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**Viking colonialism: Contact and interaction between
Viking/medieval Norway and the Northern Isles.
(Volumes I and II)**

Scott, Barbara Gail, Ph.D.

University of Minnesota, 1993

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**Viking Colonialism:
Contact and Interaction Between Viking/Medieval Norway and the Northern Isles**

Volume I

**A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
BY**

Barbara Gail Scott

**IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

December 1993

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

This is to certify that I have examined this bound copy of a doctoral thesis by

Barbara Gail Scott

and have found that it is complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by the final
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GRADUATE SCHOOL

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	v
Figures	vi
Tables	vi
Acknowledgements	vii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Geographical Constraints	3
Temporal Constraints	12
Sources	15
Chapter 2: History of Viking and Norse Studies in the Northern Isles	24
J. Storer Clouston	24
Anton Brøgger	26
Research Since 1930	31
Current State of Pictish Studies	35
Chapter 3: Theoretical Approaches to Norse-Northern Isles Interaction	50
Theory and Explanation in Archaeology	50
Structuralism	56
Pierre Bourdieu	58
Anthony Giddens and Structuration Theory	61
John Barrett and Fields of Discourse	63
Recent Work on Domestic Architecture in Archaeology	65
Interpretation of Written Sources	76
Conclusion	84
Chapter 4: Viking and Medieval House Sites in Norway	87
House Construction	94
Terminology and Reconstructions	98
House Sites in Norway	
Discussion of Data	108
Important Individual Sites	114
Chapter 5: Viking and Norse House Sites in the Northern Isles	137
Bowed Walls	145
True Longhouses	146
Benches	148
Corner Hearths	149
Annexes	151
Passages	153
Use of Wood	153
Artifacts	158
Soapstone	159
Bone and Antler Artifacts	168
Paleoeconomic Data	174
Conclusion	175
Chapter 6: The Norse Settlement in the Northern Isles and the Non-	
Archaeological Evidence	179
The Sagas	181
Old Norse Terminology	192
Family Connections	203
The Church	218
Language	226

Developments in Norway	231
Ethnographic Evidence	237
Conclusion	241
Chapter 7: The Norse Settlements in Greenland and Northern Norway	247
Greenland and the Inuit	248
Northern Norway and the Saami	263
Conclusion	276
Chapter 8: Conclusion	281
Summary of Preceding Discussion	281
The Houses	281
Changes in Society	284
Food Preparation and the Position of Women	286
Interaction Between Norway and the Northern Isles	287
The Changing Nature of Norwegian Society	289
The Problem of Interaction	294
The Broader Perspective of Interdisciplinary Research	302
A Final Note	306
Appendix 1: House Sites in Norway	308
Norwegian House Sites	312
Arstad, Beiarn, Nordland	312
Birkeland av Store Eige, Eigersund	314
Birkelandsstølen av Store Birkeland, Bjerkreim	317
Borg, Vestvågøy, Lofoten, Nordland	322
Bøstad, Vestvågøy, Lofoten, Nordland	325
Eiterjord i Beiarn, Nordland	325
Finnby, Karlsøy, Troms	326
Fjetland, Odda, Hordaland	326
Fodna Mossige	328
Frikisdal, Leikanger, Sogn og Fjordane	328
Frøya, Sogn og Fjordane	331
Grødeim, Time, Rogaland	331
Gudmedalen, Flåmsdalen	333
Hanaland av Re, Time, Rogaland	334
Heliaug av Frette, Etne, Hordaland	336
Hjartøy, Hordaland	338
Hønnland av Åmdal, Eigersund	339
Hovden, Møsstrand, Telemark	340
Høybøen, Sotra, Hordaland	341
Kirkøya, Østfold	345
Knutstad, Lista	345
Krågeland 2 av Slettebø, Bjerkreim	345
Kvikstadvika i Skjerstad, Nordland	347
Liland, Vestvågøy, Lofoten, Nordland	347
Lindland, Rogaland	348
Liset, Bremanger, Sogn og Fjordane	348
Lurekalven, Nordhordland	349
Lyngaland 1, Time, Rogaland	351
Låkabø av Apeland, Vindafjord	351
Mø, Brønnøya, Nordland	352
Moland, Vestvågøy, Lofoten, Nordland	354

