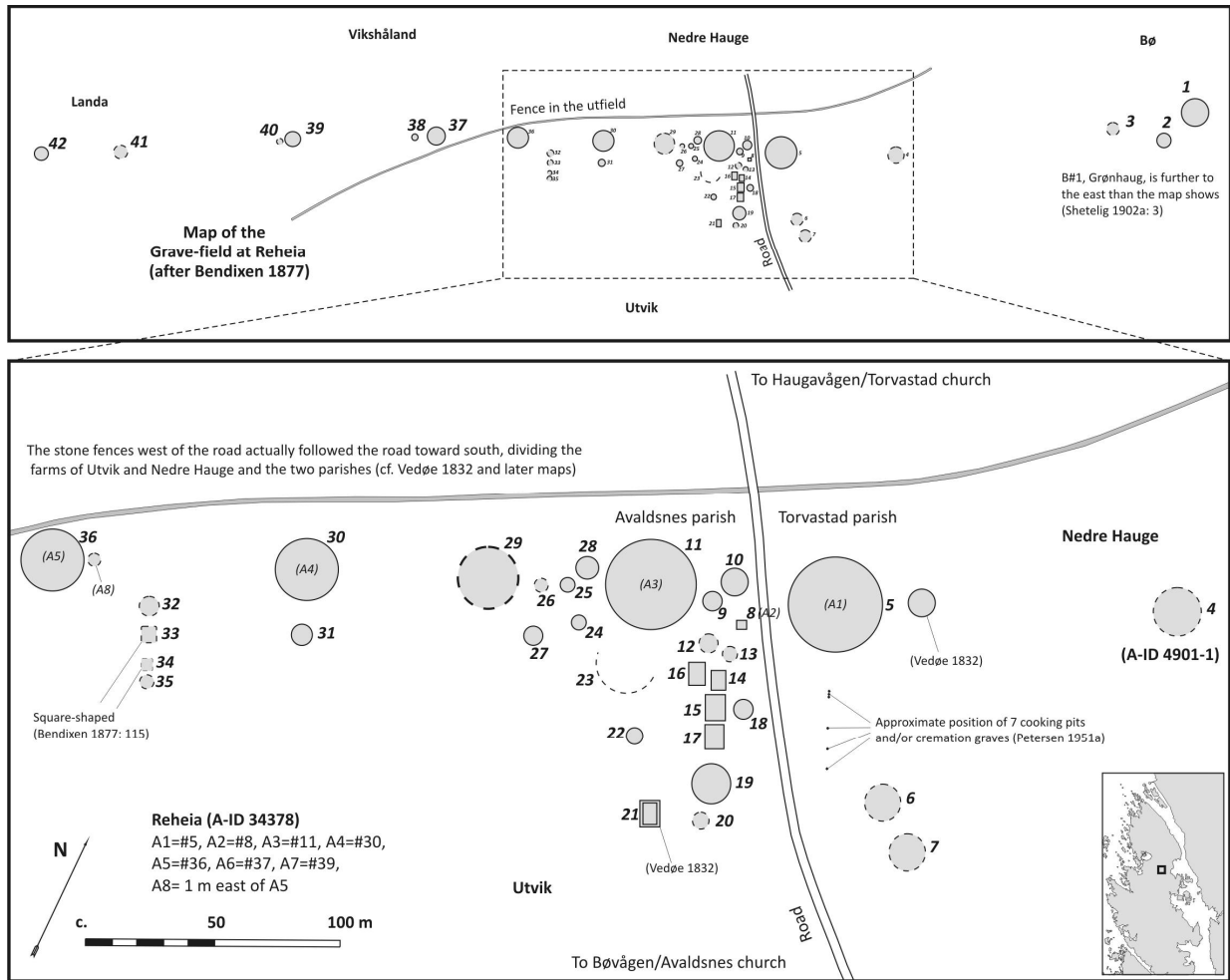


Fig. 20: Bendixen's (1877) map sketch of Reheia, compiled with information from other sources

B #	Description	Dating
4	Grave with 'copper vessel' (Westland cauldron?) with ashes and burnt bones (Hauken 1995: 52)	RIA/MP?
	Grave with clay pot, unburnt bones and pieces of a sword (ibid.)	MP?
7	Clay pot in a stone chamber (Bendixen 1877: 114)	
8	Memorial stone, c. 2.8 m high, standing in a quadrangular stone setting (Christie 1842a: VI; Øvrebø 1926a)	E-IA
9	Charcoal and burnt bones, found underneath a stone slab in the centre of the mound (Bendixen 1877: 109)	
15-17	Shreds of clay pots (B3152-a) from B#15 and 16. Layer of charcoal and burnt bones in B#15, 16 and 17 (ibid: 108f)	
?	'Sickle' (cooper's knife?) of iron found in a quadrangular monument before 1829 (Nicolaysen 1862-66: 347)	IA
18	Charcoal and shreds of clay pots of similar types as those from B#15 and 16 (Bendixen 1877: 109)	
?	Cooper's knife of iron (B1597), found in a stone chamber in a grave mound	Early RIA
?	Clay pot, sword, unburnt bones (Hauken 1995: 52) (Not the same as B#4)	IA?
?	Ring of bronze of uncertain date (S10283), found in soil stemming from the area with small mounds	
21	Layer of charcoal, with two concentrations of charcoal and burnt bones (two graves?) (Bendixen 1877: 107f, 110)	
29?	Pieces of weapons of iron (Christie 1842a: 336; Bendixen 1877). Might also stem from one of B#24-28 or #30	IA
30	Grave with burnt bones, charcoal and iron rust, and nearby a fragment possibly from a knife of iron (B3152-b: b)	
	Grave with rusty objects of iron; probably an iron vessel covered with iron weapons interpreted as a ring from horse bit, pieces of a shield boss (B3152-b: a), and a spearhead (Hauken 1995: 47; Myhre 1998: 86ff)	Late RIA
31	Layer of charcoal (Bendixen 1877: 107)	
36	Grave with burnt bones, found in a grave chamber (Myhre 1998: 82)	
-	Pieces of charcoal (S7826) stemming from 7 cooking pits (or cremation graves) (Petersen 1951a)	Late RIA/MP?
	Five more similar pits were reported to have been found further to the west	
?	Brooch of bronze (S331) reported to have been found at Reheia	VA

Table 3: List of structures at Reheia with certain or possible IA finds, listed by Bendixen-#

5.4. The Material of the Merovingian Period

There are relatively few finds in the Avaldsnes area which stem from the MVP. Four arrowheads of leaf form (B6651-a), which were found deposited in the above mentioned Salhusaugen (A-ID 14702-1), Gunnarshaug, might stem from the Late MVP or Early VA (Ringstad 1986: 68). A spearhead of iron (S1856) found secondary deposited in another large mound, Oshaug (A-ID 54196-1) at Kolstø, is of a Late IA type (Haavaldsen 1999: 459). Rønne (1995: 75f) proposes a possible dating to the Late MVP. Furthermore, according to Rønne the saucer brooch type R648, which is traditionally dated to the Early VA, might stem from the MVP (ibid: 74). Two such brooches (B4415) were found in a mound at Gunnarshaug (ibid: 75). During recent excavations at Kongshaug, Avaldsnes, a collection of nails (S12220) and a cut in the ground were found in connection with an older cairn (A-ID 115870). The two structures were interpreted as a secondary boat burial and a flat grave, and were thought to date from either the MVP or VA (Hafsaas & Hemdorff 2005: 14). An axe from Nedre Hauge is listed under the VA (Fig. 25: II), but might also date from the MVP. The general scarcity of finds in the area is contrasted by two very rich ship burials found in the same area as Salhusaugen (cf. Fig. 24). Here, a brief introduction to the material of the graves based on Opedal's (1998; 2005) studies is given.

Traditionally, the formal distinction between boat burials and ship burials is set at a length of c. 15 m. In addition, the grave has to come from a large mound (Opedal 1998: 29f). The shortest vessel yet to be defined as a ship burial was excavated by Shetelig in Grønhaug, Bø (A-ID 72135-1#1; B#1; Fig. 7). Before the excavations took place in 1902, the mound was c. 30 m in diameter and 4 m high (Shetelig 1912: 220). Inside the mound, he found a cairn surrounding a c. 15 m long ship (Fig. 22) in the centre (Opedal 2005: 163ff). The ship was probably made for rowing (ibid: 166). Shetelig identified traces of a previous digging into the centre of the mound, which he interpreted as an earlier plundering. As a result of this plundering, the preserved grave furnishing was mixed around in the cairn. According to Opedal (2005: 166ff), the preserved artefacts included a shred of green glass from a high-status beaker (B5758-a; Fig. 23: II), parts of three buckets of wood (-b-d), two rings of bronze (-e) possibly from horse gear, a wax candle and pieces of wax (-f), fragments of textiles (-g; cf. Jørgensen 1986: 257) including fragments of a tapestry with bird motif (Fig. 23: I), feathers and down from pillows or duvet (-h), ship parts of oak and an oar of pine (-i), and unburnt human bones (-k) probably from a man. In her examination of the ship burials, Opedal gained ¹⁴C-datings of birch bark from the building phase of the Grønhaug burial. This dating gave a time interval AD 880-970, and Opedal (2005: 171f) argued for a dating to the first half or middle of the 10th century AD. Recently, a dendrochronological analysis of wood from the ship, carried out by N. Bonde, gave a dating to c. AD 720 (Stylegar 2009). Although the dating differs much from Opedal's, it is not that unexpected. As it is a small rowing ship, several researchers have previously suggested a pre-VA, 8th century dating (e.g. Myhre 1995: 85).

The earliest information of the other local ship mound, Storhaug (A-ID 23742-1) at Gunnarshaug, stems from W. F. K. Christie (1832-41: 5) and Nicolaysen (1862-66: 348). Although it was damaged by local farmers, Storhaug ('large mound') was described as one of the country's largest mounds. The height of the mound was probably 5-6 m, and the diameter between 40-50 m (cf. Opedal 1998: 40). Excavations led by the teacher Døsselund and curator Lorange, in 1886-87, revealed an unburnt ship burial with a large stone chamber and thick layers of charcoal. The preserved grave furnishing included 20 circular gaming-pieces of red and yellow amber (B4438-a; Fig. 23: V), and 17 cone shaped gaming-pieces of blue and yellow glass (-b-d; Fig. 23: VI). Other artefacts included an egg-shaped sinker (-e) and parts of a flat, wax piece ornamented with two dotted lines (-f). Among the preserved personal equipment was an oval arm ring of gold (B4468-a; Fig. 23: III), 43 g, and at least four beads of glass of different shape, colour and ornaments (-b-d; Fig. 23: IV). Several other unnumbered artefacts are also mentioned in Lorange's report. This includes a weapon set consisting of a single-edged sword, a double-edged sword, a spear- or lancehead, pieces of a quiver perhaps for 24 arrows, a knife and a possible spur (ibid: 49ff). In addition, the grave included fragments of an iron cauldron, a wooden box, blacksmith and grinding tools, and possibly a lost sledge, lost horse bones, a lost ring of bronze, lost tools and boat parts (ibid: 58ff). The ship was a large rowing ship about 19-27 m long, and fragments of a second boat was also found (ibid: 45f). Two boat parts have later been found; an oar of pine (B5941) and a rib of oak (S10015-a). Opedal's (2005: 64f) ¹⁴C-dating of birch bark from the burial gave the time interval of AD 675-800, with the largest probability for AD 680-730/750. Instead, N. Bonde's dendrochronological analyses show a dating to the later part of the 8th century, c. AD 780.

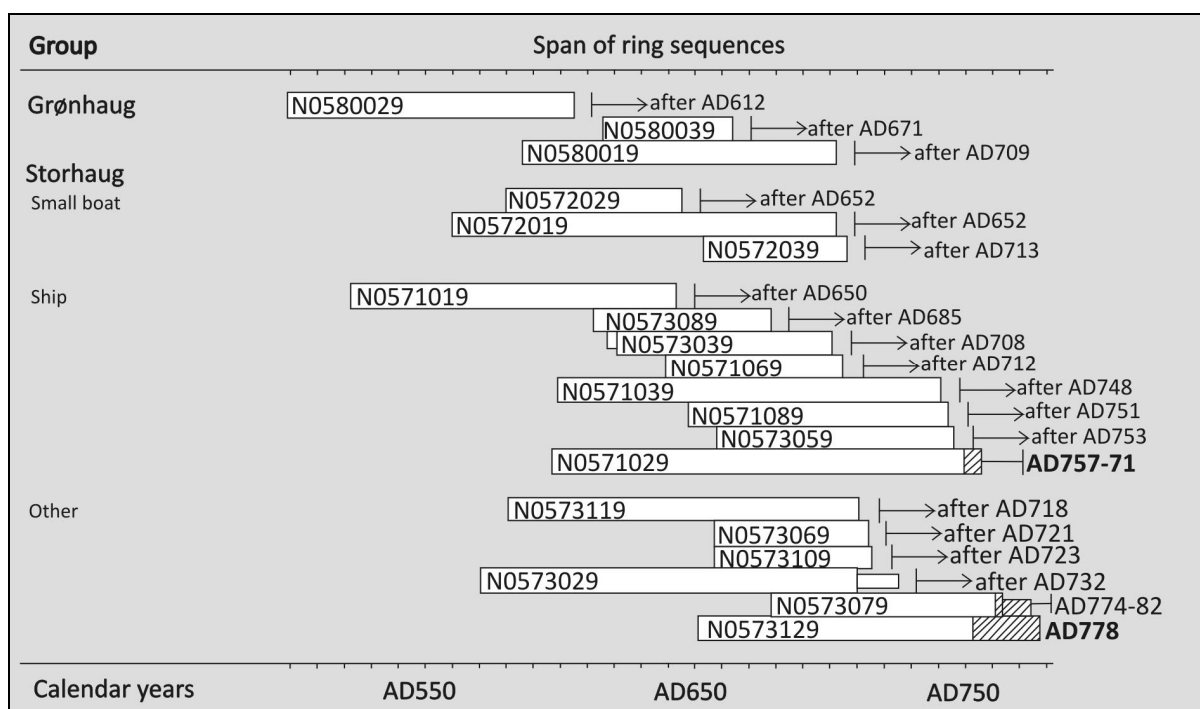


Fig. 21: N. Bonde's dendrochronological analysis of the Karmøy ships (redrawn after Stylegar 2009)

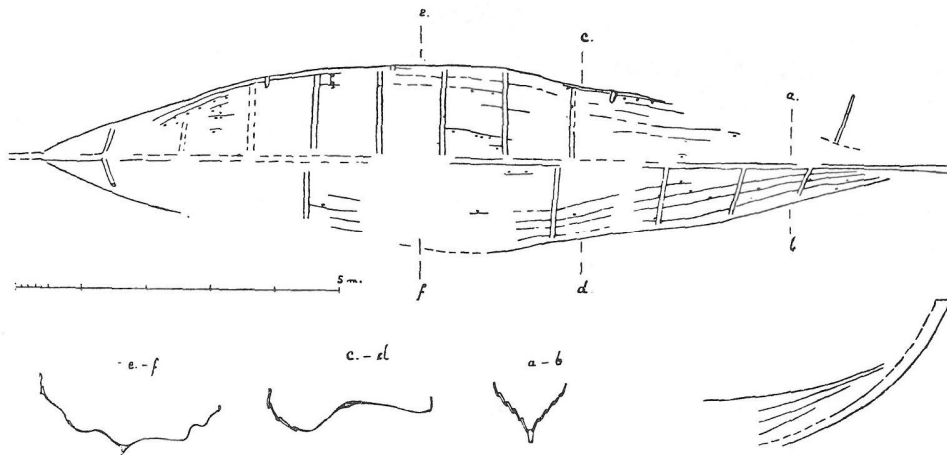


Fig. 22: Shetelig's drawing of the Grønhaug ship (Shetelig 1902a, fig. 4)

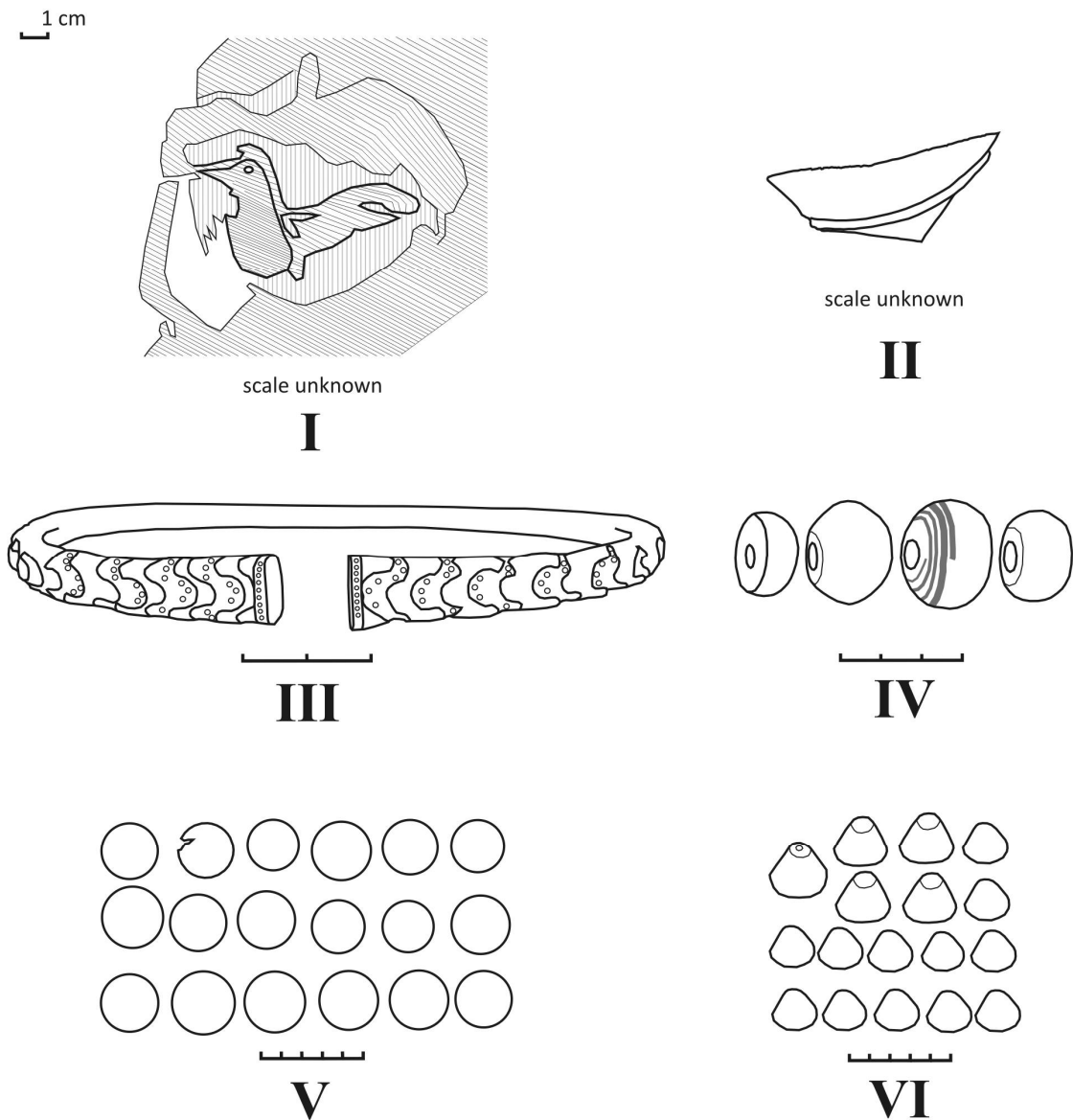


Fig. 23: Selected furnishing from Grønhaug (I-II) and Storhaug (III-VI). Further references in Ch. IV

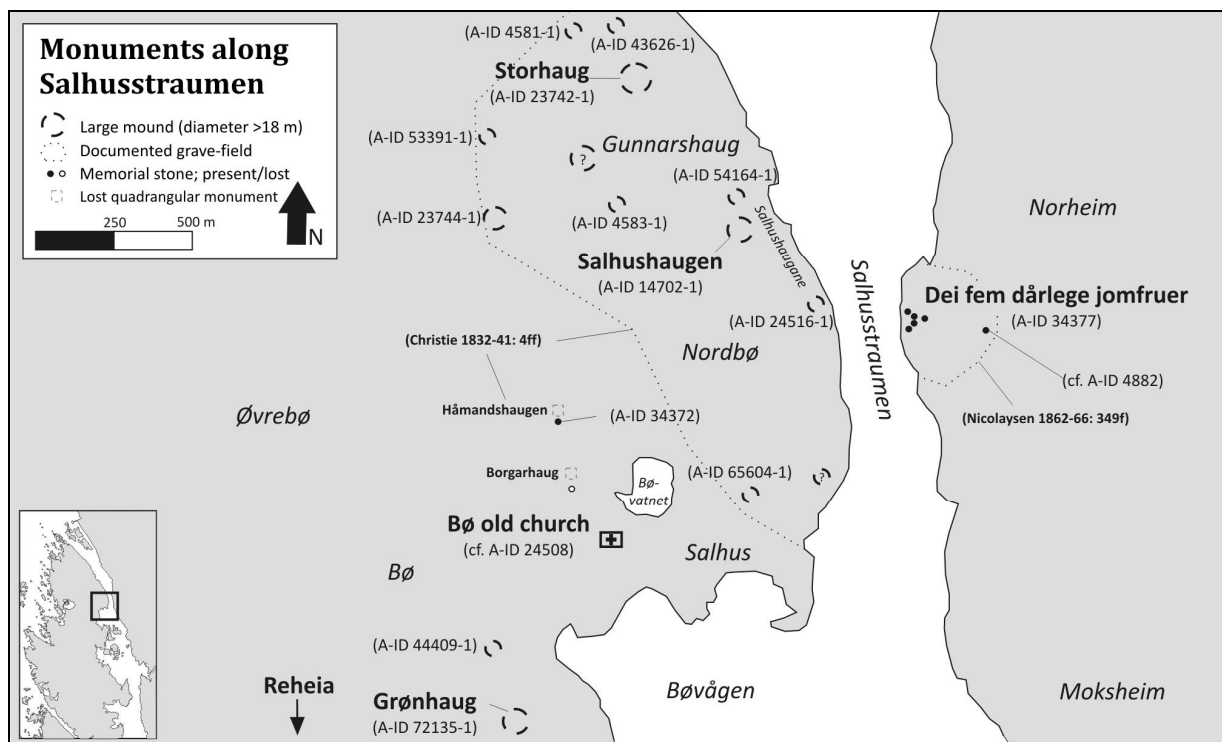


Fig. 24: Sketch of monuments along Salhusstraumen

Farm	Name	Diameter / height	Estimate in metres	Dating
Gunnarshaug	Gunnarshaug	114 skritt / 4-8 alen	29 m / 2.5-5.0 m	
	Salhusaugen (A-ID 14702-1)	122 skritt / 6,5 alen	31 m / 4.1 m (?) [43 m / 4.0 m]	MP/MVP
	Cairn (A-ID 4583-1)	89 skritt / 6 alen	23 m / 3.8 m	
	Mound (A-ID 54164-1)	99 skritt, 'low'	25 m, 'low' [21.5 m / 1.65 m]	Late PRIA
	Storhaug (A-ID 23742-1)	182 skritt / 14 alen	46 m / 8.8 m [40-50 m / 5-6 m]	MVP
	Pigghaug (A-ID 43626-1)	70 skritt	18 m	
	(H)arhaug/Ovhaug (A-ID 4581-1)	92 skritt / 6 alen	23 m / 3.8 m [20 m / 2 m]	
	Kubbhaug (A-ID 53391-1)	75 skritt / 3 alen	19 m / 1.9 m [17 m / 2.7 m]	BA
Nordbø	Cairn	100 skritt	25 m	
	Mound (A-ID 24516)		[20 m / 0.2-0.5 m]	
Bø	Knaghaug (A-ID 44409-1)	102 skritt / 5 alen	26 m / 3.1 m [19 m / 2.5 m]	BA; Early RIA
	Askhusaugen (A-ID 65604-1?)	84 skritt / 5-6 alen	21 m / 3.1-3.8 m	
	Grønhaug (A-ID 72135-1)		[30 m / 4.0 m]	MVP

The conversion of *skritt* (paces) to metres is based on Opedal's (2005: 47) observation that W. F. K. Christie measured Flaghaug, 43 m in diameter, to 170 skritt. This gives a skritt value of c. 0.2529 m and a diameter of c. 46 m for Storhaug. The accuracy of this estimate is uncertain. As far as I can see, it was in fact his nephew J. K. Christie (1842a: 41) who measured Flaghaug to 170 skritt. Nevertheless, W. F. K. Christie probably edited the article and validated his measurements. The value of an *alen* is set to the national alen standard of 1824; 0.6275 m. Possible correlations with A-IDs are suggested. More recent or accurate measurements given in [].