Mosetet, Brennmoen av Skistad, Overhalla, Nord Trøndelag	354
Måkskitmyro av Nordvik, Utsira	355
Nedre Rossavik, Forsand, Høgsfjord	357
Neset, Møsstrond, Telemark	357
Nordberg, Lista	359
Nordre Valldalseter, Røldal, Hordaland	359
Oma i Time, Rogaland	362
Rapstad av Årstad, Eigersund	363
Reve 1, Rogaland	363
Risavika, Tjora, Sola	363
Risøya, Hordaland	366
Sandøya, Hordaland	367
Seltuftøyri, Flåmsdalen	368
Skattum, Gran, Østlandet	372
Småvågane av Beite av Nordvik, Utsira	375
Storrsheia 2 av Vigesa, Bjerkreim	375
Søndre Nygård, Fåberg, Oppland	377
Sørbo, Rennesøy	377
Tjøtta, Klepp, Rogaland	379
Tjøtta, Nordland	379
Todneim, Randaberg, Hetland	381
Tranheim av Austreim, Utsira	381
Tu, Klepp, Rogaland	383
Tussøy, Troms	384
Ullaland 1 av Bø, Nærbø, Hå	385
Varberg, Eidfjord, Hordaland	386
Vaula, Hordaland	386
Vesle Hjerkin, Oppland	387
Vestre Hauge, Lista	388
Vestre Nape, Fyresdal, Telemark	388
Vestvatn, Misvær, Salten, Nordland	389
Ytre Moa, Øvre Årdal, Sogn	390
Øvre Gilberg, Fåberg, Østlandet	393
Øygarden av Fjøløy, Rennesøy	395
Åsestølen, Nygård av Gard, Skåre, Haugesund	395
Appendix 2: House Sites in the Northern Isles	397
Sites in Orkney	397
Beachview, Birsay, Orkney	397
Brough of Birsay Sites VII, VIII and IX, Orkney	398
Brough of Birsay, Guardianship Area, Mainland, Orkney	401
Buckquoy, Birsay, Orkney	402
Earl's Bu, Orphir, Mainland, Orkney	407
Pool, Sanday, Orkney	408
Saevar Howe, Birsay, Orkney	410
Skail, Deerness, Orkney	414
Tuquoy, Westray, Orkney	418
Westness, Rousay, Orkney	420
Sites in Shetland	425
Da Biggins, Papa Stour, Shetland	425
Jarlshof, Shetland	429

Sandwick, Unst, Shetland	445
Underhoull, Unst, Shetland	449
Appendix 3: Norwegian Kings	456
References	462

Barbara Gail Scott
344 words

ABSTRACT

In this thesis I use an interdisciplinary approach to study the relationship between the native Norwegian society of the Viking Age and the Middle Ages up to the Black Death (c. AD 800-1050 and 1050-1350 respectively), on the one hand, and the native Pictish society and Norse colonizers of Orkney and Shetland on the other. This involves the application of social theory, particularly Anthony Giddens's structuration theory and John Barrett's concept of fields of discourse, to the available archaeological and written evidence. These concepts provide a justification for using the house sites in Norway and the Northern Isles from this period as a key into questions of social relations and interaction. House layout does change slowly over time, for example in the placement of the hearth, benches and high seat, supporting and supported by concomitant changes in political structure and social organization (e.g. increasing segmentation and bureaucratization, decreased importance of kinship bonds).

The evidence presented in this thesis indicates that there was not a marked time-space edge where contradictions could build up between Norse and Pictish society, and that interaction between the Norse and native Picts in the Northern Isles was more extensive and complicated than previously believed. Here, a common class identity among the elites may have been a more important structuring relation than ethnic identity. In contrast, ethnic identity was an important structuring relation between the Norse and the Saami in Northern Norway where there was a distinct time-space edge between two structurally different societies. In Norse Greenland little interaction is evident between the Norse and Inuit populations, perhaps because the conservative Norse colony lay on two time-spaces edges, one with the Inuit and the other with High Medieval Norwegian society. In resisting the demands of the Church, Norse Greenland may have erected very successful barriers to even beneficial social change, leading to the eventual disappearance of the colony. These comparisons demonstrate the importance of context, of the specific historical chain of events which play out in different ways in different circumstances, rather than the search for a single overarching explanation.

Figures

Figure 1.1	Map of Norse North Atlantic
Figure 1.2	Map of Norway
Figure 1.3	Map of Northern Isles and Norway
Figure 2.1	Site map of Northern Isles
Figure 2.2	Site map of Birsay Bay
Figure 4.1	Site map of Norway--Late Iron Age/Viking Age
Figure 4.2	Site map of southwest Norway--Late Iron Age/Viking Age
Figure 4.3	Site map of Norway--Medieval
Figure 4.4	Site map of southwest Norway--Medieval
Figure 4.5	Lyngaland 1
Figure 4.6	Lyngaland 2
Figure 4.7	Illustration of Norwegian construction terms
Figure 4.8	Site map--Ytre Moa, Øvre Årdal, Sogn
Figure 4.9	Oma i Time
Figure 4.10	Rapstad av Årstad, Eigersund
Figure 4.11	Borg, Vestvågøy
Figure 4.12	Tussøy, Troms
Figure 4.13	Nordre Valldalseter 1, Røldal, Hordaland
Figure 4.14	Vestre Nape, Fyresdal, Telemark
Figure 4.15	Høybøen, Sotra, Hordaland
Figure 4.16	Lurekalven, Nordhordland
Figure 4.17	Vesle Hjerkin, Oppland
Figure 5.1	Site map--Northern Isles
Figure 6.1	Kvívík, Faroe
Figure 6.2	Stöng, Iceland
Figure 6.3	Gröf, Iceland
Figure 6.4	Diagram of Norse genealogical system
Figure 6.5	Early Earls of Orkney
Figure 6.6	Earls of Orkney, c. 1065-1230
Figure 6.7	Family of the Dales
Figure 6.8	Gairsay and Freswick Families
Figure 6.9	Families of Orkney and Caithness connected with the Earls' House
Figure 9.1	Arstad, Nordland
Figure 9.2	Birkeland 4, Eigersund
Figure 9.3	Birkeland 5, Eigersund
Figure 9.4	Birkelandsstølen 1 and 2, Bjerkreim
Figure 9.5	Birkelandsstølen 3, Bjerkreim
Figure 9.6	Fjetland, Hordaland

Figure 9.7	Friksdal, Sogn og Fjordane
Figure 9.8	Grødeim, Rogaland
Figure 9.9	Hanaland 1 and 2, Rogaland
Figure 9.10	Hellaug, Hordaland
Figure 9.11	Høybøen site plan
Figure 9.12	Krågeland 2, Bjerkreim
Figure 9.13	Liset, Sogn og Fjordane
Figure 9.14	Låkabø, Vindafjord
Figure 9.15	Mo, Nordland
Figure 9.16	Måkskitmyro, Utsira
Figure 9.17	Neset, Telemark
Figure 9.18	Risavika 1, Sola
Figure 9.19	Risavika 2, Sola
Figure 9.20	Skarg, Aust Agder
Figure 9.21	Skattum, Østlandet
Figure 9.22	Storrsheia 2, Bjerkreim
Figure 9.23	Søndre Nygård, Oppland
Figure 9.24	Tranheim, Utsira
Figure 9.25	Ytre Moa A, Sogn
Figure 9.26	Øvre Gilberg, Østlandet
Figure 9.27	Øygarden, Rennesøy
Figure 10.1	Buckquoy, Orkney
Figure 10.2	Da Biggins, Shetland
Figure 10.3	Jarlshof site plan
Figure 10.4	Jarlshof 1, Shetland
Figure 10.5	Jarlshof 2, Shetland
Figure 10.6	Jarlshof 3, Shetland
Figure 10.7	Jarlshof 6, Shetland
Figure 10.8	Jarlshof 7, Shetland
Figure 10.9	Jarlshof 5, Shetland
Figure 10.10	Phase 1, Sandwick, Shetland
Figure 10.11	Phase 2, Sandwick, Shetland
Figure 10.12	Underhouil, Shetland

Tables

Table 4.1	Late Iron Age/Viking House Sites in Norway
Table 4.2	Medieval House Sites in Norway
Table 5.1	House Sites in the Northern Isles
Table 5.2	Houses with Annexes, Northern Isles
Table 9.1	All Late Iron Age/Viking Age and Medieval House Sites in Norway (mentioned in text)

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Viking studies were long dominated by interpretations based on one-sided or questionable historical sources. These interpretations present a picture of tall, blond bearded barbarians who pillaged, raped and plundered at will across Christian Europe. In the past twenty years a great deal of effort has been expended on redressing the balance, using the results especially of archaeological excavations to reveal the extensive trade and settlement activity of these "barbarians" both in the East and West (e.g., Foote and Wilson 1970, Graham-Campbell 1980, Roesdahl 1987). This new commitment to Viking studies includes an explosion of research into the Viking and Norse periods in Orkney and Shetland, the Northern Isles of Scotland, as well as across the North Atlantic. Several Pictish and Norse settlement sites have been excavated in the Northern Isles in the past three decades, giving us the opportunity to deepen our understanding of Viking and Norse activity in this area. One of the most important results of this renewed interest in the Viking colonization of the Northern Isles is the realization that the Vikings did not encounter an empty landscape or a culture in decline. Pictish society was still a vital force, and the evidence now points to some sort of interaction between the two groups. The research also gives a more complete picture of the extensive interaction networks which existed well into the medieval period throughout the North Atlantic and especially between the new settlements and the Norwegian homeland, thus allowing us to begin to study the social relations at work in these communities.