Table 4: Large mounds by Salhusstraumen, according to Christie (1832-41: 4ff) and later surveys

5.5. The Material of the Viking Age

A VA brooch of bronze (S331; Fig. 25: III) was reported as being found at Reheia, and it probably stems from Utvik. A bit further to the north, at Nedre Hauge, several artefacts were found in 1917 during work in the area. The finds include a sword (S3993-a) and an axe (-b) from the VA, which were found together and which were probably covered by a cairn. Another axe (S4097; Fig. 25: I) from the Late MVP or Early VA (cf. Jørgensen 1999: 135) was found at the same farm. At Øvrebø, a vessel of soapstone (S5708) was found in the early 1930s, and fragments of three vessels of soapstone (S9986-S9988) were found in the soil at Moksheim. Pieces of another vessel of soapstone (B4361) were found in a mound at Vårå in 1885, and in 1909 a VA axe (S3219-a) of D-type, probably from the first half of the 9th century, and the tang of a knife (-b) were found in the same mound (Skadberg 1950: 246). At the same farm, a vessel of soapstone (3221-a) with an iron handle (-d), pieces of a spearhead of iron (-b), fragments of a horse bit (-c) and clench nails (-e) probably from a boat, were found in 1909 in a small mound. An axe (B6211) similar to R555 was found in the soil in 1909 at Kolstø.

In 1922 a probable boat burial was found at Løehaugen (A-ID 24530-1), Skeie. The finds included a shield boss of iron (S4264-a) similar to R562, a rod of iron (-c), a vessel of soapstone similar to R729, a small piece of flint (-e), c. 10 clench nails of iron with fragments of wood (-b), and unburnt bones. The bones were found in a grave chamber, 3.5 m long, south of the artefacts, and the finds altogether possibly represent three graves. A mound at Gunnarshaug, 14 m in diameter and 0.5-0.75 m in height (A-ID 54164-1), revealed a grave find probably from the VA. The finds include fragmented objects of iron (B6056-a); some probably weapons, others tools like a rasp similar to R420, scissors, an oblong iron ring and iron nails. Additional finds included a conical weight of led (-b), pieces of a thick plate of led (-c), a spindle whorl of soapstone (-d), an oblong piece of clay (-e), three hones of shale (-f-h), a piece of soapstone (-i) and burnt animal bone (-k). The finds might stem from two or more graves.

A long forgotten find, which I came across during my research, deserves some attention. In 1897, two keys of bronze (B5617, B5618; Fig. 25: Va-b), some iron fragments (B5619-b) which Gustafson interpreted as a hinge, as well as a presumable Early IA spearhead (-a; cf. Ch. 5.3), were found in 'Orhaug' at Kolstø. This find-spot was probably identical to the large Oshaug (A-ID 54196-1), the only known grave mound at Kolstø. The find was documented in the local newspaper, *Haugesunderen* (1897), and in the letter-correspondence between curator Gustafson (1897-98) and the local teacher J. Christie. When Shetelig wrote the artefact entries in the museum catalogue a few years later, he did not know about this context information. As I managed to correlate the information from the newspaper and Gustafson's letters with B5617-B5619, the find context of these artefacts is re-established. While Gustafson set the spearhead to the Early IA (*ibid.*), Petersen (1951b: 476) dates

keys similar to B5618 to the early 9th century. It is not known which of these contexts the ‘hinge’ belongs to, but a connection with the keys seems probable. A recent find interpreted as a plundered VA grave, was excavated in 2005-06 at Kongshaug, Avaldsnes (Hafsaas 2007: 10f). The finds include ten glass beads of different shape and colour and a SA axe (all S12222; Fig. 25: II) interpreted as a VA magical amulet. Hafsaas thinks a lost ‘crude sword’ found in the early 19th century, might have been a weaver’s baton found during the plundering of the grave. In addition, two spiral-shaped finger rings of bronze, 2 cm in diameter (B 5776), were found in a mound at Avaldsnes c. 1902. As mentioned in Ch. 5.2, a balance of bronze (B616; Fig. 25: IV) from Flaghaug, Avaldsnes might stem from a VA grave. There is some evidence of a reuse of IA monuments in the early conversion process. According to W. F. K. Christie, until the middle of the 18th century, a stone cross was standing on top of Krosshaug (A-ID 14708), a grave mound at Storasund (Fyllingsnes 2000b: 83). Along the Norwegian coast, the practise of raising stone crosses is traditionally dated to the 10th century (Solberg 2000: 326f). A similar date is probably also true for the Scandinavian runic stones with a Christian content (Knutzen 2006: 102). Parts of a lost runic inscription on Jomfru Maria Synål, Avaldsnes was documented in the 17th century (Hernæs 1997: 133). According to M. Olsen it said ‘Mikial Mariu nistr’, ‘*Michael, second after Mary*’ (sketch above after *ibid.*). The two MA churches in the study area were situated at Avaldsnes and Bø, and both were eventually built of stone (Fyllingsnes 2000b: 98ff). The Church of St. Olav at Avaldsnes was a royal collegiate chapel, while Bø old church was probably a small private manorial church.

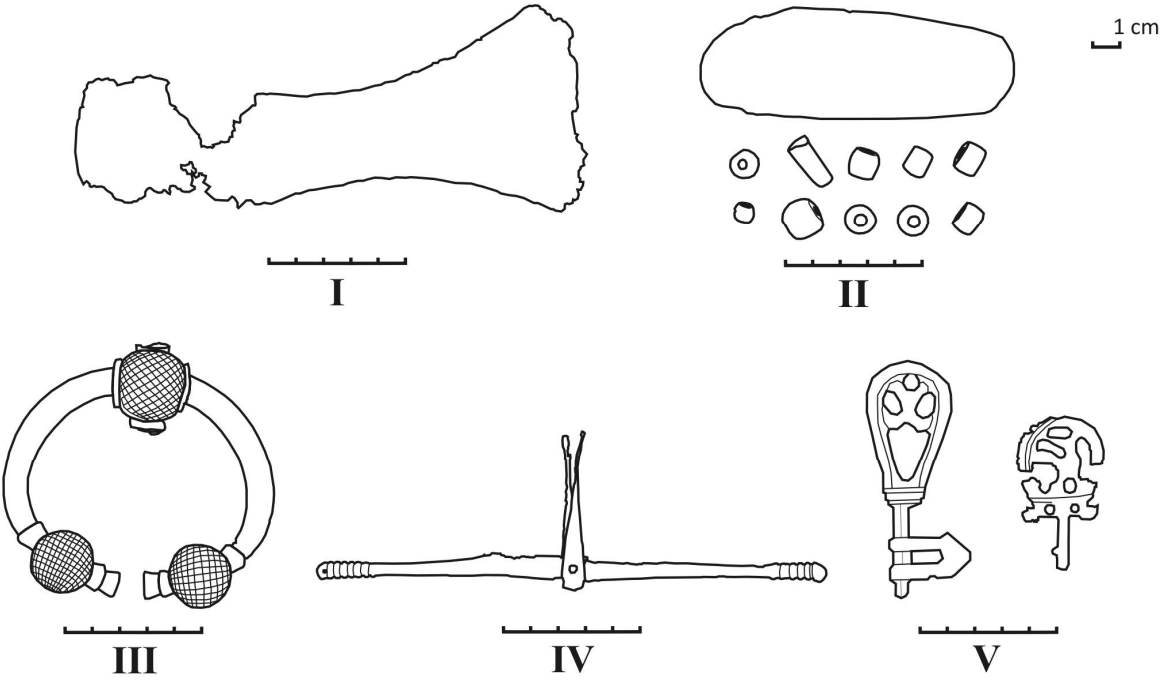


Fig. 25: A selection of the VA finds. I, II and IV are uncertainly dated. Further references in Ch. IV

5.6. Iron Age Material of Uncertain Dating

Several preserved or lost finds and structures can not be dated more precisely than to the IA. The majority of the undated IA graves stem from the northern part of the Avaldsnes area. At Øvrebø, a spearhead of iron (B4870-a) and a spindle whorl of soapstone (-b), listed with unknown dating, were found in 1892, supposedly in the same mound, although the find information is uncertain (cf. Table 5). In 1836 at the same farm, a grave chamber containing a now lost sword of iron of unknown dating was found in a cairn (Nicolaysen 1868: 101). A third undated find from Øvrebø stems from Pighaug (A-ID 4880-1). Here, two pieces of a small ring of bronze (S3681) were found along with burnt bones, perhaps in a grave chamber. According to Bendixen (1877: 112), a sword of iron was found in a cairn by a school (A-ID 4919-1) at Håland. At (Nedre?) Hauge, a grave chamber contained ash, bones, and fragments of a spearhead and a sword of iron (Christie 1832-41: 3). According to W. F. K. Christie, a cairn nearby Haugavågen contained fragments of weapons of iron (ibid.). He further reports that an axe of iron and a spearhead of iron were found at Bø (Øvrebø?), in a grave mound west of Storhaug in the 1820s (ibid: 5). At Storasund, an unburnt BA burial was found in the large mound, Resahaugen, measuring 20 m in diameter and 2.5 in height. In addition, the catalogue entry mentions a sickle of iron and burnt bones (B5765-d), probably from a secondary IA grave. According to Ringstad (1986: 68) these finds are lost. Nicolaysen (1862-66: 346) lists a sword of iron and a possible horse bit from Kongsheia as B817, but the number is probably incorrect and these might be lost. At Avaldsnes, a circular grave chamber containing burnt bones was found in the 1920s (Haugesunds_Avis 1927?), and textile fragments and bones possibly from flat graves were found in the 1970s (Hemdorff 1995: 95). Beads without known context include a blue, cylinder-shaped glass bead (B2771) from Visnes, a bead of amber (B5955) from Storasund and a mosaic bead (B4955) found somewhere at Karmøy.

Although most of the grave mounds in the study area remain undated and some of these stem from the BA, the majority of these probably date from the IA. The three largest grave-fields in the area are Kongsheia, Reheia and Salhusaugane. Some of the finds from Reheia which are dated generally to the IA should be mentioned here (references in Table 3). These include a lost sickle of iron found in a quadrangular monument, a ring of bronze of uncertain date (S10283), found in soil from the area with the largest collection of small mounds at Reheia, lost pieces of weapons of iron perhaps from B#29, and also a lost find including a clay pot, sword and unburnt bones. In addition, several lost finds of graves with either burnt bones, ash and clay pot shreds are reported found at Reheia. These might stem from the Early IA, but the dating of such graves is very uncertain as simple cremation burials are also known from the Late BA and throughout the IA. Several other graves of similar character are reported from the area (e.g. in Christie 1832-41), but as such graves with no certain context information are hard to make use of in the analysis, these are not considered here. There is a

concentration of mounds at Avaldsnes (A-ID 115870; Fig. 26). Among these, Kjellarhaug ('cellar mound') should be mentioned, as it was probably a quite large mound (Ringstad 1986: 56). Today, it measures 25-30 m in diameter and c. 2 m in height. As the name suggests, it was badly damaged by a secondary use as a potato cellar. A small grave-field at Leite, Austevik, consisted of 13 small grave mounds of which several had Early IA graves (A-ID 14728). Christie (1832-41: 4ff) documented many grave mounds and cairns at Storasund, Gunnarshaug, Nordbø and Bø (cf. Fig. 24; Table 4). The largest concentration was at Gunnarshaug, with 14 mounds (ibid: 5). Though the term 'Salhusaugane' is often used for only a few of these mounds, it is here used as a collective term for this grave-field. At the other side of Salhusstraumen, there was a grave-field at Norheim (Øvrebø 1926c).

Although few structures or finds are preserved from Kongsheia, the grave-field was probably in use in both the BA and IA – like Reheia and Salhusaugane. As mentioned above, a sword and a horse bit of iron were reported found before 1841. Christie (1842a: 325f) reports that even though the grave-field was already badly damaged in the early 1840s, there were still some larger circular and elliptic mounds, as well as some small and quadrangular mounds. One of the mounds, Butrahaugen, was probably c. 22 m in diameter (Ringstad 1986: 56). According to Bendixen (1877: 111), there were 56 mounds at Kongsheia, most of which were quite small. Shetelig's (1902b) sketch of the eastern part of Kongsheia show one large and many small mounds or cairns (Fig. 6). According to Gjessing (1915), most of the small cairns at Våge measured c. 3-5 m in diameter. Bendixen (1877: 111) mentions a lost BA sword of bronze and ring of gold from a grave chamber in one of the larger cairns. Most of the structures at Kongsheia were removed by local farmers, and no finds were reported from these (Vaage 1908-1915). When a bronze ring of Vendel type from the latest part of the Late BA eventually was found in a cairn of 7 m in diameter (Myhre 1998: 215), Gjessing was sent to examine the grave-field. The only other artefact found in this cairn was a hone of quartzite (S3780) from the Early IA. Gjessing (1915) also examined a couple of the smaller cairns, and although he found some charcoal at the bottom of the cairns, he interpreted many of these as clearance cairns. Nevertheless, L. N. Myhre (1998: 75) suggests some of the small mounds probably were Early IA grave mounds.

Farm	Description	Dating	Interpretation
Øvrebø	Spearhead of iron (B4870-a) and a spindle whorl of soapstone (-b). Found in a cairn	E-IA?	Weapon grave
Øvrebø	Lost sword of iron. Found in a cairn	IA	Weapon grave
Øvrebø?	Lost axe and spear of iron. Found in a mound	L-IA?	Weapon grave
Nedre (?) Hauge	Lost ash, bones, fragments of spearhead and sword of iron. Found in a grave chamber	IA	Weapon grave
Nedre (?) Hauge	Lost fragments of weapons of iron. Found in a cairn	IA	Weapon grave
Kongsheia	Lost (?) sword of iron and a horse bit of iron (B817?)	L-IA?	Weapon grave
Håland	Lost sword of iron. Found in a cairn	IA	Weapon grave

Table 5: Lost and/or uncertainly dated weapon graves not mentioned in Table 3 (Reheia)

5.7. Traces of Iron Age Settlement at Avaldsnes and in the Area

The central part of Avaldsnes (A-ID 115870) covers roughly the area depicted in Fig. 26. The first delimitation of the area suitable for further examinations, was done after a phosphate survey in 1988 (Hemdorff 1995: 96). In 1992-1994 and 2005-2006, a total of 2400 m² were excavated at Avaldsnes (ibid: 93ff; Hafsaas & Hemdorff 2005; Hafsaas 2005; 2006; 2007; cf. A-ID 115870). The areas with identified traces of settlement are indicated in the figure. Dates were obtained by the excavators through ¹⁴C-dating of fire places, cooking pits and post holes, identified similarities between layers in bordering trenches and through typological dating of finds. The traces of settlement show a possible successive chronological shift in the settlement pattern from the settlement in the southwest to settlement further northeast. Thus, the PRIA settlement seems to be concentrated in the area south of Kongshaug, the L-RIA and MP settlement between Kongshaug and Kjellarhaug, overlapping with the L-IA settlement between the church in the north and the area around Kjellarhaug in the south.

The harbour areas of Gloppe, Bukkøy and Fårøy have been surveyed several times between 1978 and 2006 (Bang-Andersen 1979: 31ff; Elvestad & Opedal 2001; Hafsaas 2005: 18ff; 2006). Except for a boat house dated to c. AD 300 (Grimm 2006: 435), little IA material was found. Elvestad and Opedal's (2001) investigations also included parts of Bø and Salhus, but no traces of settlement or harbour structures from the IA were found here. As mentioned above, structures which were probably cooking pits were found at Nedre Hauge (cf. S3993, S4097 and S7826). In addition, some settlement traces were excavated at Storasund and Gunnarshaug (A-ID 115618-1; A-ID 120517-1). There are few preserved IA farm structures in the study area, except for the remains of a few small IA houses, several fields and clearance cairns (A-ID 24557, A-ID 54192-54193) from Helgaberg in the south.

As settlement studies are carried out solely at Avaldsnes, it is hard to tell the extent of IA settlement. Snorri claims the part of Karmøy facing the ocean was scarcely populated (cf. Ch. 5.8). A traditional way of tracing IA settlement is through the distribution of grave monuments. Except for Visnes and Fiskå, monuments are known from every farm in the area. As mentioned in Ch. 5.6, the majority of burial monuments are found in the northeast. Another way of identifying IA settlement might be to examine the distribution of stray finds of domestic artefact categories probably used at the farms. Fig. 27 shows the distribution of stray finds of spindle whorls, hones, griddles and grinding-stones. A total of 31 artefacts stem from 17 of the 31 farms. As with the burial monuments, the majority of such domestic stray finds stem from the northern part of the area. Although the wide distribution of burial monuments and domestic stray finds suggest IA settlement in the whole area, the find concentrations indicate that settlement was most intensive in the northern part facing Karmsund. Løken (2001: 9f) suggests the Karmsund area might have had a population of about 1900 at AD 200.

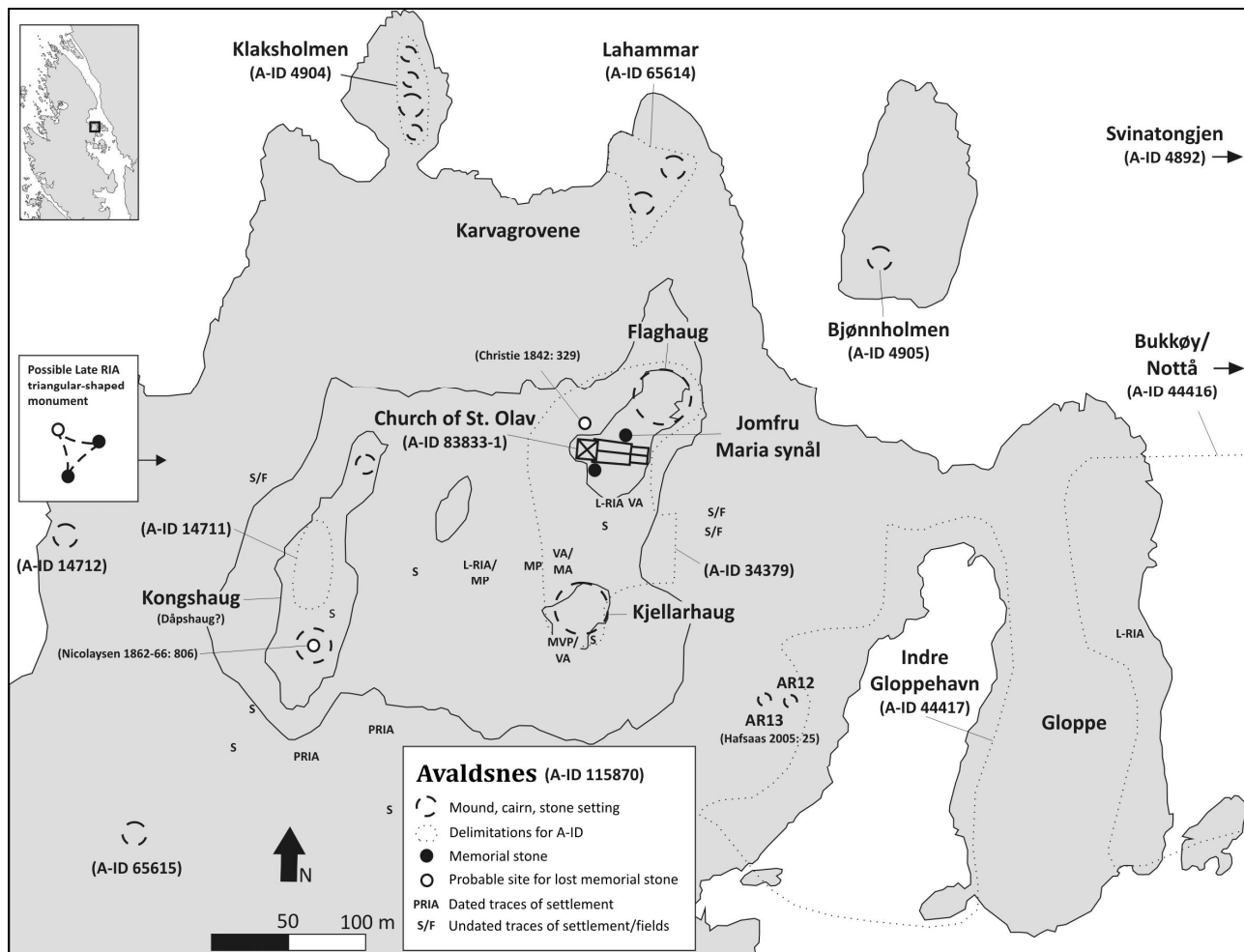
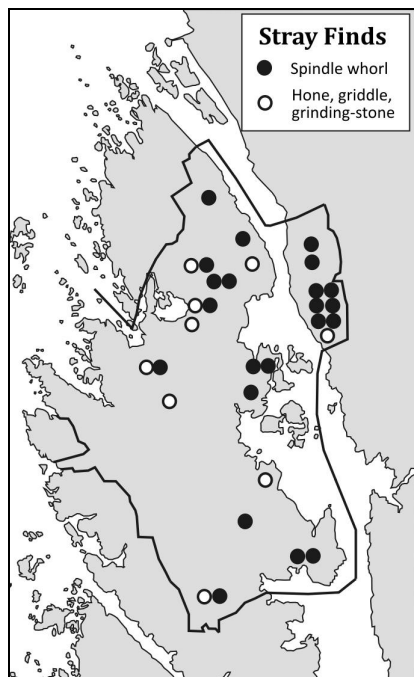


Fig. 26: Sketch of monuments and settlement traces at Avaldsnes. Details for Gloppe omitted



Farm	●	○	References
Norheim	2		S6806, S7288
Moksheim	6	1	S3407, S3945b-d, S6561, S7287, S7762
Storasund	1		cf. A-ID 43623
Gunnarshaug	1		S6083
Nordbø		1	cf. AmS top.ark.
Hauge, Nedre	1	1	S4098, S10285
Avaldsnes	2		S5759, S6085
Hauge	1	1	S3680, B5943
Øvrebø	2		S6283, S7148
Vikshåland		1	S4099
Hindaråker	1	1	S11606, S12299
Skeie		1	S7272
Velle, Nordre	1		S6351
Kolstø		1	cf. A-ID 54196
Meland	1		S7344
Austevik	2		S7344, S7409
Vårå	1	1	S5297, S9004

Fig. 27 (left): Distribution of stray finds of some domestic artefact categories

Table 6 (right): List of the stray finds in Fig. 27

5.8. Historical Sources and Place Names

Especially the later parts of the IA could be said to be proto-historic. Several historical sources from the MA describe events from the Avaldsnes area in the IA, and other sources from the MA and later describe pre-modern conditions which might shed light on IA societies in the area. When dealing with historical sources, textual criticism is always necessary. If 12th or 13th century sources portray events which are thought to have happened within the Late IA several hundred years earlier, these are necessarily problematic to use directly. The MA sagas are by nature reconstructions and interpretations of earlier oral and textual traditions largely influenced by the contemporary historical context of the MA. Nevertheless, the information given in such sources might have a core of truth or might say something about life in the IA. Thus, although there is no one-to-one association between the textual sources and events said to happen at least 200 years earlier, information from such sources might work as an inspiration for establishing possible contexts in the analyses in Chs. 6 and 7.

The oldest, and most problematic, relevant historical source is Jordanes' *Getica*, which mention a 'tribe' called 'Eunixi' (Get: v. 24), that might possibly be associated with Karmøy (Hedeager 2004: 104). The legendary sagas (No. *fornaldersoger*) has been much criticised for having little historical validity (Hernæs 1997: 146). These depict events prior to the VA, and include many contradictions, exaggerations and obvious reconstructions. According to e.g. the *Saga of Halv*, about the legendary west Norwegian king Halv, the farm name Avaldsnes stem from his ancestor, king Augvald (Ha: v. 2). Early attempts of reconstructing the genealogy of these legendary kings from saga material, were done by Torfæus (1711/2008) and Munch (1852), and later attempts were carried out by Hernæs (1997; 1999), Opedal (1998; 2005) and Veia (1999; 2004). A sketch of the reconstructed genealogy after Veia and Opedal is given in Table 13. The mythical link to the gods probably played an important role to the elite of the area (Opedal 2005: 90ff). According to Oddr Snorrason, Augvald fought many battles and fell fighting against king Varinn from Skoruströnd (OTr: 93). Another local legend instead suggests that Augvald was slain by king Ferking of Ferkingstad, West Karmøy. At Stava by Ferkingstad, two memorial stones, Skjoldmøyane (literally: *The Shield Maidens*), were standing inside triangular monuments. These have been associated with Augvald's fighting daughters who died in the battle.

It is interesting to note that in the local tradition at Karmøy, memorial stones in triangular stone settings are associated with female maidens (cf. Hernæs 1997: 114). These include Skjoldmøyane at Stava and Dei fem dårlege jomfruer at Norheim, as well as the triangular monument which Jomfru Maria Synål at Avaldsnes was possibly a part of. In old local legends, both Dei fem dårlege jomfruer and Jomfru Maria Synål are associated with the supernatural. As mentioned in Ch. 4.3, triangular monuments might be linked to Yggdrasil symbolism. This is interesting, as one skaldic poem links

Karmøy to Yggdrasil. According to *Grímnismál* (Grm: v. 29), each day, the god Thor wades over the rivers of Kǫrmt, Qrmt and the two Kjerlaugar to reach the thing site of the gods at Yggdrasil. As mentioned previously, *Kǫrmt* means Karmøy (cf. Olsen 1938: 178ff). Thus, a possible interpretation is that one of the ‘rivers’ Thor wades to get to Yggdrasil, is Karmsund. Interestingly, there might have been triangular monument at both Norheim and Avaldsnes (cf. Ch. 5.3), at both sides of Karmsund.

Kǫrmt ok Qrmt ok Kerlaugar tvær þær skal Þórr vaða, dag hvern er hann dæma ferr at aski Yggdrasils þvíat Ásbrú brennr ǫll loga heilug vǫtn hlóa	Kormt og Ormt og Kjerlaugar to dei han dagleg vassar, Tor nár til tings han fer ved Yggdrasils ask fordi Ásbru brenn med loge heite er heilage vatn	Kormt and Ormt and the Kerlaugs twain these Thor must wade each day when he to council goes at Yggdrasil’s ash for the Ás-bridge is all on fire the holy waters boil
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Avaldsnes’ role as a royal estate in the early Norwegian kingdom is documented from several sources, of which Snorri’s *Heimskringla* (Hkr) is the most important. In the *Saga of Harald Fairhair* (reign c. AD 872-930), Avaldsnes is listed as one of king Harald’s five west Norwegian royal estates, where the king often resided (Hkr: 74). Snorri further tells that king Harald died in Rogaland and was buried in a grave mound at ‘Haug by Karmsund’, at a location carefully described by Snorri (ibid: 77). The information is supported by other MA sources (Nordland 1950: 39). According to Snorri’s *Saga of Håkon the Good* (reign c. AD 933-961), in the subsequent succession conflict between Håkon the Good and the sons of Eric Bloodaxe, a large battle was fought near Avaldsnes (Hkr: 92). Local traditions associate the battle with the grave-field of Reheia (Fyllingsnes 2000b: 42f). In Snorri’s *Saga of Olav Tryggvason* (reign c. AD 995-1000), this Christian king confronted the old faith at Avaldsnes. During an Easter banquet at Avaldsnes, a band of sorcerers (O.No. *seiðskratti*) came to attack the king. By mystical circumstances, the sorcerers were blinded, and the king ordered to drown them at a skerry called Skrattasker (literally: *Sorcerer’s Skerry*) (Hkr: 172). Another time the king was at Avaldsnes, he was visited by an old man Snorri identified as the pre-Christian god, Odin (ibid: 172ff). The old man told the king the legend of king Augvald and the sacred cow he worshiped. He also tried to trick Olav to eat heathen cow meat, but he averted this. Oddr Snorrason’s *Saga of Olav Tryggvason* accounts the same events and claims that the king later opened two grave mounds at Avaldsnes and found human and cow bones, respectively (OTr: 94). Another event associated with Avaldsnes is Olav’s Christianisation of the Ryger at a thing in Rogaland (Hkr: 167f). According to local tradition, this happened at a mound, Dåpshaug (dåp: ‘*baptism*’) at Avaldsnes (Fyllingsnes 2000b: 88f).

Of interest is also Snorri’s account of Asbjørn Selsbane’s three visits at Avaldsnes in the *Saga of Olav Haraldsson* (reign c. AD 1015-1028) (Hkr: 322ff). Although these events take place after the chronological delimitations of the thesis, the information given of Avaldsnes is relevant. During

Asbjørn's first trip by ship from North Norway he went through Karmsund in the evening and stayed overnight near the royal estate at Avaldsnes. Avaldsnes is portrayed as a large and fine farm, and the royal estate was run by the king's man, Tore Sel. When Asbjørn later returned to the harbour at Avaldsnes, Tore Sel wrongfully confiscated the cargo as he claimed that Asbjørn violated the king's law. The third time Asbjørn came to Avaldsnes his ship sailed the outer sea way west of Karmøy. Snorri reports that there was intensive settlement at Karmøy, but not at the side facing the ocean. Asbjørn's ship landed on this side of the island, and he then went by foot to Avaldsnes to kill Tore Sel. This was in the Easter, while king Olav was celebrating Mass at a church standing here. According to Snorrason, the church was standing at Avaldsnes already at the time of Olav Tryggvason (OTr: 94).

Several local place names might date to the IA or provide information on the use of the landscape. The farm name Bø (O.No. *bær*), 'dwelling', is considered a name of significant age (Solberg 2000: 145). According to Bjørkvik (1999: 12ff), post MA documents show that Bø was probably the only farm in the study area owned by nobles. The farm's area might originally have included e.g. Nordbø, Øvrebø, Gunnarshaug, Hauge and Nedre Hauge (Fyllingsnes 2000b: 173). The name Avaldsnes (O.No. *Qgvaldsnes*) stems from the man's name 'Qgvaldr', possibly meaning 'ruler of the coast' (Vea 2004). Farms ending with -heim or -land are often considered to date from the IA. According to Særheim (2007: 94f, 143), many -heim names dates to c. AD 200-600 and the -land names to c. AD 200-1000. In the area, such names are found at Vikshåland, Håland, Meland, Matland, Norheim and Moksheim. The first part of the name Nor|heim denotes 'narrow sound'. Other names are also closely associated with the topography of Karmsund. Storasund is one of four -sund farms along Karmsund, and these and other farms might originally have formed a large farm, Sund (Løken 1979: 26; Bjørkvik 1999: 22).

The farm name Vårå (literally: 'beacon'), probably refers to beacons marking the sea way (Særheim 2007: 263). Snik ('narrow passage') is a farm name found just outside the study area at another narrow point of Karmsund (ibid: 210). At Bø the place name Salhus (O.No. *sáluhús*) occurs, meaning 'traveller's inn'. The farm name Landa (of *landir* 'land'), possibly denotes a 'landing place' (cf. Bjørkvik 1999: 19). Two place names at Avaldsnes have similar meanings. While Lahammar (of O.No. *lað*) denotes a 'loading rock' (Grimm 2006: 434), Nordland (1950: 38) interprets Karvagrovne (O.No. *karfagræffini*) nearby as 'hole for "karfi" ships'. Some place names have religious or ritual meanings. The farm name Skeie (O.No. *skeið*) might denote 'a place for horse games' (Særheim 2007: 202). According to O. Rygh, the farm name Visnes might stem from *vifil*, meaning 'religious leader' (ibid: 259). It is curious that the place name Helganes (literally: 'sacred ness') is found at this farm (ibid: 96). The farm Helgaberg (literally: 'sacred hill') is named after the hill Helgabergnuten (ibid: 95). Håland, were referred to in the MA as Helgo-halande ('sacred Håland'), as it was located next to Helgaberg. Two farms just to the west of the study area are named Helgeland (cf. Fett 1998, fig. 1).

6. ANALYSIS OF THE LANDSCAPES OF POWER IN THE SUB-PERIODS

As accounted for in Ch. 4.2, the material will now be applied in an analysis of the landscapes of power in each of the five sub-periods. As mentioned there, the three problems discussed in the analysis of each sub-period are:

- A) Are there any clear patterns or changes in the spatial distribution of material within the area?
- B) Are there any clear patterns or changes in the use of ideological expressions within the area?
- C) Are there any indications of alliances or conflicts on a regional or supra-regional level?

Thus, each of the sub-periods is examined according to the same standard. First, a brief introduction to the general historical context of the sub-period is provided, then the three problems A), B), and C) is examined in one paragraph each, and finally a summary of the analysis of the sub-period is given. This analysis is based on the distribution of material in each of the sub-periods. In order to make the analysis transparent, distributional maps of the study area are provided for each of the five sub-periods. Here, a selection of some key finds of the sub-period is also depicted. The signatures depicted on the maps represent interpretations of the material either as graves of different status, or as depot finds and monuments. To clarify this interpretation, each of the maps has corresponding tables where the material and their interpretation are listed. Except for the RIA map, the certainty or uncertainty of the proposed dating is shown with 'filled' or 'open' signatures respectively. The RIA map instead shows a chronological shift with two different colours representing an early and a late period. Some important find-spots just outside the study area are also depicted on the distribution maps. As accounted for in Ch. 1.2, the analysis begins with the last two centuries of the PRIA.

6.1. The Late Pre-Roman Iron Age

Significant structural changes seem to have happened in Scandinavian societies in the last one or two centuries BC. When the iron eventually replaced the bronze, this led to the breakup of older power structures and the establishment of new. According to Myhre (2002: 117), the settlement and burial material of the Late PRIA show new tendencies of an increasing social stratification in the Norwegian areas. The new signs of stratified societies are concentrated especially in the Oslo Fjord area, South Rogaland and Trøndelag (Solberg 2000: 65). The areas are characterised as good agricultural districts. An agricultural surplus might have opened up for the production of outfield resources to utilize in regional goods exchange (Myhre 2002: 118). The PRIA grave finds of West Norway are concentrated in Etne in South Hordaland, Jæren in South Rogaland and Lista in Vest-Agder (Pilø 1989: 38). Both Pilø (ibid.) and Solberg (1989) suggest that Southwest Norway had connections with the Danish areas.

Because of the quantitatively meagre local material of the Late PRIA, there are no clear patterns in the use of the landscape in the Avaldsnes area but some tendencies might be sketched (cf. Fig. 28). Regarding the distribution of settlement in the area, the only excavated Late PRIA settlement traces stem from Avaldsnes. Nevertheless, the pollen analysis showing a deforested landscape on the eve of the Late PRIA, the ridging ploughs found deposited in the bog at Utvik and the first clear traces of permanent settlement at Avaldsnes, might indicate a more extensive use of the landscape in the area than before. The three locations with certain or probable Late PRIA graves at Gunnarshaug, Avaldsnes and Kolstø are all situated along Karmsund. At least the graves from Gunnarshaug and Kolstø stem from mounds of a considerable size, visible along the important sea way. The two bog finds from Landa and Utvik both stem from bogs near the BA grave-field of Reheia.

Both the bog find of four wooden ridge plough parts found at Utvik and the bog find of potsherds and hones found at Landa, probably represent intentional ritual deposits. These finds are only dated generally to the Early IA, but a PRIA clay pot (C16293) containing a liquid was found in a bog at Longåker, West Karmøy, and confirms that bog sacrifice were practiced in the district during the PRIA (cf. Slomann 1972: 29). In Norway, the most widespread grave traditions of the PRIA were simple flat graves or low cairns. As a cairn at Kongsheia has revealed finds from the latest part of the BA and from the Early IA, it is possible that some of the small grave and clearance cairns here might stem from the PRIA. During the PRIA larger grave mounds were rare, but in the Late PRIA some mounds do occur especially in the Oslo Fjord area and South Rogaland (Solberg 2000: 41f). The grave mound from Gunnarshaug measured 21.50 m/1.65 m. Both of the two inhumation graves were at the bottom of the mound and probably represent the primary burials (Fig. 11). According to Solberg (ibid: 41), all graves known from the south Norwegian PRIA are burnt graves, but inhumations are known from north Norwegian graves and from a few Danish graves (ibid: 42; Jensen 2003: 159). It is then interesting that the primary burials in the Gunnarshaug mound were in fact inhumations, and that one of these got a special treatment by being covered by large stone slabs. In addition, the size of the mound, with a volume of c. 302 m³, and the location at a strategic point by Karmsund might indicate high social status. If the two urn graves placed in the mound subsequently were suggesting a link to those already buried there, this might possibly denote a new focus on property rights.

Another grave stemming from a mound is the weapon grave from the large Oshaug at Kolstø, dated to 200-1 BC (Haavaldsen 2000: 10f). Oshaug probably measured 23-25 m/2-3 m, which correspond to as much as 420-750 m³ in volume, but the grave might be a secondary grave. The preserved weapon set included a single-edged sword, a chape preserved from the scabbard, and a spearhead. Weapon graves from the Late PRIA are very rare in the Norwegian area, and only a few such graves stem from East Norway (ibid: 10). However, Nybruget and Martens (1997: 85f) claim that all the east Norwegian

graves might in fact belong to the Early RIA. Some of the other furnishing of the Kolstø grave includes a cooper's knife of iron for hide working, and an iron fragment possibly from a neck ring. Neck rings are a status laden material category, and about eight other PRIA neck rings are known in Norway. These include five bronze neck rings of the imported torques type, of which three stem from the Oslo Fjord area and one from South Rogaland (Solberg 2000: 44). At least two neck rings of iron are known from South Rogaland and one from Etne in South Hordaland (ibid: 46; Haavaldsen 2000: 11). The two lost handle fittings of bronze found 'deep in the soil' at Avaldsnes might stem from a vessel in a cremation grave. In Norway, only two metal vessels from the PRIA are known from graves in South Rogaland and the Oslo Fjord area (Nybruget & Martens 1997: 86). If the bronze fittings indeed stem from a Late PRIA metal vessel, this is undoubtedly the vessel of highest quality yet known in Norway. The fittings have artistic elements resembling fittings on Celtic import known from Danish bog finds.

Although the local material is limited, there is reason to believe that elites similar to those visible archaeologically in other parts of Scandinavia were also emerging here in the Late PRIA. The area had good agricultural soil and might have produced a surplus, but tradable outfield resources such as hide and iron had to be brought from elsewhere. Although there are two documented ritual deposits in bogs near the BA grave-field of Reheia, the few known burials were now focused closer to the sea way through Karmsund. This change might suggest an increased interest in resources flowing through the sea way. The use of mounds, weapons, neck rings and status vessels suggest a power ideology similar to those known from the Oslo Fjord area, South Rogaland and Denmark. Even though standard ritual practices such as bog sacrifices were carried out in the area, the local elite had the power to experiment with new ritual practices like inhumations and mound burials. It is possible that the local elite got outfield resources from South Hordaland and areas further north, and that these were exchanged with elites in South Rogaland and Denmark.

Farm	Short description	Dating (Ch. 5.1)	Interpretation
Gunnarshaug	Double inhumation grave and two burnt graves in clay pots. Found in a mound	Late PRIA? PRIA/Early RIA	Status graves? Graves
Landa	Clay pots and hone. Found in a bog	Early IA	Bog sacrifice
Utvik	Four parts of ridging ploughs. Found in a bog	Early IA	Bog sacrifice
Avaldsnes	Settlement traces (not depicted)	Late PRIA	Settlement traces
Avaldsnes	Two lost bronze fittings for a cauldron (?)	Late PRIA?	Lost status grave?
Kolstø	Pieces of a single-edged sword of iron, chape of iron, cooper's knife of iron, spearhead of iron, some pieces of flint, fragments of putty for a vessel and a fragment of iron possibly stem from a neck ring. Found in Oshaug	Late PRIA	Status grave

Table 7: List of the Late PRIA finds in Fig. 28

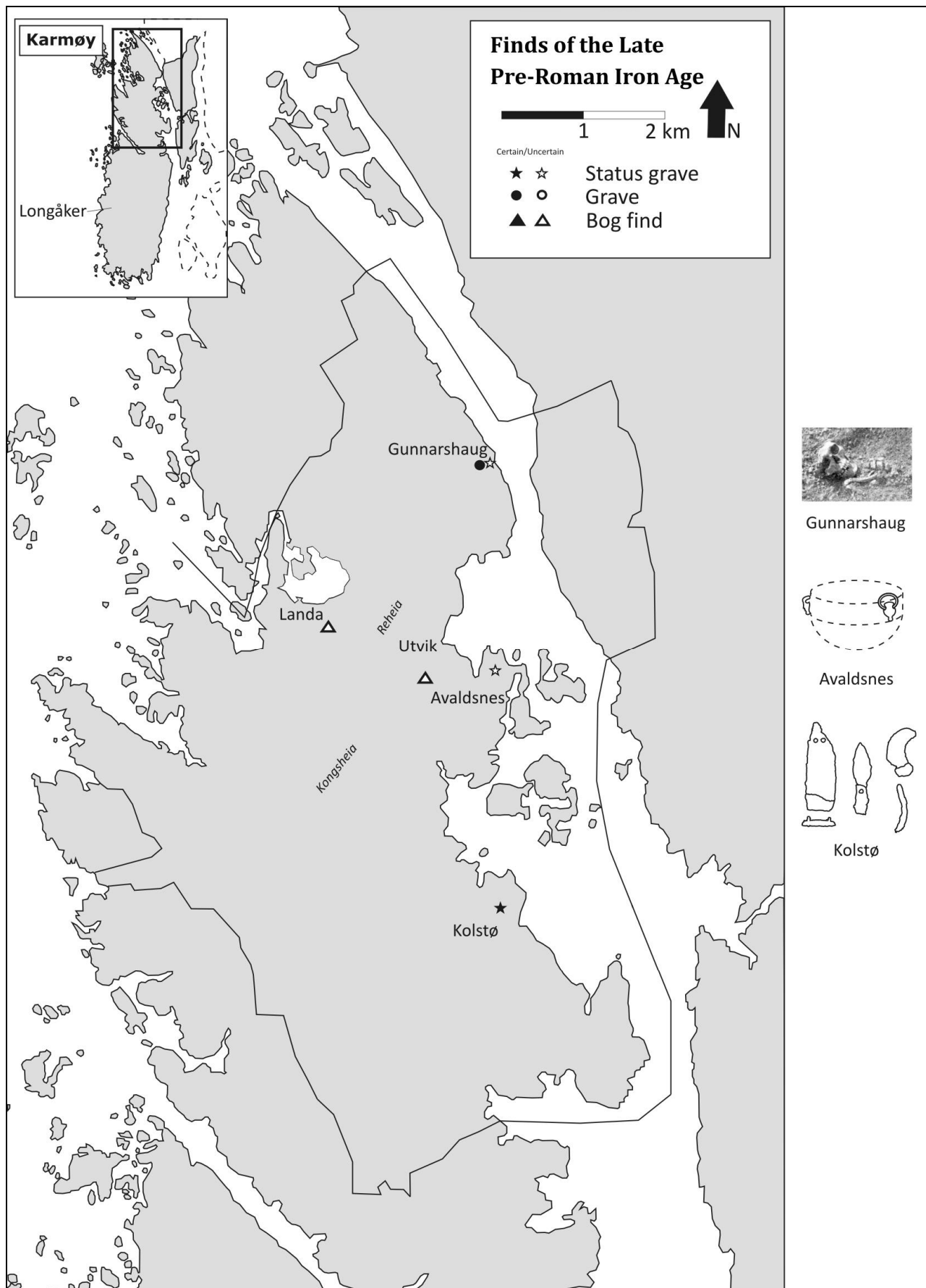


Fig. 28: Distribution of the Late PRIA finds. Key finds depicted right

6.2. The Roman Iron Age

On the eve of the RIA, the northern borders of the Roman Empire were determined. Roman soldiers at the borders needed many resources which could be obtained from Germanic societies in the north. At this time Roman produced goods started to occur in larger numbers among the Germanic societies. An increased contact with Roman areas had significant consequences for Scandinavian societies, and probably eventually led to a more complex organisation of soldiers, trade and society (Solberg 2000: 89ff). In the Early RIA, the south Scandinavian societies probably consisted of many different chiefdoms led by their chieftains (Fig. 8). According to Myhre (2002: 116ff), the stratified societies visible in the Norwegian material from AD 200 were formed during the first two centuries AD. Around AD 200 the first central places occur both in South Scandinavia and in some Norwegian areas (Solberg 2000: 121ff; Näsman 2006: 215f). Näsman argues that this centralisation of different social functions was driven by chieftains who also led the exchange of goods. Leaders of the centres probably either formed alliances or led war against each other. During such stress some of the chiefdoms may eventually have obtained hegemony over others and formed larger confederations.