To date this new information has been treated in a traditional way without an explicit theoretical framework to aid in the interpretation. For example, rectilinear

structures are usually seen as evidence of Viking or Norse presence without any justification for why such structures should be an ethnic indicator (e.g., Hamilton 1956, Small 1966, but see Ritchie 1975). Objects originating in Norway are seen to indicate continued contact with the homeland, but there is no explanation of why these items in particular were retained in the new settlements, of the specific networks of interaction which led to their presence there or whether their meaning was the same in all areas. Certainly these are all difficult questions, and some might wonder if they are legitimate questions to ask of the archaeological material.

Such an enquiry can only be attempted given an appropriate theoretical framework. The explicitly scientific hypothetico-deductive approach advocated so strongly by the positivists in the New Archaeology is both unrealistic and unhelpful in the search for greater understanding of social relations (see Chapter 3). In addition, one must understand that in every society there are many social relations at work including ethnicity, gender and class. These involve each and every individual in a society and are created and recreated through human action (e.g., McGuire 1992:187; also Giddens 1984, Foucault 1979). The dominance of particular social relations is the result of specific historical contexts and can not be assumed a priori. It is now time to reevaluate the variety of evidence from this particular colonial situation in the Northern Isles and to explore the strategies employed by the inhabitants using a consistent theoretical perspective which takes the presence and importance of these social relations into account.

In this project I will use an interdisciplinary approach to study the relationship between the native Norwegian society of the Viking Age and the Middle Ages up to the Black Death (c. AD 800-1050 and 1050-1350 respectively) on the one hand and the

native society and Norse colonizers of Orkney and Shetland on the other.¹ This will involve applying social theory to the archaeological and written evidence available. After describing the geographical and temporal boundaries of my research, I will review the available types of evidence (Chapter 1). I will then review previous research and the current state of knowledge about the Norse settlement in the Northern Isles in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3 I will present the theoretical framework I intend to use and will justify my choice of the house sites in Norway and the Northern Isles as my primary source of data. The following two chapters will include a presentation of this archaeological material. This will be analyzed and interpreted using complementary non-archaeological data in Chapter 6. Finally, in Chapter 7 I will compare the results of this analysis with two other examples of Norse colonization, one successful (in northern Norway where the Norse interacted with the Saami) and one unsuccessful (in Greenland and North America where they encountered at least three distinct aboriginal groups). In Chapter 8 I will discuss first, the general conclusions which this research indicates and second, the efficacy and usefulness of the approach advocated here.

Geographical Constraints

Figure 1.1 (redrawn after Guralnick 1982) shows the entire North Atlantic area including Norway and the Northern Isles. The research presented in this study will concentrate on two main geographical areas, modern Norway and the Northern Isles of Scotland, i.e. Orkney and Shetland. This obviously imposes modern political boundaries on the evidence, but the problem is more serious in the case of Norway than

¹There are difficulties with terminology when referring to the "Scandinavian" settlers in the Northern Isles. "Viking" is not quite appropriate as it conjures up images of violence and a male-dominated society which may not be appropriate here. On the other hand, "Norse" can be confusing as it sometimes refers to a later chronological period than "Viking" but at other times refers to the ethnic origin of a group. I hope it will be clear when I am using "Norse" as an ethnic indicator, e.g. in opposition to "native" or "Pict", and when I am referring to the later time period, i.e. post-Viking. A possible solution to this problem might be to adopt the Nordic term *norrønt*, but as this is unfamiliar to most general readers I have chosen not to use it.