In B2-C1, Scandinavian and Roman produced goods started occurring in the area. The earliest RIA graves containing such status markers stem from Bø in the north and Austevik and Vårå in the south (cf. Fig. 29). At least three of the four status graves are probably female graves. Among these are a grave from Vårå containing a rosetta fibula probably produced near Danish Himlingøje, and a grave from Bø containing a berlock of gold, perhaps made in South Norway, as well as the first Roman produced bronze to occur in the area (Andersson 1995: 173; Hansen 1995: 213f). In C2 there is a marked shift in the distribution, and two out of the three certain status graves stem from Avaldsnes. The third is from Norheim. Further, two stray finds of a gold pendant and a large gold finger ring from Avaldsnes, probably represent two other graves. In addition, the only status grave dated with certainty to C3 comes from Avaldsnes. Another status grave from Storasund might date from C3 or the Early MP. All of the preserved Roman bronzes are found in graves from the area around Bøvågen.

The majority of the local RIA graves stem from grave mounds. A ritual reuse of large BA mounds for secondary burials is known from Knaghaug (c. 331 m³), Bø and Kjørkhaug (856 m³), Gunnarshaug (cf. Myhre 1998: 135). In addition, the grave from an unknown mound at Reheia and the weapon grave from the second largest mound here, B#30 (c. 2428 m³), might stem from secondary burials in BA mounds (ibid: 86ff). It should be stressed that the weapon grave in B#30 was found in the centre at the bottom of the 6 m high mound, and that a secondary burial here would have demanded much manpower. The only large mound certainly built in the RIA was for the weapon grave in Flaghaug. The mound measured c. 43 m/5 m, with a volume of 3696 m³. Ringstad (1992: 108) claims that each

m³ represent one day's work, meaning it would have taken 60 workers two months to build Flaghaug. In addition to circular mounds, the triangular shape was used for status graves in the area in the Late RIA. The first example is the triangular cairn with five memorial stones at Norheim, hiding a Hemmoor bucket. According to Shetelig (1912: 54), one of Flaghaug's secondary graves came from a triangular grave chamber. This was probably Flaghaug grave 2, with a Hemmoor bucket of same type as the Norheim grave. At Dale in South Karmøy, a triangular mound hid a Late RIA status grave with a small 'serpent ring' of bronze (S2527-h) (Hauken 1995: 46). Myhre (2005b) suggests the two memorial stones near Flaghaug might have formed a triangular monument (cf. Fig. 26), and the proximity to Flaghaug and its similarity to the Norheim monument indicates a Late RIA dating.

The Early RIA Roman bronze dish found in a grave at Bø, show that there was a local interest in status import already at this time. Most of the earliest RIA status graves in the area represent women, and the rosetta fibula from Vårå might indicate marriage alliances with the Himlingøje area. The type of serpent head ring found at Avaldsnes is also associated with Himlingøje in Zealand (Hansen 1995: 209ff). Thus, already before the making of Flaghaug it seems like the elite in the area were forming supra-regional alliances in order to control the flow of resources and goods. The spending of large material resources in four graves at Avaldsnes in C2 probably established the farm as the most important place in the region. Interestingly, the remains of a boat house found at Avaldsnes are dated to the Late RIA. In particular the burial of Flaghaug grave 1 shows evidence of a leader of the highest social and military rank. In the area, weapons are documented only in one other Late RIA grave, the burnt grave from the large mound B#30 at Reheia. Neck rings of gold and shield bosses of silver are regarded as the highest social indicators of the RIA, and the only close parallel to Flaghaug grave 1 is found in Gommern, Germany (Solberg 2000: 119f; Carnap-Bornheim 2006: 121ff). Similar status weapons and rings which might reflect regional alliances stem from Kvinnherad, Halsnøy, Bjoa and Etne in South Hordaland and Hove in South Rogaland (Myhre 1997b; Solberg 2000: 109, 120).

While the earliest status graves from B1-C1 come from Vårå-Austevik and Bø, the status graves of C2 are concentrated especially around Avaldsnes. The weapon graves in the large mounds Flaghaug and B#30 might indicate a strong local military power here. Further, the use of triangular symbolism in C2 status graves at Norheim and Avaldsnes probably reflects a close connection between the two farms, possibly denoting Avaldsnes' large influence in the area. The local use of status symbols documented in Flaghaug grave 1, resembles that of South Scandinavia. Rich Scandinavian and Roman imports in the area and similarities to graves with status rings and weapons in the region, suggest alliances in the exchange of prestige goods. When the ritual spending in graves ends in C3 and the only certain status grave is found at Avaldsnes, this might suggest a larger degree of power stability in the area.

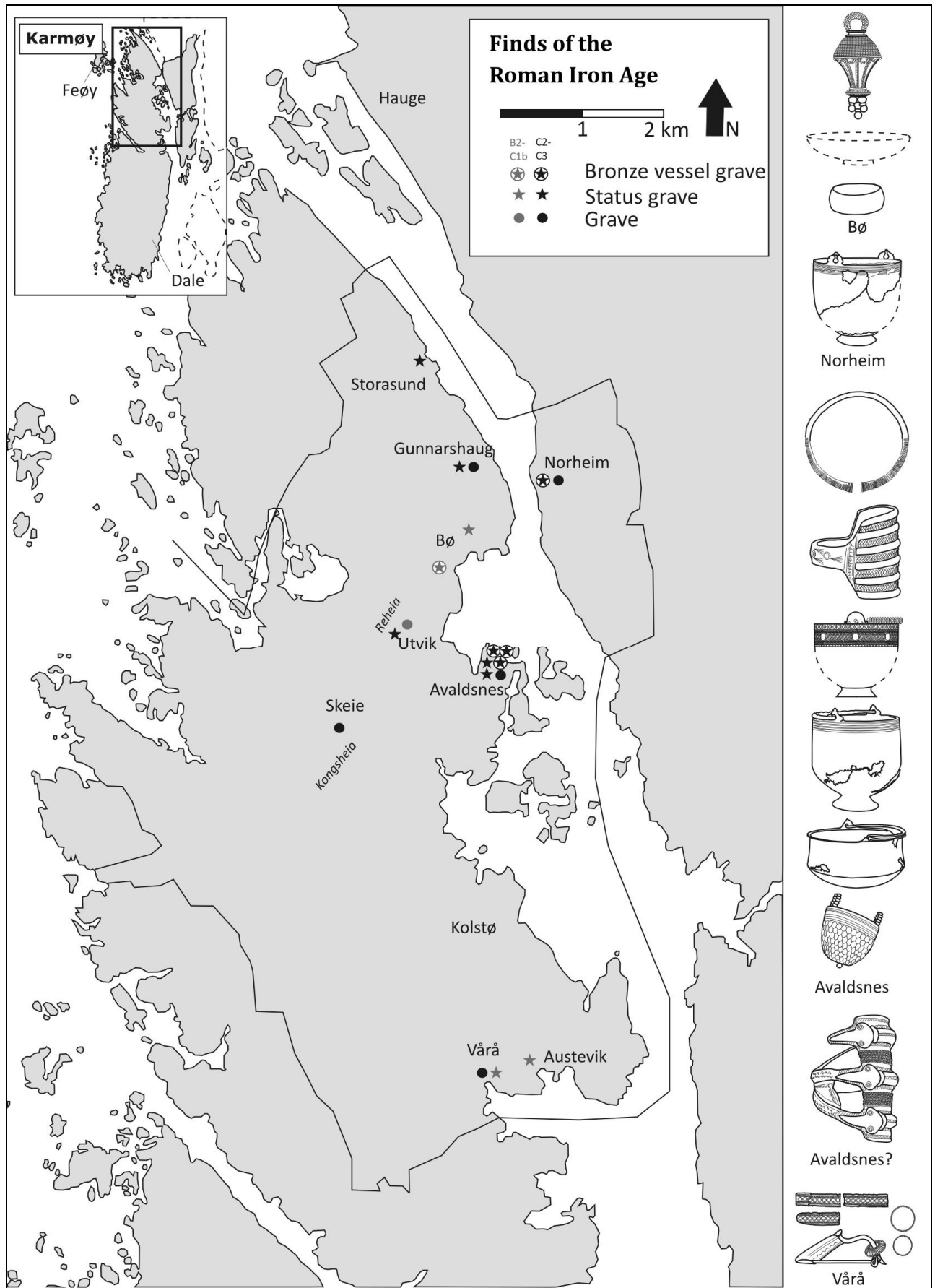


Fig. 29: Distribution of the RIA finds. Some of the key finds depicted right

Farm	Description	Dating (Ch. 5.2)	Interpretation
Utvik (Reheia)	Cooper's knife of iron. Found in a mound	B2	Grave
Austevik	Fibula of bronze and silver. Found at Tuhaug	Late B2	Status grave (F)
Bø	Berlock of gold, fragment of serving dish. Found in Knaghaug	Late B2	Status grave (F)
Bø	Finger ring of gold. Found nearby Bøvatnet	C1?	Status grave
Vårå	Clay pot, charcoal, rosetta fibula. Found in a mound	C1b	Status grave (F)
Avaldsnes (or Kolstø?)	Finger ring of gold of serpent head type. Found in soil near a 'scrap heap' (mound?)	C2?	Status grave
Avaldsnes	Neck ring of gold, finger ring of gold, three lost finger rings of gold, lost dress pin of gold, two-edged sword in wooden scabbard with fittings of gilded silver, shield boss of silver, pommel-knob of silver, circular gold-foil, lost pair of lance- and spear heads, Hemmoor bucket with silver ornaments, strainer of bronze, hanging dish of bronze with three lion-shaped handles, the silver rim of a drinking cup, fittings of silver for drinking horn, 32 gaming pieces of glass, silvered bronze mirror and a rope. (Possibly also a balance of bronze.) Flaghaug 1	Early C2	Status grave (M)
Avaldsnes	Pendant of gold. Stray find from Kongshaug	C2	Status grave (F)
Avaldsnes	Hemmoor bucket of bronze, burnt bones, three lost finger rings of gold (?). Flaghaug 2; might stem from a triangular grave chamber	C2	Status grave
Avaldsnes	Settlement traces including a boat house dated to Late RIA (none of these depicted)	Late RIA	Settlement traces
Avaldsnes	Triangular monument with three (one lost) memorial stones?	Late RIA?	Monument
Norheim	Hemmoor bucket of bronze, burnt bones, birch bark, burnt bear claws, fine cloth. Found in a triangular monument with five memorial stones (Dei fem dårlege jomfruer)	C2	Status grave
Norheim	Clay pot, bones, comb. Found in a mound	C3	Grave
Utvik (Reheia)	Charcoal, and iron fragments; probably a vessel containing a ring from a horse bit, a shield boss and a spearhead. Found in B#30	Late RIA	Status grave (M)
Avaldsnes	Three burnt graves without furnishing	Late RIA	Graves
Avaldsnes	Westland cauldron of bronze, burnt gaming-pieces of bone, cloth of wool. Flaghaug 3	C3	Status grave
Vårå	Bucket-shaped pot. Stray find (?)	C3?	Grave
Skeie	Clay pots. Stray find (?)	Late RIA	Grave
Gunnarshaug	Burnt mosaic bead. Lost spiral ring of gold? Found in Kjørkhaug	Late RIA	Status grave?
Gunnarshaug	Bucket-shaped pot. Lost bronze 'pot' (bronze bucket?) Found in a mound	C3/Early MP	Grave
Storasund	Knife of iron, cruciform brooch, agraffe brooch, burnt bones, cloth of wool	C3/Early MP	Status grave

Table 8: List of the RIA finds in Fig. 29

6.3. The Migration Period

During the MP large parts of Europe experienced great instability and stress. Large scale migrations eventually led to the fall of the West Roman Empire. The mid 6th century historian Jordanes mention several North European 'tribes' in his *Getica*, of which several have been associated with Norwegian areas. Several legends documented from MA sources have their roots in dramatic events of the MP (Hedeager & Tvarnø 2001: 126ff). Archaeologically, the MP shows a large degree of continuity from the Late RIA. The instability reported in the sources is reflected in the presence of MP gold hoards, and the hill forts often associated with the Late RIA and MP (Skre 1998: 266). In Norway, the largest MP concentration of gold hoards, bronze import and weapon graves are found in South Rogaland (Myhre 1987a, fig. 4; Hauken 2005, figs. 2-4). Much of the import came from former Roman towns which were still in use. Stress in the MP might have led to the forming of larger confederations in South Scandinavia, and many central places were established in this period (Helgesson 2002: 216).

In the Avaldsnes area there is some increase in grave finds from the Late RIA to the MP (cf. Fig. 30). An important change from the RIA is the character of the finds, where a larger percentage of the finds are simple graves while few graves are especially rich. Like in the Late RIA, a concentration of graves interpreted as status graves are concentrated along Bøvågen. None of the graves found here are considered simple graves. The lost probable Westland cauldrons from Norheim and Reheia are also found in the area around Bøvågen, enforcing the distribution pattern for the bronzes of the RIA. Quite certain weapon graves with one or two spearheads are found at Avaldsnes, Reheia and Kolstø. There seems to be accordance between rich graves and the proximity to memorial stones, and such stones are found at Bø, Norheim, Reheia, Avaldsnes, Kolstø and Vårå. From Vårå two possible status graves are known. At the bordering farm Austevik, several simple graves were found in small mounds at the grave-field Leite. The only hill fort in the area is situated far west at Visnes, but a yet unverified hill fort might also have been positioned between Austrheim and Eide just south of the study area. Both of these hill forts are situated strategically along two alternative routes which avoid Karmsund.

The fact that there are fewer rich graves in the area compared to the RIA might denote either lesser access to status goods in the area, or a lesser social need to deposit status goods in graves. If the large Salhusaugen stem from the end of the MP, even the monumental burials of this period lacked rich furnishing. The mound measured 43 m/4 m, almost the same as its rich predecessor Flaghaug. The measurements gives a total volume of c. 2938 m³, corresponding to a workload which might have required 60 workers over seven weeks. The building ritual is reflected in the about twenty spades and mattocks found in the mound. When even a large mound lacks a grave with rich furnishing, this might indicate some sort of general social ban of such furnishing or little social stress

within the area. Here, the public rituals of making this large mound might have been more important than the grave itself (cf. Gansum & Østigård 2004: 61f). Another location which might be linked with public rituals is Reheia. The memorial stone at Reheia was raised between two of the largest BA mounds in the area, along an important road and at what later became the boundary between the MA parishes of Torvastad and Avaldsnes (cf. Fig. 20). The stone was standing in the middle of a small quadrangular stone setting, and several similar monuments were found south of the stone. Interestingly, two memorial stones at Bø were also standing near two quadrangular monuments (cf. Fig. 24). Grave finds and cooking pits show that Reheia was used in the Early IA (cf. Table 3), and as discussed in Ch. 5.3, the association between memorial stones and quadrangular monuments might suggest a dating of these to the MP. The small monuments at Reheia might have represented a neutral place where people gathered for public rituals, just like at the grave-field Leite at Austevik.

Apart from a lost cruciform brooch and two possible lost Westland cauldrons, few of the status laden categories linked to the southwest Norwegian MP are found in the area. The only gold object is a small ingot from Avaldsnes, possibly from a hoard. The few weapon graves in the area are contrasted by the many such graves of South Rogaland, but this might possibly indicate less social stress in the area (Solberg 2000: 161). It has also been suggested that the many hill forts in South Rogaland forms a front towards a threat from the north (ibid: 162). In attempts of correlating 'tribal' names from Jordanes' *Getica* with the Norwegian areas, the 'Eunixi' have been associated with Karmøy and the 'Ethelrugi' with South Rogaland (Hedeager 2004: 109). It has been proposed that the legends of king Augvald and king Halv are based on leaders which lived in the Late MP and MVP (Vea 1999: 384ff). The large Salhusaugen from the transition to the MVP suggests that there were powerful elites in the area, but that rich furnishing was not seen as necessary. A contrary explanation to the lack of rich graves is a genuine social decline. I have previously suggested that this scenario might be explained by an increased use of alternative sea ways obstructing the flow of resources needed in the area (Reiersen 2006: 15ff). This explanation is unlikely, as Karmsund nevertheless would have been used.

The trend of fewer richly furnished graves observed in the Late RIA from C2 to C3 continues into the MP. Even without many rich graves, the focus of the few graves interpreted as status graves is around Bøvågen. A second concentration of graves is found at Vårå and Austevik in the south. The absence of rich furnishing in Salhusaugen at the transition to the MVP, suggests that rich grave furnishing were not accepted in the area. This might indicate a certain social stability, or possibly that public rituals masked stress within the area. Few local status graves or finds locally, greatly contrast the rich finds of South Rogaland and South Hordaland. Elites in the bordering areas might have been in conflict with elites in the Avaldsnes area who were controlling Karmsund. To prevent the control of resources, the use of alternative routes over isthmuses in North Rogaland might have increased.

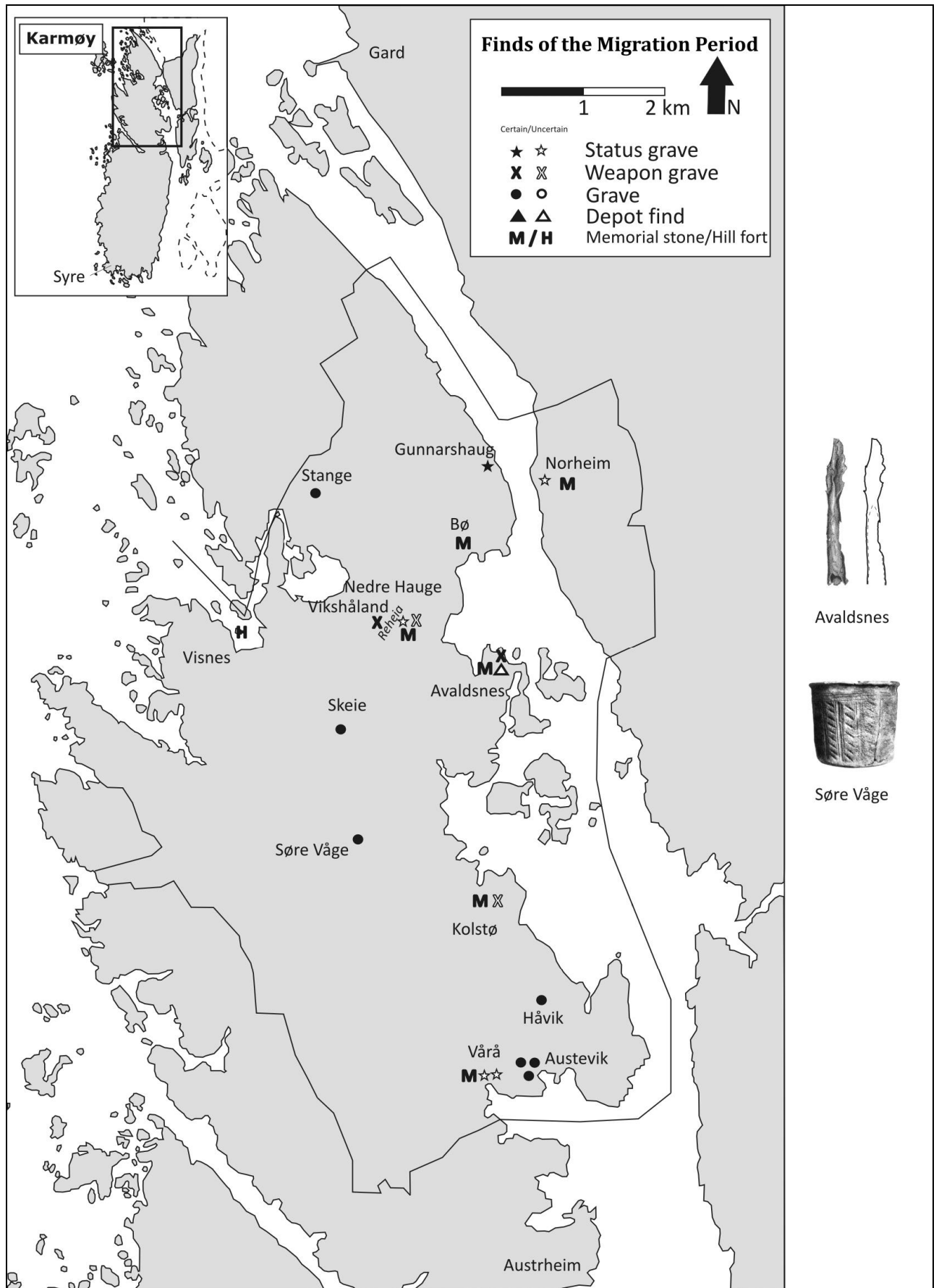


Fig. 30: Distribution of the MP finds. Some examples of graves depicted right

Farm	Description	Dating (Ch. 5.3)	Interpretation
Stange	Four beads of glass, burnt bones, lost bucket-shaped pot. Found in a mound	MP	Grave
Gunnarshaug	Many wooden spades, mattocks and other wooden tools, hone of quartz, spindle whorl of soapstone, circular stone slab and lost clay pot shreds. Found in Salhusaugen	LateMP/ Early MVP?	Status grave
Norheim	Lost bronze vessel (Westland type?)	Late RIA/MP?	Lost status grave?
Norheim	Memorial stone, now in a stone fence	Late RIA/MP?	Monument
Bø	Two memorial stones, near two quadrangular monuments	Late RIA/MP?	Monuments
Nedre Hauge (Reheia)	Lost bronze vessel (Westland type?), burnt bones. Lost clay pot, unburnt bones and sword fragments. Two graves? Found in B#4	Late RIA/MP? MP?	Lost status grave? Lost weapon grave?
Utvik (Reheia)	Memorial stone B#8 in a quadrangular stone-setting, along a road	MP?	Monument
Vikshåland (Reheia?)	Two lance heads of iron, hone of quartzite and a bucket-shaped pot. Unknown context, perhaps from Reheia mounds at Vikshåland?	MP	Weapon grave
Visnes	Hill fort at Børholmen	Late RIA/MP?	Fortification
Avaldsnes	Lancehead of iron and another piece of iron; probably a spearhead. Unknown context	MP	Weapon grave
Avaldsnes	Memorial stone on a cairn at Kongshaug	Late RIA/MP	Monument
Avaldsnes	Ingot of gold. Found at Kongshaug	Late RIA/MP?	Hoard?
Avaldsnes	Settlement traces (not depicted)	MP	Settlement traces
Kolstø	Spearhead of iron. Found in Oshaug	Early IA?	Weapon grave
Kolstø	Fragment of memorial stone	Late RIA/MP?	Monument
Skeie	Three bucket-shaped pots, clay pot with handle, strap buckle of bronze and a spindle whorl. Found at different times in a mound	MP	Graves
Søre Våge	Bucket-shaped pot, burnt bones. Stray find?	MP	Grave
Håvik (?)	Girdle stone. Stray find from the Håvik area	MP?	Grave (M)
Austevik	Three bucket-shaped pots, two beads of amber, six beads of glass and two girdle stones. Three graves (?), found in Tuhaug	MP	Grave (M) Grave (M) Grave (F)
Austevik	Bucket-shaped pot, coarser clay pot, knife blade of iron with textile fragments, small pieces of iron and some flint. Found in a grave chamber. Burnt bones found southwest of the chamber. Spindle whorl found in another grave chamber. Three graves (?) found in a mound at Leite	MP, Early IA MP?	Graves
Austevik	Clay potsherds. Found in four different mounds (Alnor #1, 4, 6, 7) at Leite	Early IA	Graves
Vårå	Lost clay pot, burnt bones, charcoal, pieces of a cruciform brooch (?). Found in a mound	MP?	Lost status grave?
Vårå	Sixteen beads of glass. Unknown context	Late RIA/MP?	Status grave? (F)
Vårå	Two or three memorial stones	Late RIA/MP?	Monument

Table 9: List of the MP finds in Fig. 30

6.4. The Merovingian Period

When the great migrations in Europe ended, many of the settled 'tribes' formed early kingdoms. One of these was the Franks, who under the leadership of its Merovingian kings established a Christian Frankish kingdom. Here, land ownership and manor structures were very important, and the kings promoted trade and established towns by the North Sea. Some similar processes probably occurred in Scandinavia in the Late IA (Mogren 2005: 13f). In Scandinavia the transition to the MVP is marked by a great decrease in the burial material. The traditional interpretation of these changes is that some crisis led to a dramatic drop in the population, but recent studies suggest settlement continuity (Myhre 2002; Näsman 2006). A decrease in the grave material might instead denote an increased centralisation of power, with stronger leaders and more social stratification (Myhre 2002: 181ff). In Denmark, for instance, the lack of graves is contrasted by the building of large constructions like the Danevirke fortification, the Kanhave canal, and the early town of Ribe. The establishment of these constructions was most likely led by a central power, denoting that an early West Danish kingdom was formed (Solberg 2000: 214). Traces of the formation of early kingdoms are also visible in status graves e.g. in Sutton Hoo, England, in the Uppland region, East Sweden and at Borre in East Norway.

Quantitatively, there are few graves in the Avaldsnes area dated with certainty to the MVP (Fig. 31). Two brooches which might stem from the MVP come from a mound at Gunnarshaug. At the same farm four arrowheads of possible MVP dating was found in Salhusaugen. Likewise, a spearhead found in the top of the large Oshaug at Kolstø might stem from the MVP, and the same is also true for a boat burial and a flat grave, without burial material, from Avaldsnes. Though there are few certain MVP graves in the area, the only certain graves in Grønhaug and Storhaug might tell much about the contemporary society. A recent dendrochronological analysis of wood from the Grønhaug ship suggests a dating to the first quarter of the 8th century AD (c. 720) (Stylegar 2009). This implies that the grave was in fact the first ship burial in Scandinavia. Until recently, the other local ship burial in Storhaug were credited as the oldest grave of this type, but dendrochronological analyses instead give a dating to the last quarter of the 8th century AD (c. 779, cf. Fig. 21). If the new ¹⁴C-datings of Salhusaugen (cf. Ch. 6.3) suggests a dating to the last half of the interval AD 530-660, the northern focus of the MVP status graves would be even more apparent (cf. Rønne 1995: 69).

With exception of the Sutton Hoo burial in England, large ship burials first seem to appear in the Avaldsnes area. The Grønhaug mound measured 30 m/4 m, or a total volume of 1447 m³. The rowing ship placed in the centre of the mound was c. 15 m long – about 5 metres longer than the MVP boats known from rich burials in East Sweden (Carver & Fern 2005, table 44). Grønhaug was built along the same line as the older large mounds at Reheia, between the grave-fields of Reheia in the south and

Salhusaugane in the north. The preserved grave furnishing from the plundered grave included glass, wooden buckets, probable horse gear, textiles, tapestry, down and pieces of a wax candle. The osteological analysis of skeletal remains from Grønhaug showed that this was probably an adult man (Sellevoold 1998: 223). Men buried in the 6th and early 7th century ship and boat burials of Sutton Hoo and Uppland were equipped with personal furnishing such as helmets and weapon fittings of gold. Sadly, the Grønhaug burial was plundered, and parts of the skeleton, such as the head, were missing. Few generations after Grønhaug, the much larger Storhaug was built. Storhaug measured 40-50 m/5-6 m, which gives an estimated average volume of as much as 4605 m³. The large rowing ship was c. 19-27 m long, and another boat c. 5-7 m long was also found. In addition to the boats and different kinds of tools, rich personal equipment probably belonging to a man was found. This equipment included an arm ring of gold, glass beads, gaming sets and a rich weapon set with two swords. The burial must have required significant investment of manpower and material resources.

With a basis in the previous dating of Storhaug to the first part of the 8th century AD, Opedal (1998) argued that the Avaldsnes area was the core of a west Norwegian kingdom in the MVP. When Meling (2000) examined west Norwegian MVP graves with horse gear as possible traces of regional alliances, Storhaug formed a core in the distribution. As the recent dating analysis dates both of the local ship burials to the 8th century, the hypothesis of a royal centre in the area is strengthened. The two ship burials probably denote that a kingdom with its core in the area, was established and maintained throughout the 8th century. As the North European towns needed raw materials, the local petty kings were probably involved in this trade (Opedal 1998: 151ff). A glass shred from Grønhaug might stem from 7th or early 8th century South England, and Opedal suggests that the pair of swords from Storhaug might denote alliances with the Franks (ibid: 154f; Myhre 1995: 85). It has also been emphasized that the ship burials included a wax candle and a wax fragment with cross ornaments, which are interpreted as possible indicators of early Christian influence (Hernæs 1993: 106).

The two 8th century high status graves were built in the same part of the area as the somewhat older Salhusaugen (cf. Fig. 24). Even though the new dating of Salhusaugen is not published, the mound might be interpreted as a predecessor of the ship burials. As the two ship burials are the only local graves dated with certainty to the MVP, the northern focus around Bø is apparent. The men buried in these status graves probably represent a parallel to those buried in the large mounds in Borre (cf. Fig. 10). Like Myhre termed Borre a MVP centre in East Norway, the northern part of the Avaldsnes area should probably be seen as its west Norwegian equivalent (Myhre 1993: 55). When Storhaug was built at the end of the MVP, this was a burial ritual truly worthy of a regional king. The use of large ships in burials was an ideological innovation which would later spread to other parts of Scandinavia.

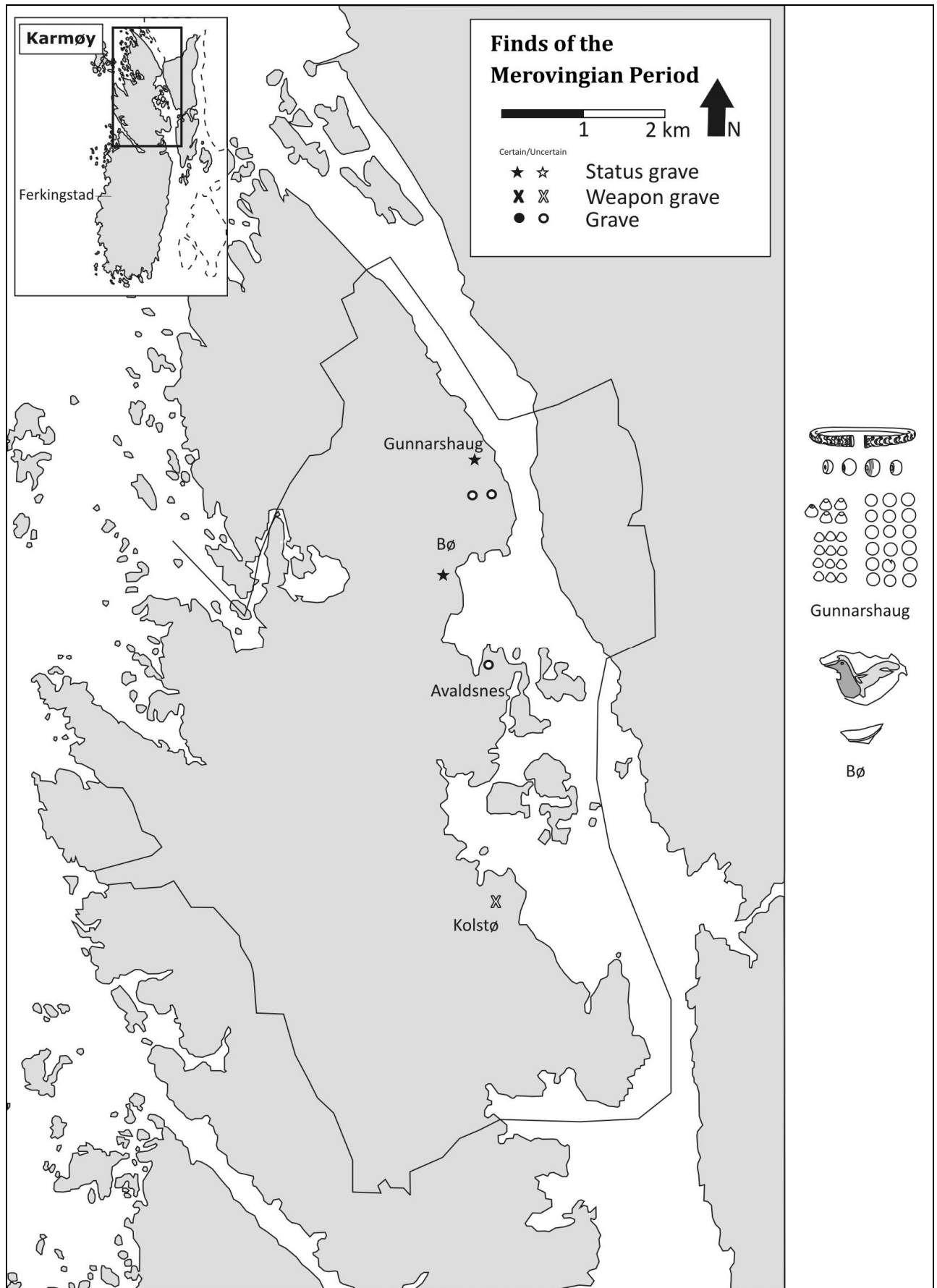


Fig. 31: Distribution of the MVP finds. Key finds depicted right

Farm	Description	Dating (Ch. 5.4)	Interpretation
Bø	Glass from a drinking cup, three buckets of wood, two rings of bronze possibly from horse gear, wax candle, pieces of wax, fragments of different textiles including fragments of a tapestry, down from pillows or duvet, unburnt human bones probably from a man, and parts of a ship c. 15 m long. Found in a plundered grave in Grønhaug	MVP	Status grave (M)
Gunnarshaug	20 circular gaming-pieces of amber, 17 gaming-pieces of glass, egg-shaped sinker, wax piece, arm ring of gold, four beads of glass, single-edged sword, double-edged sword, spear- or lancehead, quiver for c. 24 arrows, knife, a possible spur, iron cauldron, wooden box, different blacksmith and grinding tools, possibly a lost sledge, lost horse bones, lost bronze ring, lost tools and lost boat parts for a ship 19-27 m long and a smaller boat. Found in Storhaug	MVP	Status grave (M)
Gunnarshaug	Four arrowheads. Found in Salhusaugen	MVP/Early VA	Grave?
Gunnarshaug	Two saucer brooches. Found in a mound	MVP/Early VA	Grave (F)
Avaldsnes	Nails from boat burial and cut from a flat grave without preserved grave furnishing. Found at Kongshaug, by an older cairn, probably denoting two secondary burials	MVP/VA	Graves
Avaldsnes	Settlement traces (not depicted)	MVP	Settlement traces
Kolstø	A spearhead of iron. Found in Oshaug	MVP/VA	Grave (M)

Table 10: List of the MVP finds in Fig. 31

6.5. The Viking Age

According to the sagas, the Norwegian kingdom was formed when the east Norwegian king Harald Fairhair achieved dominion of all Norwegian petty kingdoms after a final victory at Hafrsfjord AD 872 (Solberg 2000: 300ff). While Harald's son Håkon the Good is said to have been a Christian, the forced conversion AD 995-1030 led by Olav Trygvason and Olav Haraldsson represented the breakthrough of the new religion. Due to increased criticism of historical constructs in the sagas, these processes of kingdom formation and conversion have been reinterpreted. It has been suggested that Harald and his two succeeding sons ruled mainly over areas in West Norway, where Harald's royal estates are reported (Helle 1993: 148ff). However, the territorial borders of Harald's kingdom probably reached a great deal further than that of the preceding MVP petty kings in the Avaldsnes area, and he most likely also had indirect hegemony of bordering areas (Solberg 2000: 302). Throughout the VA, other regional kingdoms, as well as the Danish kingdom, probably held much power in Norwegian areas. As the contact over the North Sea probably started before the first known Viking attacks AD 793, so did also the influence of Christian Europe (Myhre 1993: 57ff). If the Anglo-Saxon and Frankish influences started prior to the VA, the Christianisation might have been a long process throughout the VA.

The VA distributional pattern of the Avaldsnes area shows relatively few grave finds (cf. Fig. 32). Probable weapon graves in the area stem from Gunnarshaug, Nedre Hauge, Skeie, Kolstø and Vårå; all farms with finds from many of the other periods. Some of the lost weapon graves from Nedre Hauge, Øvrebø, Kongsheia and Håland (Table 5) might also date from the VA. It has been suggested that one weapon as furnishing in a VA grave might reflect a low class of free land owners (Solberg 2000: 268). If the assumption is correct, most of the graves belong to men of this class. Only one grave at Nedre Hauge includes both an axe and a sword. In addition, a grave from Gunnarshaug revealed several tools, fragments of weapons, burnt animal bones and an oblong iron ring. A possible boat burial from Vårå included a spear and perhaps also a horse bit, and a boat burial at Skeie included a shield boss and a 'rod' of iron. Traditionally, Snorri's report of a battle by Avaldsnes c. AD 950 has been associated with Reheia (Fyllingsnes 2000b: 42f). A man's brooch was found at Reheia, and two weapon graves were found at Nedre Hauge in a field where the soil was filled with charcoal. There is also evidence of five poorly documented weapon graves at Nedre Hauge and Øvrebø. Even so, the evidence is too scarce to support the tradition of a large battle. The lack of rich graves might perhaps indicate either a strong royal presence or an early Christian influence in the burial practice.

As previously mentioned, the wax objects found in the ship burials might indicate close contact with Christian Europe already in the 8th century (cf. Solberg 2000: 313). Like his MVP predecessors, Harald Fairhair is said to have gotten a pre-Christian burial in what was possibly the centre of his kingdom, c.

AD 930. His son Håkon the Good was brought up by his allied king in England in the early 10th century and probably returned to Norway with missionary intentions (ibid: 311). Some of the local material might shed light on religious changes in the VA. At Kolstø two keys of bronze were found in the large Oshaug. Bronze keys might have been symbolically associated with St. Peter's keys to heaven, and might suggest a Christian influence in the burial tradition (Gellein 1998: 13). A grave with Christian indicators was found at Rossabø just east of the area (Hernæs 1993: 103f). At Kongshaug, Avaldsnes there is a contrast between two Late IA graves with no preserved furnishing (cf. Ch. 6.4) and a female VA grave with beads and a SA axe interpreted as a magic amulet. A similar use of strong pre-Christian symbols in opposition to the conversion process is also documented elsewhere (Solberg 2000: 317f). The Christian reuse of pre-Christian monuments is known from two farms. At Avaldsnes runes was written on Jomfru Maria synål, and at Storasund a stone cross was raised on a mound. Both events probably happened in the 10th century, perhaps reflecting the presence of king Håkon (cf. ibid: 319). Though the sagas tell that Olav Tryggvason confronted strong pre-Christian forces several times at Avaldsnes (Fyllingsnes 2000b: 44), Snorrason claims a church was standing here at this time (OTr: 94).

While Snorri claimed that the formation of king Harald's kingdom started in East Norway, it instead seems like a west Norwegian formation. Wood analysis of the two ships from Karmøy and the east Norwegian Oseberg ship, in fact suggest that the three ships were built in the region around Karmøy (Stylegar 2009). This indicates that the earliest ship burial in East Norway happened in contact with a west Norwegian elite. While Harald might have come from West Norway, his original relationship with the Avaldsnes area is unknown. It seems of importance that the MVP ship burials stem from Bø and Gunnarshaug and not the farm Avaldsnes. In the MA, Bø was the only noble manor in the area and it also had a manorial church in stone. It is possible that the old local elite were situated at Bø (cf. Fyllingsnes 2000b: 31), while its neighbouring farm Avaldsnes was given to Harald. Avaldsnes was a strategic location for the establishment of a royal estate. Two place names at Avaldsnes are related to trade, and indicate Avaldsnes' important role in the trade in the Late IA (cf. Ch. 5.8).

At the beginning of the VA, the elite milieu which had buried a regional leader in Storhaug some decades earlier was probably still located at Bø. New analyses show that the Oseberg ship which provided a rich burial for two women in the early 9th century was made of wood from the same area as the MVP ships in the Karmøy ship burials. This might indicate alliances between strong elites in the two regions. When king Harald in the last part of the 9th century established a royal estate at Avaldsnes, Bø seems to have remained an important farm in the area. Thus, it is probable that the new royal power was allied and cooperated with the old elite rather than replaced it. The few local weapon graves and the presence of early Christian symbols probably were combined effects of the presence of strong elites and the religious change which influenced the area throughout the VA.