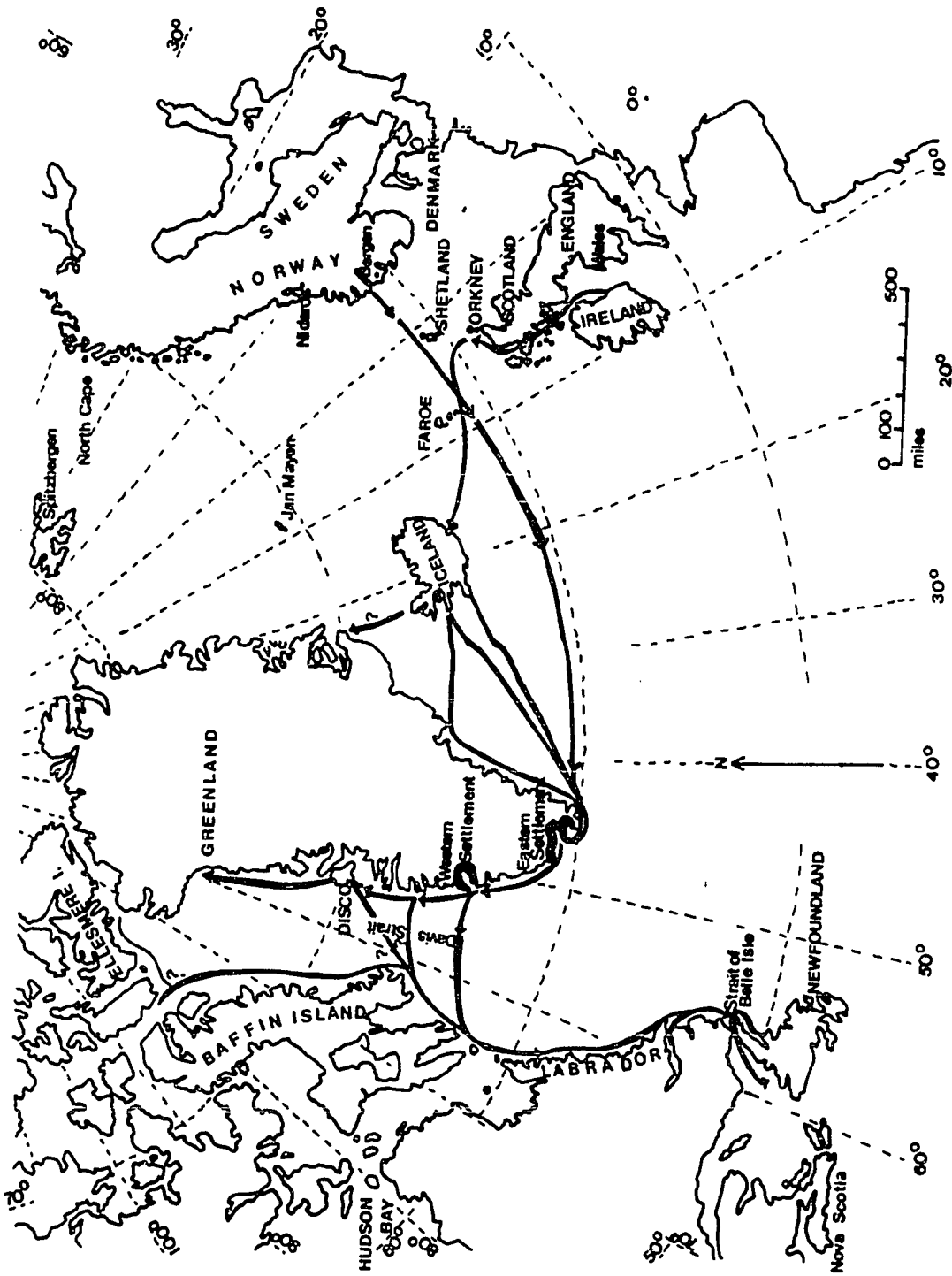


Figure 1.1: Norse voyages in the West, redrawn after Guralnick (1982:opposite p. i)

the Northern Isles. Since they are islands, Orkney and Shetland have clear natural boundaries in the form of the Atlantic Ocean and the North Sea.²

The arbitrary limits I am imposing on the Norwegian data serve several purposes. In the first place, Viking scholars generally accept the proposition that the majority of emigrants to the islands of the North Atlantic originated in Norway, though of course some came from other parts of Scandinavia or other Norse colonies; some were non-Norse slaves or servants. In addition, we know that the Northern Isles were linked politically to the kingdom of Norway until the fifteenth century. Finally, limiting my research to the political borders of modern Norway also limits the archaeological evidence to a manageable level and to a consistent research tradition.

I have chosen the Northern Isles for two reasons. Firstly, unlike Faroe and Iceland, there was a native population in the Northern Isles when the Norse arrived which would allow me to study the interaction between two groups. Faroe and Iceland were unpopulated, with the possible exception of a few monks. Secondly, there has been a great deal of excavation in the Northern Isles since the 1960s including a number of settlement sites. While a number of settlements are known from Greenland, few of them have been excavated recently. Also, the Norse settlement of Greenland did not begin until the late tenth century and seems to have drawn primarily from other Norse settlements in the North Atlantic, especially Iceland. These factors would both limit the time period available for study and demand a complete study of the Icelandic material. So while the situation in Greenland will be discussed briefly in Chapter 7, the Northern Isles provided the clearest opportunity to study the interaction between the Norse settlers and their homeland and these settlers and the native population.