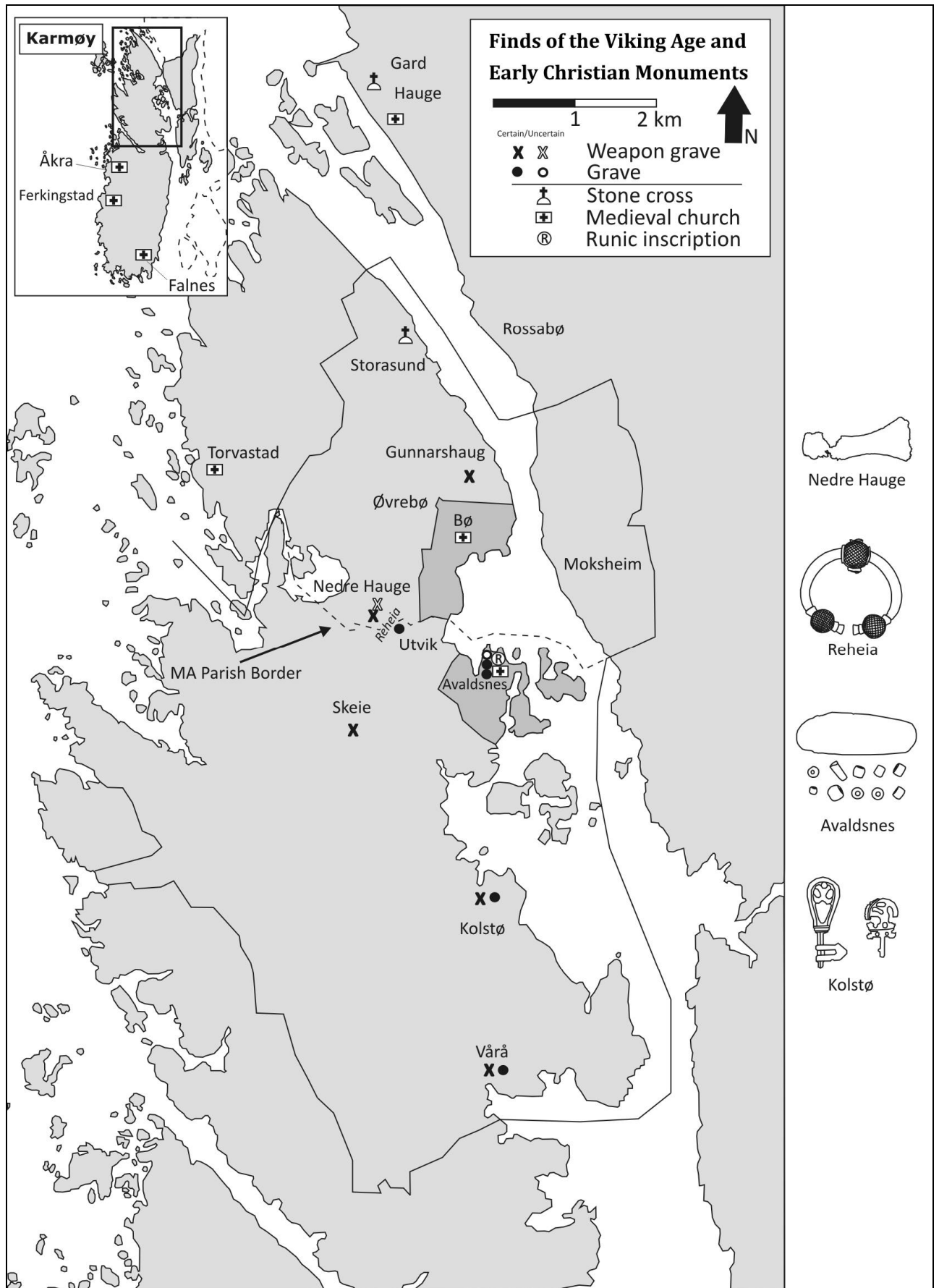


Fig. 32: Distribution of the VA finds and early Christian monuments. Key finds depicted right

Farm	Description	Dating (Ch. 5.5)	Interpretation
Storasund	Lost stone cross at Krosshaug	Late VA?	Monument
Moksheim	Three vessels of soapstone. Stray find (not depicted)	VA/MA	Settlement traces
Gunnarshaug	Fragments of iron; probably weapons, tools like rasp, scissors, oblong iron ring and some iron nails; conical weight of led, pieces of a thick plate of led, spindle whorl of soapstone, oblong piece of burnt clay, three hones of shale, piece of soapstone and a burnt animal bone. Found in a mound and might stem from two or more graves	VA?	Weapon grave
Øvrebø	Vessel of soapstone. Stray find (not depicted)	VA	Settlement traces?
Nedre Hauge	Sword, axe. Found in a cairn?	VA?	Weapon grave
Nedre Hauge	Axe. Stray find	MVP/Early VA	Weapon grave?
Reheia. Utvik?	Brooch of bronze. Found at Reheia	VA	Grave?
Avaldsnes	Ten beads, SA axe, lost weaver's baton. From a plundered grave at Kongshaug	VA?	Grave (F)
Avaldsnes	Two spiral-shaped finger rings of bronze. Found in a mound	VA	Grave
Avaldsnes	Runic inscription on Jomfru Maria synål	VA/Early MA	Monument
Avaldsnes	Settlement traces (not depicted)	VA	Settlement traces
Avaldsnes	Balance weight of bronze. Possible VA secondary grave in Flaghaug (or Flaghaug 1)	VA? RIA?	Grave?
Skeie	Shield boss of iron, rod of iron, vessel of soapstone, small piece of flint, c. 10 clenched nails of iron with fragments of wood. Unburnt bones found in a chamber south of the artefacts. Three (?) graves in Løehaugen	VA	Weapon grave/ Boat burial Graves
Kolstø	An axe. Stray find	VA	Weapon grave?
Kolstø	Two keys of bronze, fragment of iron (hinge?). Found in Oshaug	Early VA?	Grave (F?)
Vårå	Vessel of soapstone, axe, tang of a knife. Found in a mound at different times	Early VA?	Grave
Vårå	Vessel of soapstone with pieces of an iron handle, pieces of a spearhead of iron, fragments of a horse bit and some clenched nails. Found in a mound	VA?	Weapon grave/ Boat burial?

Table 11: List of the VA finds in Fig. 32

Farm	Description	Dating	Interpretation
Bø	Noble manor	Late VA origin?	Old manor structure
Bø	MA manorial church. Built in stone possibly in the 12 th century (Fyllingsnes 2000b: 103)	Late VA origin?	Monument
Avaldsnes	Royal estate	Late VA origin	Old manor structure
Avaldsnes	MA royal collegiate chapel. Built in stone after 1250 (Lidén 1999)	Late VA origin	Monument

Table 12: List of the MA structures within the study area in Fig. 32

6.6. Discussion of the Changing Landscapes of Power

The following chapter is concerned with a long-term analysis of where power dwelled in the local landscape. Do the developments show continuity or discontinuity regarding the presence of elites in the area and the social structures they led? Here, I will apply the analytical tools described in Ch. 3.2, and the discussion is based on the changes observed in the burial material (Fig. 33) and some textual sources. In the Late PRIA and Early RIA there are tendencies of social stratification. Although there are few grave finds, the graves present in the material show high social status. Two examples of richly furnished graves are the male Late PRIA grave from Kolstø and the female Early RIA (B2) grave from Bø. The preserved furnishing of the Kolstø grave included several weapons and a probable neck ring of iron, and the Bø grave included a gold berlock and a Roman bronze serving dish. The few rich graves from these periods show that certain individual agents in the local society managed to attain power, perhaps by investing surplus in the regional exchange. According to Näsman's model (Fig. 8), the occurrence of rich graves in the Early RIA represents the presence of 'chieftains'. As the traces of such leaders of society at this time are few and scattered, power to engage in regional exchange was probably largely based on fragile personal relations lasting no longer than perhaps a generation. In an archaeological perspective, the above mentioned burials might perhaps be termed shorter *events*, with no observable continuity. Within these periods, the activities of most leaders in the area were probably concerned primarily with the local society. The two graves indicate that a few leaders recognized the area's potential to produce an agricultural surplus and to organise exchange relations.

The area's strategic potential comes to the surface in the Late RIA, and most notably in the phase C2. This correspond to what Slomann (1972, fig. 5) quite suitably termed the 'Avaldsnes phase'. Here, the rich graves do not occur sporadic and spread, but concentrated chronologically and geographically. The four rich C2 graves at Avaldsnes probably represent an accelerated structural change of the *conjuncture* scale. In contrast to the situation in the Early RIA, this must have been the establishment phase of a stable and strong elite milieu, where power in the area was sustained at the same farm over several generations. The three graves in Flaghaug imply a particularly close relation between these leaders, which might even represent successive chieftains with inherited, or ascribed, status. Flaghaug 3 from C3 is the only status grave certainly dated to the ending phase of the RIA, and might indicate a general lesser need to invest in power manifestations. This secondary burial in Flaghaug refers to the spending of the C2, probably then still remembered in the area. One would assume that the structural changes observable in C2 which show continuity to C3 probably represent some lasting changes in the social structure at least into the 4th century AD. Nevertheless, the social developments from the Late RIA to the MP are more uncertain. The many and generally sparsely furnished graves of the MP contrasts both the local Late RIA material and the rich MP burial material of South Rogaland.

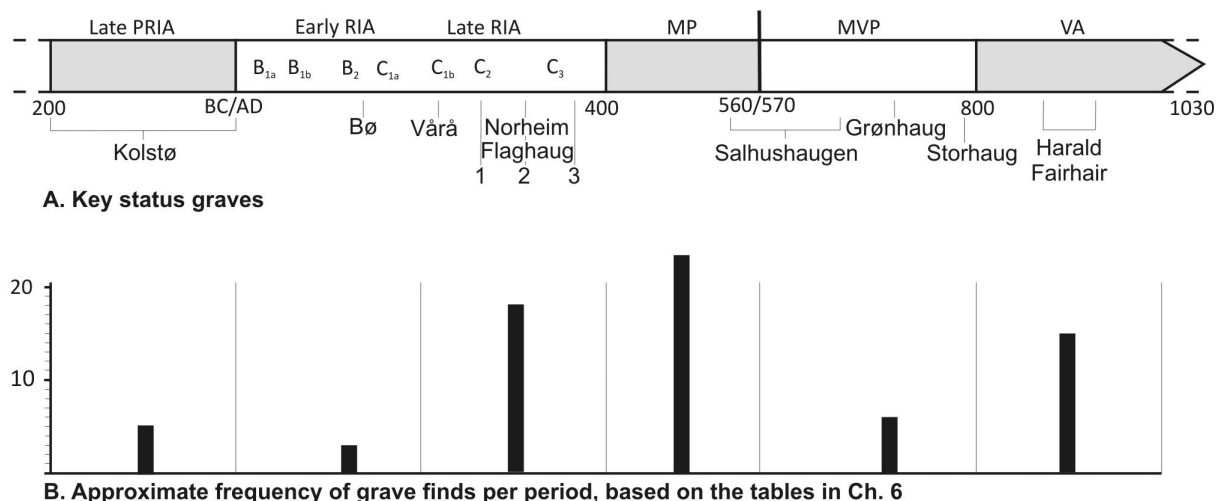


Fig. 33: Key status graves and frequency of graves throughout the IA

Mythical genealogy of Augvald; cf. Opedal (2005: 88ff)		Descendants of Augvald; estimated year of birth after Vea (1999: 388f)	
Creative power	Fornjot	600	Augvald Roge
Elemental forces	Kåre (wind)	630	Jøsur
	Frost (frost)	660	Hjør
	Snø (snow)	690	Hjørleiv
	Thorre (frost)	720	Halv the Hero
	Nor	750	Hjør Halvson
Early legendary kings of Rogaland	Gard Agde	780	Flein
	Rugalf	810	Hjør Fleinson
	Rognvald	840	Geirmund Heljarskinn

Table 13: Reconstructed genealogy of legendary kings associated with Rogaland and Hordaland

King	Period of rule (c.)	Association with Avaldsnes in the sagas
Harald Fairhair	872-930	Avaldsnes was one of Harald's five west Norwegian royal estates (Hkr: 74). Harald died in Rogaland and was buried in a grave mound at 'Haug by Karmsund' (ibid: 77).
Håkon the Good	933-961	In the succession conflict between Håkon and the sons of Eric Bloodaxe, a major battle was fought near Avaldsnes (ibid: 92).
Olav Tryggvason	995-1000	Olav drowned a band of sorcerers at Avaldsnes who came to attack the king (ibid: 172). Olav was visited by Odin, who tried to poison Olav and told the king of Augvald and his sacred cow (ibid: 172ff). Olav opened two mounds at Avaldsnes and found human and cow bones respectively (OTr: 94).

Table 14: Norwegian kings prior to AD 1000 associated with the royal estate in the MA sagas

Does the MP material reflect a structural break or continuity from the situation of the RIA? Although the material is less rich, there still are several signs suggesting continuity. The major part of richer graves of both the RIA and MP are concentrated along Bøvågen, and the settlement traces at Avaldsnes show a continued settlement from the Late RIA to the MP (cf. Hafsaas 2007: 12). The only weapon graves of the Late RIA were found at Avaldsnes and Reheia, and the spearheads found at Avaldsnes and at Vikshåland by Reheia represent the only certain MP weapon finds in the area. These patterns in the use of the local landscape might possibly suggest continuity and lasting structures of *longue durée*. According to Skre (1998: 225), the tendency of few MP grave finds is common in Scandinavia, with exception of Southwest Norway and Bornholm. Solberg (2000: 161) suggests the contrast between few and rich graves in North and South Rogaland might denote less social stress in the north. Myhre (2000a: 9) agrees that the rich graves in South Rogaland show much social stress between local leaders. The agricultural region of Romerike (Jordanes' 'Raumarici'; Get: v. 24) in East Norway, has produced few MP graves. Skre (1998: 242f) argues that between AD 200-600 manorial structures were formed here with a basis in the best farms. If the decrease of rich graves in the Avaldsnes area is interpreted as an increased centralisation of power rather than a decline, the same might have happened here. A possible intensified stratification from the RIA could even mean the formation of a MP chiefdom at Karmøy – the 'Eunixi' of Jordanes (cf. Hedeager 2004: 109).

The possibility that the lack of rich finds from the MP does not represent an actual absence of rich graves, but rather a lack of reported rich finds, must also be considered. This could perhaps mask a more expected situation with some rich graves. Although the problem of representativeness doesn't explain the whole picture, several finds have probably been lost especially in the early 19th century. In 1834, just after the unearthing of the Flaghaug graves, the priest and excavator Brun reported with great concern that the local farmers were 'obsessed with a lust for digging', that they did not 'speak or dream of other than gold in the soil', and that he prayed they would report their finds (Slomann 1964: 21). Their eagerness to report finds might not have corresponded to his prayers, as shown by the RIA serpent head ring which reached Bergen Museum in 1872, twenty years after it was found. Few local finds were reported to the museums in the decades after Flaghaug, but the digging in mounds are reported e.g. from Øvrebø c. 1835 (Christie 1832-41: 5), and the priests at Torvastad writes in the 1830-40s that several 'urns and antiquities' similar to those in Flaghaug had been found at Norheim (Øvrebø 1926c). As mentioned earlier, some lost MP status objects are documented, including a cruciform brooch and two or three bronze vessels. However, although some MP graves might have been plundered, terming it a 'gold rush', hopefully, is an exaggeration (cf. Hernæs 1997: 102). Nevertheless, the uncertainty of the find situation makes it hard to judge if there were strong elites present in the MP, or if the tendency indicates a break with the developments of the RIA.

The uncertain interpretation of Salhusaugen causes further problems for the discussion. First of all, the broad ¹⁴C-dating to AD 530-660 falls between two periods, and at the time of what have been termed a supra-regional crisis. As the mound seems to break with the material of the MP and show a location similar to the MVP ship burials, the mound might perhaps date from the Early MVP, c. AD 600, just after the 'crisis'. Although the reason for building this large mound with no certain grave is unknown, it indicates social stratification and the presence of elites. The mound was roughly the same size as Flaghaug, and building it demanded an organised effort. Ritual practices are essential for communicating power and changing the structures of society (Bourdieu 1996). The ritual of building this monument might have been used by elite agents to introduce new social structures and to confirm their power, just like Flaghaug was raised in the establishment of the 'Avaldsnes phase'. If a crisis really occurred, the dramatic situation might have demanded a ritual action from the society. Perhaps the localisation trend of mounds in the northern part of the area, later confirmed by the ship burials, represented a local transfer of power to an elite situated here? If this suggestion is correct, the building of the ship mound Grønhaug at Bø c. AD 720 and Storhaug near Salhusaugen c. AD 780 represented an elite milieu which dwelled near Bø in a period of *longue durée*. Even if the relation between Salhusaugen and Grønhaug is somewhat unclear, the tradition of ship burials shows a strong degree of continuity in the presence and location of power, at least in the 8th century AD.

Opedal (1998; 2005) has suggested that the Storhaug burial represents the burial of a regional, west Norwegian king. This regional king held hegemony of a larger territory through alliances with elites in different parts of Hordaland and Rogaland (Opedal 2001a). In Näsman's model, this might either correspond to the 'confederation' of political units, or perhaps even a territorial 'kingdom'. If the 'Arochi' of Hordaland and the 'Eunixi' and 'Ethelrugi' of Rogaland mentioned by Jordanes (Get: v. 24) represent actual units, these might eventually have formed a confederation. Similarly, the legendary sagas mention kings who supposedly ruled over the territories of Hordaland and Rogaland (Table 13). Some of the kings, like Augvald and Halv, are associated with the Avaldsnes area (Opedal 2005: 88ff). Even if the reconstructed datings and the actual presence of specific kings could justly be criticised, the essence of the tradition correspond well to the presence of elites buried in large ship mounds. The MA saga material suggests the presence of supra-regional kings in the area from Harald Fairhair in the end of the 9th century AD, and thereafter several of the subsequent kings (Table 14). As argued earlier, there are few signs of a violent take-over in the area. If this was the case, one would assume that the royal power met resistance from local elites, and that such a regional battle would probably have been remembered in skaldic poems. Instead, Harald might have gained important allies at Bø by favouring social relations, rather than military power, to get his estate (cf. Earle 1997: 3ff). The continuity of Bø as a MA manorial estate, close to the royal estate, might be due to such alliances.

7. ANALYSIS OF THE AREA AS A CENTRAL PLACE IN THE IRON AGE

Although several researchers have termed the Avaldsnes area a centre in the Early and Late IA (e.g. Ringstad 1986, fig. 168), few have examined the area's possible functions as a centre more carefully. Therefore, there is disagreement if the area actually functioned as a centre in these periods. While Magnus (2002: 17) terms the area a central place 'from ca AD 300 to well into the Middle Ages', Løken (2001: 6) argues that there is no evidence of a continuous power concentration here between Flaghaug and the ship graves. A central place is per definition an area where elites gathered central functions for a larger region. The analysis in Ch. 6.6 indicates that strong elite milieus were present in the area at least at Avaldsnes in the Late RIA and around Bø in the Late MVP. Furthermore, with some degree of uncertainty, the analysis opened up for possible continuities in these patterns both within the Early and Late IA. On the basis of insights from Ch. 6, the analysis in Ch 7.1 examines the hypothesis that the area functioned as a central place within the Early and Late IA. As the first central places appeared in the RIA (Ch. 3.2), the Late PRIA is not included in this analysis. In addition, as the analysis in Ch. 6.6 suggests that Salhusaugen at the transition between the MP and MVP resembles the local trends of the MVP rather than those of the MP, it is here considered among the Late IA material. Ch. 7.2 carries out a wider Scandinavian comparison. The features of the area is compared to other central places in terms of which central place indicators were present in these centres, what chronological focus the centres had, and what the size of the areas covered by the centres were.

7.1. Analysis of the Area's Central Functions in the Iron Age

This chapter focuses on the potential central functions the area might have had in the Early and Late IA. The analysis is based on distribution maps showing those of the central place indicators, discussed in Ch. 4.3, which are present in the area in the two periods. These indicators might point towards different central functions which are contextualised in my discussion. The central functions gathered by elites in the centres could be divided into three groups. First of all, there are (A) functions related to the exchange of resources and the production of handicraft. Furthermore, there are (B) ritual and judicial functions, as well as (C) military functions. In each of the periods, the presence of the three groups of central functions is discussed. The location in the cultural landscape was an important factor for where central places emerged. As described in Ch. 1.3, the landscape of the Avaldsnes area is flat, with good agricultural soil and rich fish resources. Even if the area lacked a direct access to resources like iron and hides, such products were probably gained from the control of resources going through Karmsund. Thus, as long as the exchange routes went through this main sea way, the area held a very favourable position regarding both communications and the access to resources.

7.1.1. Central Functions in the Early Iron Age

With regards to the traffic going through Karmsund, there are some particularly narrow passages which form very strategic points. Because of the strong and shifting current of Salhusstraumen, the area around the bay of Bøvågen was the most effective place to control the passing traffic. Likewise, some other narrow passages are found at Austevik by Vårå in the southern part of the Avaldsnes area, as well as at the passage through Smedasundet by Gard and Hauge in Haugesund, just north of the study area. In the Early IA, the most status indicating finds seems to come from these areas.

Within the Avaldsnes area, this includes the area around Vårå, and at Bø and Avaldsnes by Bøvågen (cf. Fig. 34). All the known bronze vessels from the Early IA, preserved as well as lost, stem from the Bøvågen area. As discussed in Ch. 6.6, the formation of manor structures might have happened within the area, already in the Early IA. The rich grave finds at Bø, Avaldsnes, as well as Vårå, indicate that people of high social status resided here, which makes these farms probable candidates for the core of such manor structures (cf. Bjørkvik 1999: 21ff). The farm name Bø in itself indicates a large farm, and it is considered a place name which works as a central place indicator (Grimm 2006: 434). As mentioned in Ch. 5.8, Bø might originally have included several of its bordering farms such as Gunnarshaug, Øvrebø and Hauge. However, even if both the farms around Bø and Vårå have some rich finds from within the Early IA, the material of the Late RIA show a quite clear focus at Avaldsnes.

Although there has not yet been found any hall at Avaldsnes, excavations have revealed extensive settlement traces from both the RIA and MP. The concentration of gold objects and bronze vessels suggests a role as the estate of elites of regional significance. In the establishment of the farm as an elite estate, large amounts of precious metal were invested. The best preserved Flaghaug 1 had a drinking set consisting of bronze and silver objects, a neck ring and four finger rings of gold, and status weapon with gold and silver fittings. The two other status graves from the same grave mound includes Flaghaug grave 2, with a bronze vessel and three gold rings, and Flaghaug grave 3 with a bronze vessel and gaming pieces. In addition, two stray finds of a finger ring of serpent-head type and a pendant of gold, probably represent the remains of two additional status graves at Avaldsnes. A moderate estimate of the total weight of gold from the Late RIA graves at the farm is 700 g (cf. Table 15). According to O. Rygh, the total amount of gold in Flaghaug was c. 750 g (Bøe 1926: 48), which would denote a total of c. 800 g. This means that the largest concentration of gold objects in the region at this time, were deposited in graves at Avaldsnes in the late 3rd century AD. With a basis in Flaghaug 1 and contemporary finds in the area, IA researchers such as Shetelig (1912: 58f) and Solberg (2000: 119f) have suggested that the Avaldsnes area was a centre which redistributed status goods. Several types of status import found in Flaghaug 1 are not found anywhere else in the region, which is a pattern one would perhaps expect from a centre which kept the most prestigious objects.