²Caithness in northern Scotland was also heavily influenced by the Norse and was often part of the Earldom, but for the sake of geographical simplicity I have chosen not to include it in this study. The only major site this excludes is at Freswick.

A basic understanding of the geography of these three regions is helpful in understanding the settlement patterns in each and the possible environmental constraints faced by the inhabitants. Norway (Figure 1.2) comprises the western and northern parts of the Scandinavian peninsula. It extends for 1752 km between 57° N and 71° N. More than one third of the country lies within the Arctic Circle. Norway has 2650 km of coastline, 26,000 km if one includes the islands. The coastline is dissected by the fjords and the western valleys are short, deep and 'V'-shaped. Only 5% of the land is arable and 75% of Norway is mountain and moorland, resulting in a dispersed settlement pattern along the floors of the interior valleys and along the Atlantic coast (Fullerton & Williams 1972:275).

The major geographical features of Norway are the result of erosion of its geological structure since the Tertiary cycle of uplift and faulting. The highest part of Scandinavia, the western mountains, extend almost the length of Norway with a break centered on Trondheimsfjord. East of these mountains lie the northern plateaus and upland, occasionally surmounted by mountains (Fullerton & Williams 1972:12-15).

The Norwegian climate is milder than might be expected at that latitude because of the presence of low pressure systems from the North Atlantic (Fullerton & Williams 1972:24-29). These systems develop over the relatively warm sea and bring with them warm air from subtropical latitudes. Thus the contrast in temperature between Bergen on the west coast and Tromsø north of the Arctic Circle is not great: mean temperatures for January and July are -4° C and 12° C for Tromsø and 2° C and 15° C for Bergen. However, the interior valleys are isolated from the ameliorating effects of the ocean and instead experience long cold winters. The mean January and July temperatures at Røros are -11° C and 12° C respectively. The growing season ranges from 38 weeks in Bergen to 27 weeks in Trondheim and only 22 weeks in Røros.