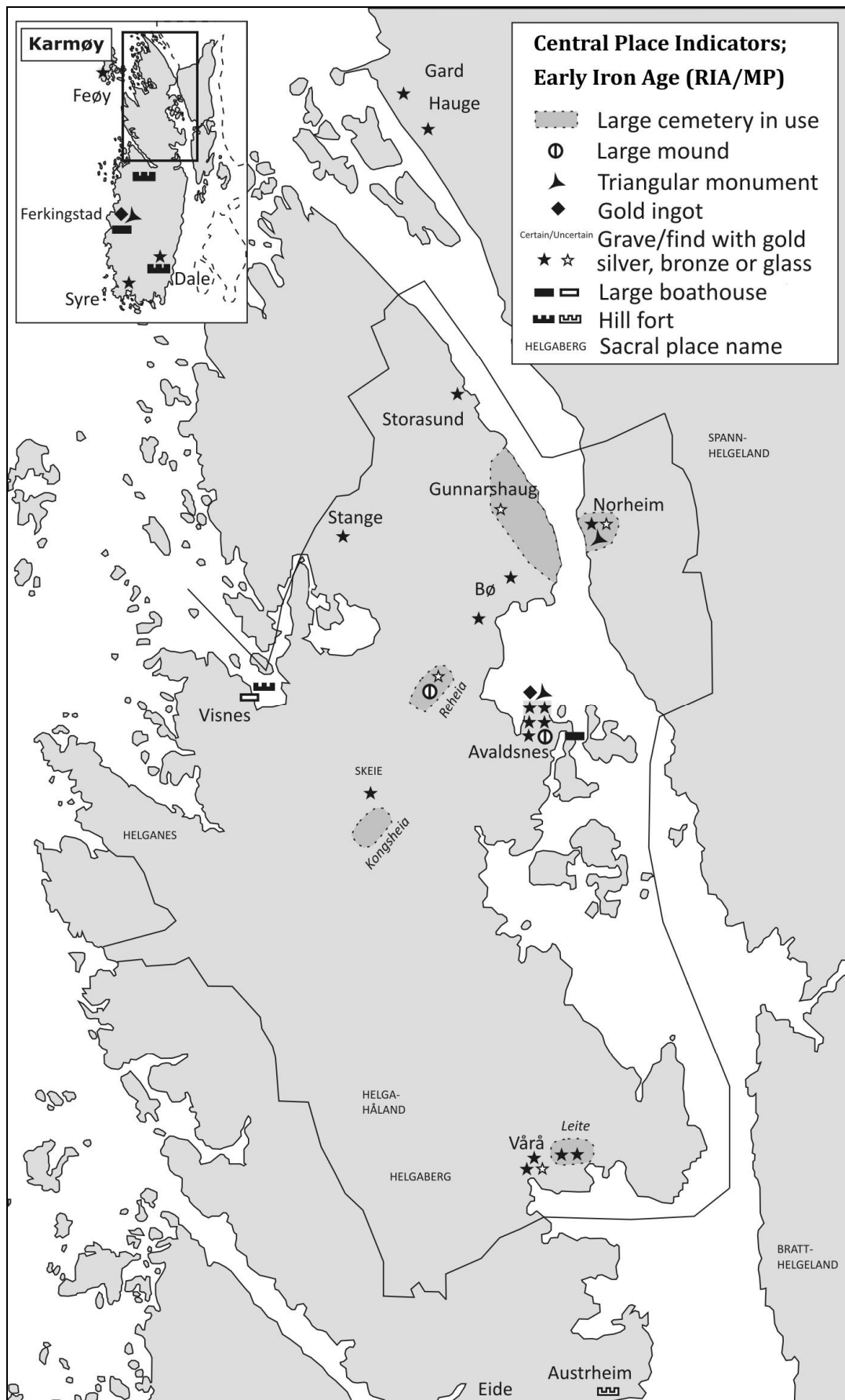


Fig. 34: Central place indicators of the Early IA

In order to organise the exchange of outfield resources for prestige goods, one needed to establish contacts with centres that had such resources and goods. Fibulas of the rosetta type from the early 3rd century AD, were probably produced near Himlingøje in Denmark, and the presence of these fibulas have been seen as a sign of marriage alliances. The rosetta fibula found in a rich female grave at Vårå might denote that such supra-regional contacts were arranged already before the local peak at C2. Flaghaug 1 included a drinking set which was probably used in parties carried out to establish elite alliances (Solberg 2000: 120). The three status rings found at Avaldsnes (cf. Table 15) might be applied to identify regional alliance networks. Such rings are often interpreted as a sort of insignia used by the elite, and these might have been given as gifts between elites as a sign of alliances (ibid: 93f). Flaghaug 1 included a large neck ring and a finger ring of Type 18. Although this finger ring type is found e.g. in Himlingøje, it is uncommon outside Norway. Andersson (1993b: 65f) suggests that this ring type had a special significance here. In Rogaland, the three finds of such finger rings show an interesting pattern. At Bjoa in Vindafjord and at Hove in Sandnes, such rings are found together with arm rings of gold. The area around Hove show many of the same find categories as Avaldsnes (Myhre 1997b). It is possible that a regional centre in the Avaldsnes area was allied with centres in Hove and Bjoa. In addition, a finger ring of serpent head type probably stems from another grave at Avaldsnes. A similar ring is found at Nes in Kvinnherad, which might have been a centre which controlled several outfield resources. In addition, fragments of a sword with gilded scabbard fittings from Etne, South Hordaland, resembles the scabbard in Flaghaug 1, which indicates close relations (Shetelig 1912: 61).

If some categories of special objects like gold rings and gilded sword fittings were spread from the Avaldsnes area, it is also possible that handicraft such as goldsmithing in fact happened here. Finer metal working is known from several Norwegian central places in the Early IA, and especially in Southwest Norway (Hjärthner-Holdar et al. 2002: 177ff; Myhre 2007). The Himlingøje area probably was a centre for goldsmithing at the time the elite milieu in the Avaldsnes area was established. As the fibula from Vårå suggests close relations with Himlingøje, this might have led to an exchange of such specialist knowledge. It is then curious that the golden neck ring from Flaghaug 1 has no obvious parallels in Scandinavia (Andersson 1995: 96f). Rings of Types R300-301 show similarities, and several of these are found in West Norway (ibid: 94ff). Likewise, the pendant of gold found at Kongshaug, Avaldsnes, does not have any direct parallels. The pendant was of 20 carats gold, the same as an ingot of gold found at Kongshaug (Hafsaas 2005: 15). It is tempting to relate the ingot to a balance weight found in Flaghaug, but as mentioned in Ch. 5.2 the balance might stem from a Late IA grave. Andersson (1995: 174) suggests that both the pendant and the serpent head ring might be of a local, west Norwegian origin. The large amount of gold present at Avaldsnes, of which much is formed as innovative object types, might suggest that some of these were actually produced in the local area.

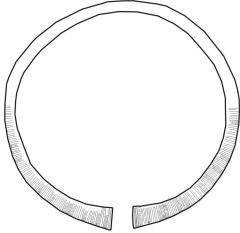



Grave		Description	Weight	
Flaghaug 1	C718	Neck ring, similar to Type R301 [38 Lod]	590.3 g	
Flaghaug 1	B614	Finger ring of Type 18 [1,5 Lod]	24.1 g	
Flaghaug 1	B611	Circular gold-foil; button for bandoleer	-	
Flaghaug 1	Lost	Dress pin, probably of Type B124 [2" long]	-	
Flaghaug 1/ Flaghaug 2	Lost	6 finger rings; 3 from Flaghaug 1, 3 from Flaghaug 2, lost [2,5 Lod]	c. 38.8 g	 x 6
-	S6810	Pendant of gold, stray find, Kongshaug	4.4 g	
-	B2774	Finger ring of Type 39c, stray find, Avaldsnes (?)	42.9 g	
			700.5 g	

Table 15: A moderate estimate of the weight of gold from Avaldsnes in the Late RIA

The weight of the lost finger rings from Flaghaug 1 and 2 are estimated from the measurements in 'Lod' (in []) given by the excavator Brun (cf. Slomann 1964: 22). The weight of several objects of gold, such as the circular gold-foil and the lost dress pin, are not included in the calculation. According to W. F. K. Christie (1842b: 389), the lost dress pin was 2" long, which corresponds to c. 5.2 cm. Its closest parallel in the region is a pin of gold (B10890-1a) from Austre Vikse in Sveio, north of the study area. This pin measured 5.1 cm and weighed 1.54 g.

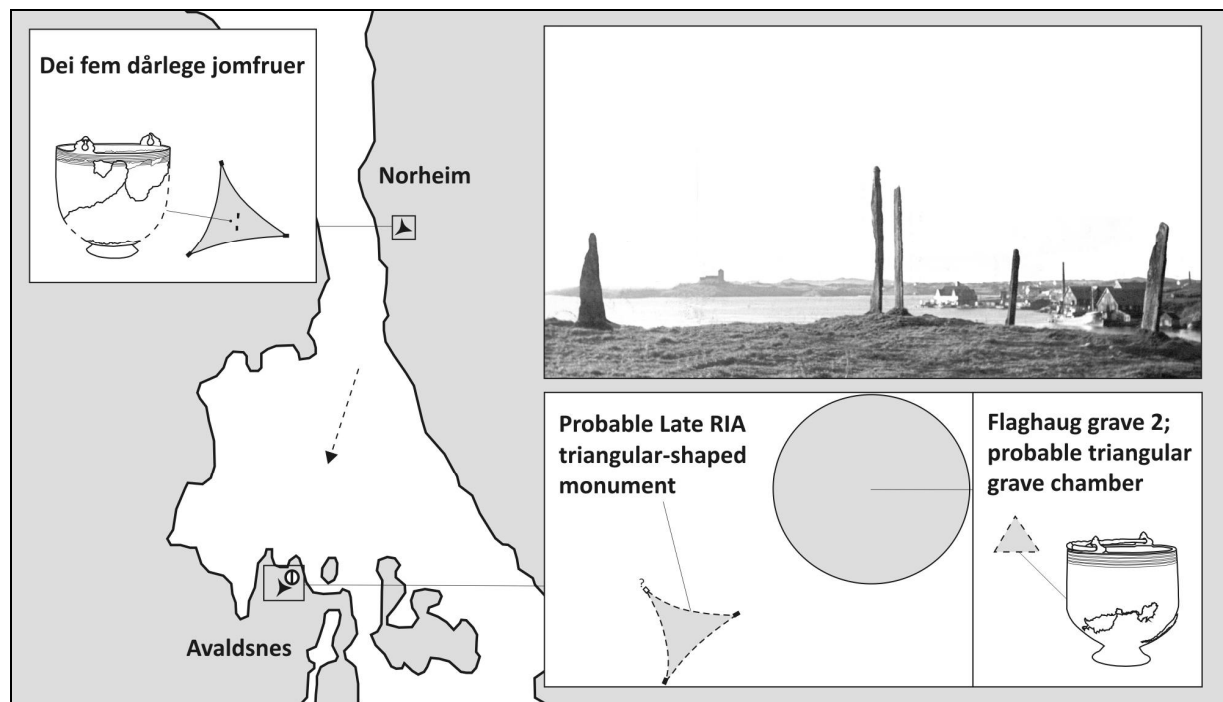
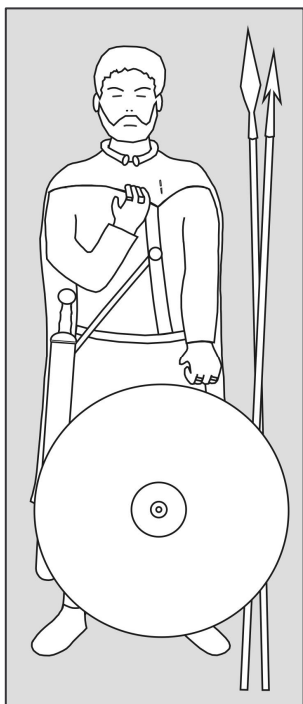


Fig. 35: Triangular monuments by Bøvågen. Arrow shows photo angle (photo: Myhre 2005b, fig. 7)

Some of the central place indicators might also shed light on ritual or judicial functions in the area. While all of the large grave-fields in the Avaldsnes area were used in the Early IA, it is possible that Reheia at this time represented the most public location of these. At the midpoint between Bø and Avaldsnes and along the road between Bøvågen and Haugavågen, Reheia might have been a ritual meeting place for a larger area. The two known collections of tall memorial stones at Norheim and Avaldsnes might also have functioned as public ritual sites. As discussed in Ch. 5.3, the stones at Avaldsnes probably formed a triangular monument, just like the stones at Norheim (cf. Myhre 2005b: 9f). As the Norheim grave and Flaghaug grave 2 had the same type of Hemmoor bucket as grave urn, and as Flaghaug 2 might stem from a triangular grave chamber, the two graves seem to be connected (Fig. 35). Andrén (2004: 414) suggests that graves in triangular monuments might represent ritual specialists, and interestingly, the grave from Norheim included bear claws. The two triangular monuments at Norheim and Avaldsnes were situated nearby the northern and southern entrance to Bøvågen, possibly working as ideological markers of the control area of the central place. It is interesting that Norheim's neighbouring farm had a sacral name, Spann-Helgeland (cf. Ch. 5.8). Similar sacral place names like Helgaberg and Bratt-Helgeland are found near Vårå. Sacred hills like Helgaberg are found for instance near the Danish central place Gudme (Hedeager 2002: 5). Far to the west, the place name Helganes is found at the farm Visnes. The farm name has been interpreted as Vifils-nes, possibly rooted in the ritual specialist title 'vifil', but this is debated (Særheim 2007: 259).

The presence of gold rings and status weapons in Flaghaug 1, suggests that the deceased held the highest social and military rank. Sword fittings of gold are regarded as a central place indicator, and



shield bosses of silver and neck rings of gold represent the most status indicating symbols of the Scandinavian RIA (Solberg 2000: 119). In the bog finds from Illerup, a few military leaders of the highest rank had shield bosses of silver. Flaghaug 1 is the only Norwegian grave with such a shield boss (cf. Løken & Myhre 2008, fig. 30). At the time the mound Flaghaug was built, it was the largest mound ever built in the area. The only other weapon grave which is probably from the RIA, stems from mound B#30 at Reheia. The burial, whether it was a primary or secondary burial, would also have demanded a lot of resources. As discussed in Ch. 6.6, the MP weapon finds at both Reheia and Avaldsnes suggests some continuity in the location of military power in the area. The leader in Flaghaug 1 did probably draw warriors from allies in South Hordaland and Rogaland.

Fig. 36: Reconstruction sketch of the military leader buried in Flaghaug grave 1

Some local central place indicators might be associated with military central functions. Investigations of the harbour area at Avaldsnes gave the dating of a large boat house here to c. AD 300. Large boat houses from the RIA are also found at Ferkingstad, West Karmøy (Myhre 1997a, fig. 2). The name Ferkingstad (probably o.No. *far-þegn-staðir*) might denote the warrior title 'thegn' (cf. Brink 1996), perhaps indicating a local leader subordinate to the leaders of the Avaldsnes area. Within the area, a hill fort is found at Børholmen in Visnesvågen, nearby an undated boat house. It has been suggested that this hill fort was a control point for traffic by sea going on the west side of Karmøy, and for the on land traffic going from Haugavågen to Bøvågen (Ch. 5.3). The possible, but yet unconfirmed, hill fort at Valberg, Austevik, south of the area, might have had a similar strategic potential. This would have been a perfect spot for controlling traffic going over the isthmus of Eide, avoiding the sea way of Karmsund. Two more hill forts are found further south on the island, and these might possibly also be linked to the Avaldsnes area. The so called court sites are often seen as barracks and gathering points for warriors. No such sites are yet found in the area, but Stylegar & Grimm (2005: 119) suggest that there might have been court sites here. At Dysjane in South Rogaland and at Skei in Trøndelag, triangular monuments are situated at the entrance to court sites (Holand 2001, fig. 5; Myhre 2005b, fig. 7). However, if the same was the situation at Norheim or Avaldsnes remains speculations.

7.1.2. Central Functions in the Late Iron Age

As the Late IA is a proto-historical period, historical sources discussed in Chs. 5.8 and 6 are applied to contextualise the central functions the area possibly held during the period. First of all, there are legends of regional kings such as Augvald and Halv, which are linked to the area (Opedal 2005: 88ff). As discussed in Ch. 6.6, the ship burials indicate that the legends are rooted in an actual MVP regal milieu in the area. Nevertheless, there is some contrast between the kings' association with the farm Avaldsnes and the northern focus of the rich graves. Starting with Salhusaugen at the transition to the MVP, the focus of the status graves shifted from Avaldsnes to the Salhusaugane area. The first truly rich burial of the period, the ship mound Grønhaug, was built at Bø and visually referred to the local area here. Some generations later, the large Storhaug was built by Salhusaugane, at a point more widely visible. The two rich ship burials suggest a power concentration at the farms around Bø lasting at least throughout the Late MVP. Although no MVP hall buildings have yet been identified in the area, the presence of halls nearby larger grave-fields e.g. at Borre and Spangereid (Fig. 9; Fig. 10) indicates that halls might have been situated near Salhusaugane. It is interesting that probable boat burials are found at Avaldsnes, Vårå and Skeie (Fig. 37). Though these are all sparsely furnished, it is amusing that the important Early IA farms Avaldsnes and Vårå had this special type of Late IA burials.

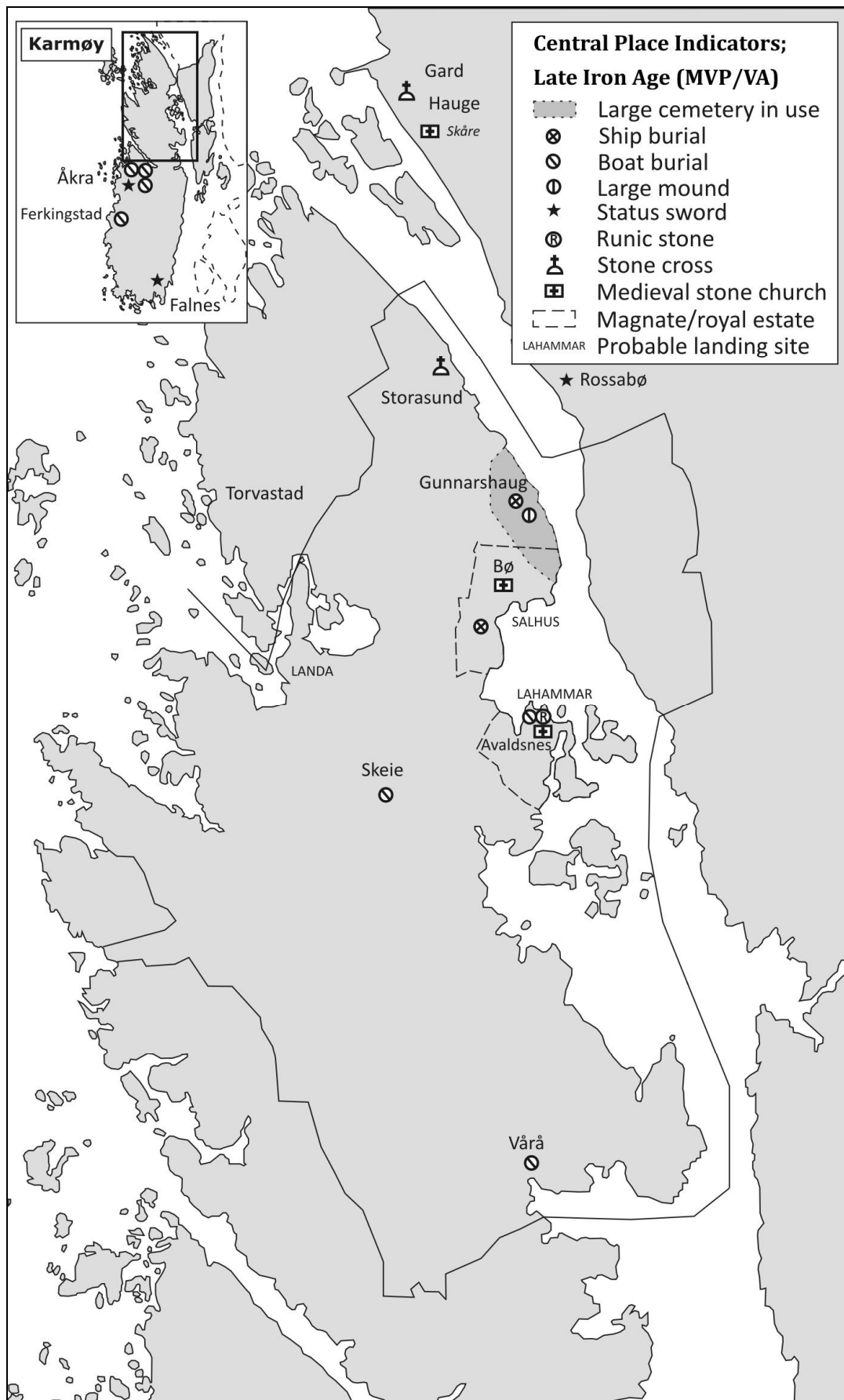


Fig. 37: Central place indicators of the Late IA

The furnishing of the ship burials show that some rare imported objects reached the area. Among the preserved furnishing from Grønhaug was a tapestry with a bird motif. The bird motif is a known MVP status marker, and the motif is known locally from a brooch (S4260) from Ferkingstad (Rønne 1995: 69f). Grønhaug also included a shred of what was probably an English glass beaker (Myhre 1995: 85). The Storhaug burial yielded glass beads, gaming-sets of glass and amber, a golden arm ring and a sword set of a single-edged and a double-edged sword. This import in rich graves should probably be linked with the North Sea trade which started in the Early MVP (Hodges 1982; Myhre 2002: 211). To some degree, this trade also included the exchange of mass products. The fishing equipment present in the Storhaug burial might indicate that fish was among the resources brought abroad. At the island of Utsira, far west of Karmøy, there are traces of settlement starting in the MP. Solberg (2000: 204) suggests that this settlement might be linked to organised fishery, led by the leader in Storhaug. According to Snorri's story of Asbjørn Selsbane, there were at least two possible harbours in the area at the eve of the MA. Firstly, there was a harbour at Avaldsnes, where the king's man controlled the ship's loads. Secondly, it was also possible to land at the outside of Karmøy and walk to Avaldsnes, as Asbjørn did at his last visit. As discussed in Ch. 5.8, several local place names might be associated with possible harbours. Lahammar and Karvagrovne at Avaldsnes suggest a harbour here. Likewise, the name Salhus at Bø suggests another probable harbour along Bøvågen. The information of an alternative landing site at the west side of Karmøy has been linked with Landanes or Visnesvågen.

In the Late IA, the only larger grave-field certainly in use was the area around Salhusaugane (cf. Fig. 38). This was the largest local concentration of large grave mounds, with about 14 mounds over 18 m in diameter from different periods (cf. Table 4). Among these, the four largest between 30 and c. 45 m in diameter, were Grønhaug, Salhusaugen, Storhaug and an unidentified mound Gunnarshaug. Hernæs (1999: 129ff) has shown the tendency that the local BA mounds were located more inland, than the IA mounds along the sea way. The tendency is confirmed by the three dated BA mounds here. Although only the three largest IA mounds are dated, many of the other mounds probably also date from the IA. As the largest mounds here show a dating to the MVP, the grave-field has been compared to the collection of large MVP and VA mounds at Borre (Myhre 2002: 207). Both grave-fields might have functioned as the cemetery of regional kings. An interesting similarity is that both grave-fields had a triangular monument in the proximity (cf. Fig. 10). At Norheim, Andrén's (2004) interpretation of the triangular monuments with raised stones as symbols of Yggdrasil, and as ritual sites, is interesting. As mentioned in Ch. 5.8, a section of the Grímnismál poem links Karmøy to the rivers Thor waded to get to the thing site at Yggdrasil. It is possible that this old RIA monument at Norheim, which was probably a well known landmark for travellers, had gradually been associated with Yggdrasil symbolism as an important thing site. Hence, the area around Bø with many large mounds and an old triangular monument might have held ritual and judicial functions in the Late IA.