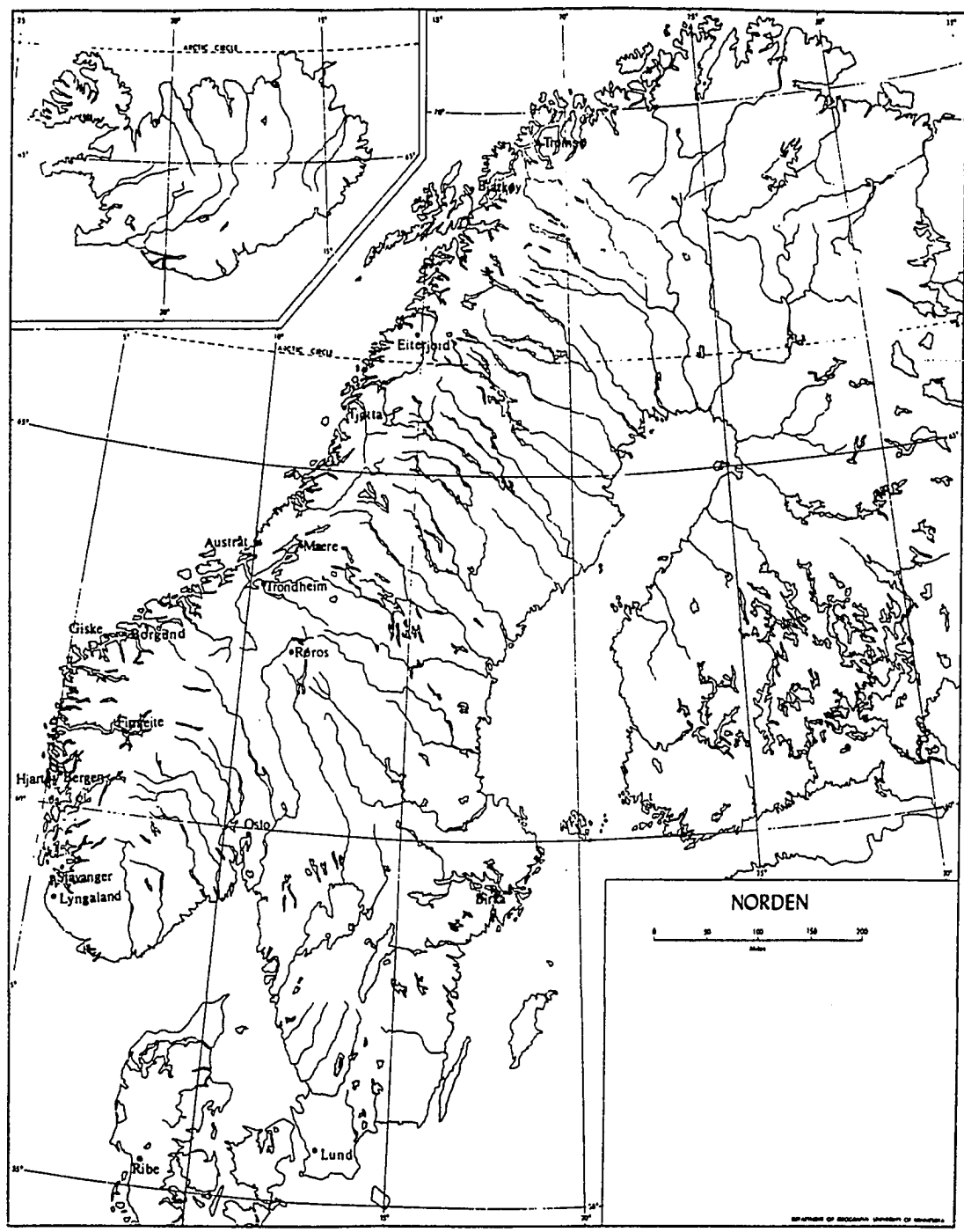


Figure 1.2: Norway, with places mentioned in the text.

There are four main vegetation areas in Norway (Fullerton & Williams 1972: 30-32). The mixed deciduous forests of the south coast dominated by oak and beech have mostly been cleared for agriculture today. A few miles inland and north as far as Trondheim lies the north European mixed forest containing pine, spruce, maple, ash, birch and alder as well as oak and beech. The boreal coniferous forest is found on the lower lands of northern Scandinavia where summer temperatures are too low for the growth of many deciduous trees. It is dominated by pine and spruce but also contains birch and alder. The upper limit of this forest lies at 750 m in the valleys of southern Norway. Thus the greater part of Norway lies above the coniferous tree line. On the northern Norwegian coast and in the highest plateaus of western Norway there are areas of true Arctic vegetation where water from snow melt is abundant in summer but where the vegetation period is too short for tree growth.

The Shetland Islands (Figure 1.1, Figure 1.3) lie 160 km off the north coast of Scotland and 350 km west of Bergen in Norway. There are over 100 islands of which 17 are inhabited today. The archipelago lies at 60° N, the same latitude as the southern tip of Greenland. It is 112 km from north to south and 56 km east to west.

The geology of Shetland exhibits similarities to the geology of Norway. The structure is very complex and a large variety of rocks are exposed. The central backbone of Shetland consists of schist, gneiss and blue-grey limestone. Other deposits include serpentine, crystals of kyanite, garnet, actinolite, talc and many other minerals. The rocks in the extreme northwest of Mainland Shetland are Pre-Cambrian, at least 2 billion years old. The covering sediments are the result of millions of years of erosion and are known as Old Red Sandstone. Since the last Ice Age the land has been sinking and the sea rising. This is the opposite of the situation in Norway.

The hills of Shetland are covered sparsely by heather and grass. There are hundreds of small lochs with peaty water scattered over the landscape and most of the land is covered by peat. Good soils are scarce, a fact which has constrained settlement from prehistory to the present day to the green patches of land along the coast. Trees exist only where they are protected from the wind.

The climate is damp and windy with cool summers and mild winters. The mean temperatures in Lerwick in January and July are 4^o C and 12^o C respectively (Nicolson 1984:15-17). The North Atlantic Drift runs past Shetland, bringing warm waters from the Gulf Stream, and as in Norway and Orkney, the winds off the sea carry quite a lot of warmth in winter. Again like Orkney, annual rainfall is moderate but is spread evenly throughout the year, and relative humidity is high. Because of the slow rise in temperatures at the beginning of the year and the waterlogged condition of the ground, the crops are sown late and, with the cloudy summers, ripen slowly. Winds can be very high with gales occurring an average of 58 days per year. Some of the highest wind speeds recorded in Britain have been measured on Unst (e.g. on 16 February 1962 a gust of 177 mph was recorded).

Orkney consists of approximately 70 islands lying at 59^o N in the North Atlantic (Figure 1.1, Figure 1.3). The small size of many of the islands makes it difficult to determine the exact number of islands, as many of them are really no more than skerries. The island known as Mainland makes up half the total land area of Orkney. The islands are almost completely made up of Old Red Sandstone. This stone breaks along its layers of sedimentation so it is ideal for drystone building. The land is fertile and green, today mostly given over to pasture for cattle.