As discussed in Ch. 6.6, the legends of regional kings associated with Avaldsnes are probably based on the milieu reflected in the ship burials. Out of these kings, Halv the Hero is most closely related to military functions (Vea 1999). The leader buried in Storhaug probably had regional military functions. His grave furnishing included warrior equipment such as the two swords, a horse and horse gear, as well as a large rowing ship which demanded many oarsmen. Just outside the area, the MA church sites at Falnes, Ferkingstad, Åkra and Skåre show several central place indicators (cf. Fig. 34; Fig. 37). It is interesting that different versions of the Augvald legend claim that he was slain by local kings; either a king Ferking of Ferkingstad or king Varinn of Skorustrønd. The last of these locations is interpreted as Skåre in Haugesund (Skadberg 1950: 24). Instead of the local conflicts described in these legends, Opedal (1998: 130f) suggests that e.g. Ferkingstad was a local ally in the MVP. The VA boat burials at Åkra might represent another local elite (Opedal 2001a), which probably collaborated with the elites of the Avaldsnes area. Opedal's analysis of possible 8th century AD allies in the larger region includes many locations which later became king Harald Fairhair's royal estates (ibid: 135ff). The area's allies in South Hordaland and North Rogaland might have formed the core of a regional kingdom. Indirect control of larger parts of West Norway might have been possible through alliance networks. As mentioned above, Meling (2000, fig. 6.1) suggests that alliances can be traced from west Norwegian graves with horse gear, where the ship burials form a distributional core.

It has been claimed that royal estates such as Avaldsnes and Utstein were old manor structures taken over by king Harald in the late 9th century AD (Helle 1993: 149). As argued in Ch. 6.6, the fact that the farm Bø shows continuity in the MA as a noble manor very close to the royal estate at Avaldsnes, might indicate friendly relations between local elites at Bø and Harald in his establishment phase. The presence of a Late VA royal estate at Avaldsnes meant that several of the regional central functions probably were sustained in the area by the new royal power. When Harald died, he allegedly was buried in the Karmsund district, probably denoting that the area held a special position in his kingdom. According to MA traditions, he was buried at 'Haug by Karmsund', which might be either Hauge in Haugesund or Hauge next to Bø. If those burying the king wanted to associate him with the old local elite, the last location would have been appropriate. On the contrary, if the king was denied a burial near the seat of the local elite, a burial at a more peripheral site in Haugesund would make more sense. After the death of Harald, Avaldsnes seems to have been just one out of many royal estates. Snorri claims that the VA royal estate had a harbour with economical functions. Christian kings like Håkon the Good and Olav Tryggvason probably promoted the religion in the area, and the runic stone at Avaldsnes has been linked to an early cult of St. Michael (cf. Hernæs 1999). When two stone crosses were raised in the northern part of Karmsund in the Late VA, this was probably a signal to people passing by that the elites controlling the area accepted this new religion.

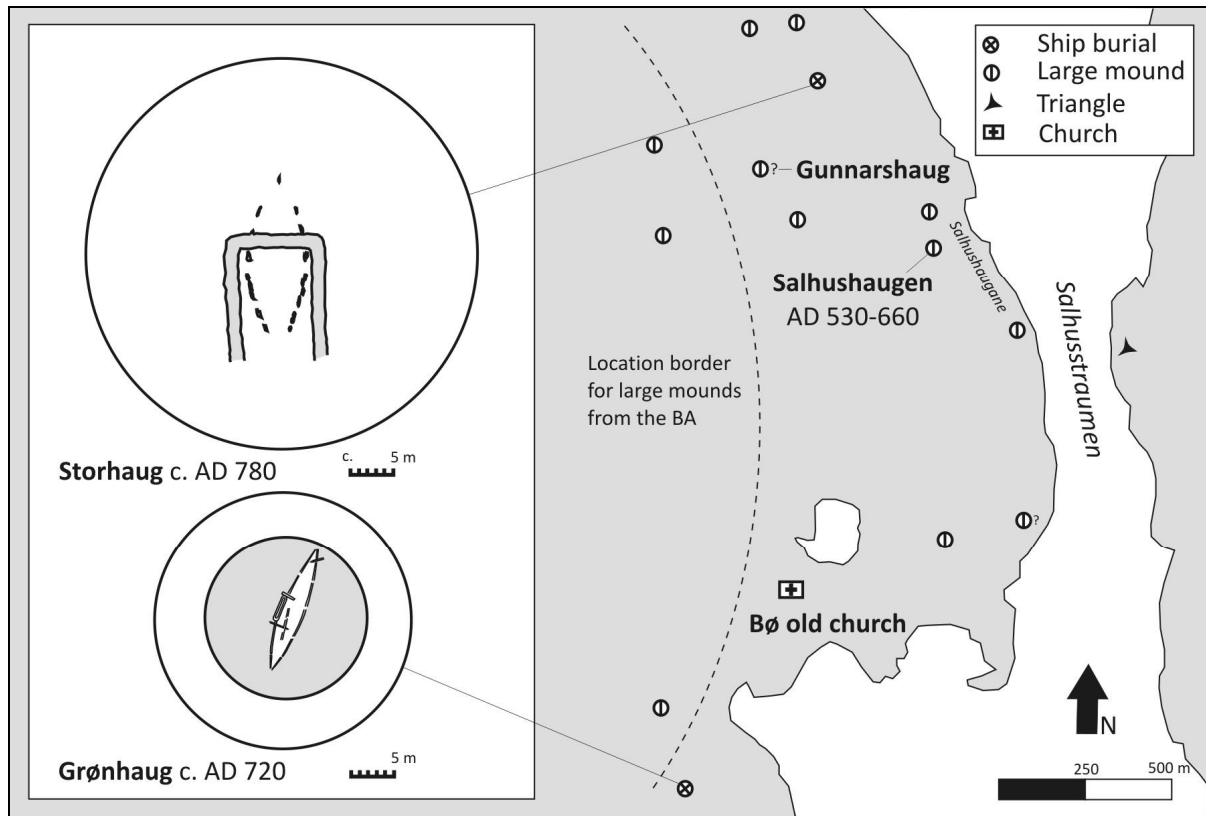


Fig. 38: Location of the ship burials. Sketches after Shetelig (Fig. 7) and Lorange (Opedal 1998: 16f)

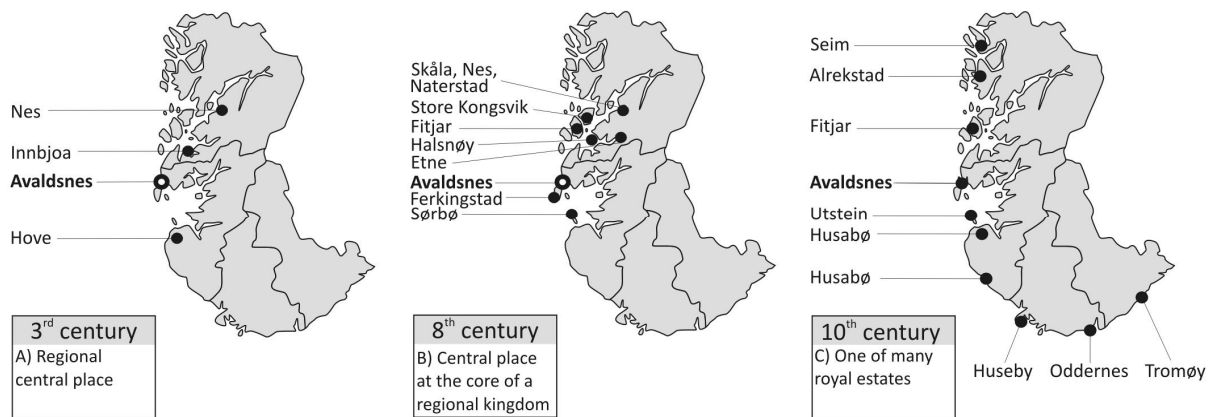


Fig. 39: Regional relations (after Løken & Myhre 2008, fig. 32; Opedal 1998: 138; Helle 1993, fig. 1)

Map A) depicts the distribution of certain status rings of gold in the region around Avaldsnes. These include a neck ring and finger ring Type 18 from Avaldsnes, arm rings and finger rings of Type 18 from Hove in Sandnes and Innbjøa in Vindafjord, and finger rings of serpent head types from Avaldsnes (?) and Nes in Kvinnherad.

Map B) depicts the distribution of what Opedal interprets as the Avaldsnes area's allied centres in the 8th century. Some special categories defined by Opedal (2005: 130f) link these centres to the same milieu as the Storhaug burial, making these centres the possible core of a regional kingdom (cf. *ibid*: 131ff).

Map C) depicts the royal estates explicitly associated with Harald Fairhair in MA sources – Seim, Alrekstad, Fitjar, Avaldsnes, Utstein (and possibly also Skåla in Kvinnherad) – and in addition some estates further east associated with Harald's successors, most notably farms of the Huseby name class. After Helle (1993, fig. 1).

7.1.3. Evaluation of the Avaldsnes Area as a Central Place

On the basis of the analysis of possible central functions in the Early and Late IA, it is then time to evaluate if it is appropriate to term the Avaldsnes area a central place in these periods. The three most important chronological points in the area's changing regional relations are sketched in Fig. 39. The analysis in Ch. 7.1.1 suggests that central functions related to resource exchange, ritual, judicial and military functions were present in the area within the Early IA. As most of these functions are closely related to the elite milieu present at Avaldsnes in the Late RIA, the analysis does not verify with certainty that the functions were sustained in the MP. Thus, as Løken (2001: 6) points out, there is no documented continuity in the period between the Flaghaug burials and the ship burials. The Flaghaug 1 burial has been seen as a sign of the only Norwegian supra-regional centre in the Late RIA (Solberg 2000: 119). Although the leader buried here might have drawn resources and warriors from other regions along the Norwegian coast in certain contexts (cf. Løken & Myhre 2008: 22ff), the area of primary interest for leaders of this central place were probably South Hordaland and Rogaland. Alliances within the region might be deduced from the distribution of status rings of gold (Fig. 39a).

In the MVP, the focus of the elites shifted to the area around Bø. Quite similar to the Late RIA, the analysis in Ch. 7.1.2 suggests that the ship burials and other related structures denote economical, ideological and military central functions for a larger region within this period. While the area in the Early IA was probably a centre which was associated with a larger region as it held central functions for this region, it is possible that the centre in the MVP ruled the surrounding region in a more direct, territorial way. Opedal (1998) suggests that the area's closest allies were situated at several strategic points in the South Hordaland and Rogaland region (Fig. 39b), and Meling (2000) proposes an even larger west Norwegian region of allies. In the Late VA several of the area's central functions seems to have been taken over by the royal estate of Harald Fairhair and his successors. It is possible that the area held some special significance in Harald's kingdom as he was possibly buried in the district. After Harald, the MA textual sources describe Avaldsnes as just one out of many royal estates (Fig. 39c).

Thus, the presence of several central functions in the Early and Late IA show that the Avaldsnes area might be termed a central place within both of these periods. The area probably held these central functions for a region consisting primarily of parts of South Hordaland and Rogaland, and cooperated with its changing allies in this region at different times. In the Late RIA, the status milieu at Avaldsnes probably controlled these central functions, and in the Late MVP the milieu around Bø had a similar role. Although there might have been some continuity in the MP between these periods, the material is too uncertain to tell for sure. In the late 9th century AD, the area got a new role housing the royal estate of kings with supra-regional ambitions, and consequently kept some of its central functions.

7.2. Comparison with other Scandinavian Central Places

In this last chapter of the analysis, the characteristics of the Avaldsnes area as a central place within the IA are compared to the characteristics shown by other Norwegian and Scandinavian central places. Most of the central places used for this comparison, are mentioned in previous passages of the thesis. Firstly, the presence and absence of different central place indicators are discussed. Then the chronological focus of different Scandinavian central places, and the size of the area their central functions covered, is examined. An important aspect of the Avaldsnes area is that elite residences and larger settlements are not yet identified with certainty. Scandinavian central places like Gudme, Uppåkra and Tissø share the characteristic that halls and extensive settlement traces with finds from handicraft production and trade are found at the centre core. In the Avaldsnes area, large mounds from the Early IA are found at Avaldsnes and Reheia, and large mounds from the Late IA in the area around Salhusaugane. The richly furnished graves of both periods are also concentrated especially in the same area along Bøvågen. Deduced from the richer grave finds, the core of the central place was at the farms surrounding Bøvågen, with a focus at Avaldsnes in the Early IA and around Bø in the Late IA. As possible halls are found near important grave-fields at centres like Borre and Spangereid, Avaldsnes and the Bø area are locations one would suspect to find halls. While Avaldsnes has limited space for settlement, the plains around Bø have a greater potential for housing a large settlement.

Although no production sites have yet been found in the Avaldsnes area, the presence of rare status imports in both the Late RIA graves and the Late MVP ship graves show the importance of exchange in the area. Nevertheless, the large amounts of gold at Avaldsnes in the Late RIA, suggest possible goldsmith production here (cf. Ch. 7.1.1). The most interesting sacral place name in the area is Helgaberg, 'the sacred hill', which brings to mind the sacred hills of Gudme (Hedeager 2002: 5). In the analysis of ritual and judicial central functions in the area, I paid special attention to the triangular monuments at Norheim and Avaldsnes. As mentioned earlier, such monuments are found e.g. at Borre and Helgö (cf. Ch. 4.3). The tradition of triangular monuments with raised stones at North and West Karmøy seems to stem from the Early IA. Nevertheless, the triangular monument at Norheim might also have been an important ancient monument in the MVP, close to the grave-field at Salhusaugane. If the triangular monuments in the Late IA symbolised Yggdrasil, the centre might have been organised according to mythology, similar to Gudme and Uppsala (ibid; Sundqvist 2004). Regarding structures related to military functions, there was a large boat house at Avaldsnes and a hill fort a bit more peripheral at Visnes. In contrast to Spangereid (Fig. 9), there is no concentration of military structures at the centre core, and there are no identified court sites in the area. MA stone churches are another central place indicator seen e.g. at Borre, Spangereid and Huseby. Outside the Norwegian MA towns, few other stone churches were built as close as those at Bø and Avaldsnes.

The chronological focus of the Scandinavian central places differs. The important Danish central places at Himlingøje and Gudme had their peaks in the Late RIA and MP, respectively (Jensen 2003: 438, 425). In general, the MP was the major era of Scandinavian central places, as seen e.g. at the centre at Lye in Rogaland. Although the Avaldsnes area probably was the closest Norwegian parallel to Himlingøje in the Late RIA, the MP material yet known from the Avaldsnes area show very few of the rich archaeological finds one would expect at a MP centre (cf. Table 2). While the peak at Gudme, for instance, stop at the end of the MP (ibid: 425), some Swedish central places like Helgö and Uppåkra show a long continuity from the RIA to the Late IA. The site at Uppåkra showed interesting finds already in the PRIA, and it remained a central place from the RIA and into the Late VA, when the town of Lund was established 5 km further north (Hårdh & Larsson 2007: 84f). Although the situation of the MP is unclear in the Avaldsnes area, the presence of strong elites in the RIA and the MVP suggests at least some of the same continuity. The status milieu also present at Bø on the transition to the VA probably overlaps with the establishment of a Late VA royal estate at Avaldsnes. Several other central places showed a similar structural continuity as important estates in the VA. Sites like Gammel Lejre and Tissø in Denmark, Gamla Uppsala, Vendel and Valsgårde in Sweden and Borre in East Norway show such continuity from c. AD 600 to the 10th or 11th century (Jørgensen 2002: 216f).

While the central functions of many lesser central places only covered a local area, most of the centres mentioned above probably covered regional or supra-regional areas. The exchange and production of resources and prestige goods, were most likely the primary regional and supra-regional functions of centres like Himlingøje, Gudme, Uppåkra and Helgö (cf. Teigen 2007). In Himlingøje, alliances with other areas were probably shown symbolically using status rings as alliance gifts (cf. Jensen 2003: 437). The distribution of status rings in the region surrounding the Avaldsnes area in the Late RIA, and similarities in status graves in the same region in the Late MVP, suggests similar uses of status objects to signify regional alliance networks (Fig. 39a-b). As concluded in Ch. 7.1.3, the central place of the Avaldsnes area probably had a regional character at least in the 3rd and 8th centuries AD. Hence, the prime concern and direct relations of the centre were probably addressed towards its regional allies in South Hordaland and Rogaland. However, if local elites wanted to sustain a stable control of the exchange of resources coming from north and south through Karmsund, this also required relations with south Scandinavian areas as well as areas along the Norwegian coast. Thus, the area probably also had supra-regional allies. To sum up, the clearest contrasts between the Avaldsnes area and other Scandinavian central places are the absence of rich MP finds, and the lack of documented elite residents, workshops, harbours and larger settlement. However, the lack of such categories might perhaps be due to the lack of extensive research. The site of Uppåkra, for instance, was largely unknown before an excavation project was initiated in 1996 (Hårdh & Larsson 2007: 3ff).

8. SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

With a basis in the local IA material and analogies with contemporary processes in Scandinavia, my analysis suggests that the following developments might have taken place in the Avaldsnes area throughout the IA. In the Late PRIA and Early RIA, the presence of a few rich burials denoting high social status, suggests that the local societies in these periods were stratified. The few and scattered graves with imported objects, suggest that only a few of the local leaders achieved to make an active use of the strategic location along Karmsund, within shorter periods. In the Late RIA, the very rich material in the area in general, and at Avaldsnes in particular, suggests that a stronger and more stable elite milieu with regional contacts, was established in the area. The three rich Flaghaug graves and two other rich burials at Avaldsnes, suggests that the elites at this time were located at this farm.

From the centre core at Avaldsnes, the local elite probably gathered and sustained central functions for a larger region. In a similar way as the contemporary Danish Himlingøje, status rings of gold were probably handed out to its regional allies. The importance of the Late RIA central place lasted at least within the late 3rd and early 4th centuries AD. While the MP is the major era of Scandinavian central places, the Avaldsnes area has yielded few of the rich categories associated with central places from the MP. The many uncertainties connected to the local MP material, makes it hard to conclude if the developments showed either continuity or discontinuity from the Late RIA. The influence of the central place around Avaldsnes on a regional scale probably wasn't territorial by nature. However, it is possible that a larger district surrounding the Avaldsnes area was organised as a 'chiefdom' within the Early IA, perhaps corresponding to the 'Eunixi' listed by Jordanes. At the transition to the MVP, the large Salhusaugen was raised in the northern part of the area. The mound might possibly be associated with a new northern focus of elites situated near Bø, visible especially in the Late MVP.

The two local ship burials, recently redated to the 8th century AD, confirm that strong and stable elites were again present in the area. Several legendary sagas speak of west Norwegian regional kings, associated with the Avaldsnes area. Although the presence of specific kings cannot be verified, the presence of ship burials near Bø suggests that the legends are rooted in an actual status milieu. The ship burial Grønhaug, which was the first rich MVP grave in the area, was situated at Bø, and links the elite milieu to the Bø farms. A few generations later, Storhaug was built nearby at the grave-field of Salhusaugane. The MVP central place of the Avaldsnes area probably formed the core of a regional kingdom, quite parallel to Borre in East Norway. In the VA, the central functions of the area were gathered at the new royal estate at Avaldsnes. The establishment of Harald Fairhair's estate might have been a result of alliances with local elites, rather than a violent take over. In the MA, the old elite farms Avaldsnes and Bø showed continuity as a royal estate and a noble manor respectively.

Consequently, the conclusion of my analysis is that the hypothesis that the Avaldsnes area functioned as a central place in the Early and Late IA, prior to the establishment of a royal estate at Avaldsnes, seems probable. However, the central functions held by the central place were most likely closely related to the relatively stable presence of elites in the Late RIA and Late MVP, with no certain continuity in the MP. As my analysis of the IA material at hand, by necessity has the character of a pre-study, it seems appropriate to finally sketch some suggestions for further research on the central place of the Avaldsnes area. With regards both to the general Scandinavian trends of central places and the conclusion of my thesis, the periods from the RIA to the MVP seems most interesting. Within these periods, further surveys of the structures at the centre cores of the RIA and MVP, and further investigations of the problem of continuity or discontinuity in the MP, might be suggested.

The classical central place indicators found e.g. at Gudme and Uppåkra, but not yet in the Avaldsnes area, are larger settlement sites with hall buildings, workshops and harbours, all yielding stray finds of precious metal especially of MP and MVP dating. Such categories can only be found by large scale surveys and excavations. Central places are seldom situated solely at a specific farm, but its central functions are rather scattered over a larger settlement area as a greater complex. Compared to other regional central places, there has been little settlement research in the local area apart from surveys at the farm of Avaldsnes itself. If the focus of the local elites shifted in the MP or the MVP to the farms around Bø, this is where the centre core of these periods should be sought. Thus, instead of a focus solely around the farm of Avaldsnes, one should in addition consider the research potential of settlement traces, grave-fields and harbour areas at Bø, Nordbø and Gunnarshaug in the analysis. Above all, the poorly documented grave-field of Salhusaugane deserves further research (cf. Rønne 1995: 70f). Likewise, greater attention should be given to the use of the grave-field Reheia in the IA.

The relationship between the central place and other areas in local, regional as well as supra-regional contexts should be further investigated. First of all, new studies might shed light on the shifting internal relationship between the two most important farms, Avaldsnes and Bø, throughout the IA. Several of the other MA church sites just outside my study area, Hauge, Ferkingstad, Vea and Falnes, are all associated with different central place indicators (cf. Fig. 34; Fig. 37). Of special interest is the complex at Ferkingstad, with many such indicators, and material from the RIA to the MVP (cf. Hauken 1995: 44; Rønne 1995: 72). Opedal (2005: 134f) suggests Ferkingstad was an important allied of the MVP elite milieu in the area, and it might possibly have been a subordinate satellite central place. A wider and coordinated research of all potential central places in the South Hordaland and Rogaland region within the RIA, MP and MVP, is crucial to gain a better understanding of both cooperative and competitive relationships among these. Together, these perspectives might lead to an even better understanding of the dynamics of the regional central place of the Avaldsnes area, throughout the IA.

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