The climate has a great impact on life in Orkney, being dominated by persistent

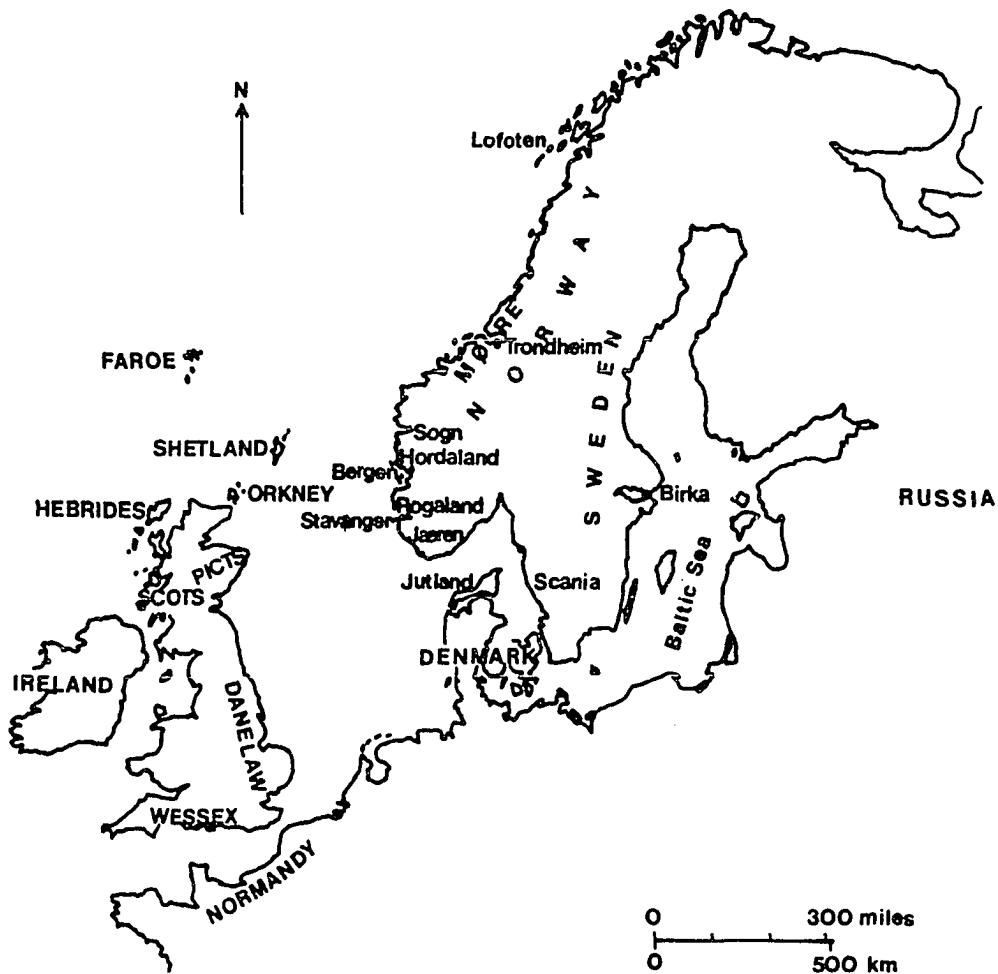


Figure 1.3: Northwest Europe with the Northern Isles, redrawn after Crawford (1987:12)

rain and wind. While total rainfall is moderate, the general dampness stresses agriculture. There is not a great range in temperature with mean temperatures for January and July in Kirkwall being 3.6° C and 14.9° C respectively (Davidson and Jones 1990:17-19). The most persistent feature of the climate is the wind, however. The number of days with wind gusts of 39 mph, the limit for gales, is 130.4. As Hedges (1984:10) somewhat dryly observes, though rainfall is moderate in Orkney it has a tendency to arrive horizontally.

Of course, the climate in both Norway and the Northern Isles has changed over the centuries and these fluctuations affected ecologically marginal areas first, something which should be kept in mind when dealing with Norway, especially northern Norway, and the islands of the North Atlantic, especially Greenland (as in Chapter 7). Hubert Lamb (1985, 1992) has studied the climatic fluctuations in Europe and has identified general phases of climatic improvement and deterioration, although there were local variations as well. The post-glacial warmth came to an end in Europe after 2000 BC but especially between 800 and 500 BC. The climate improved during Roman times but deteriorated again around AD 400. This period of colder climatic conditions lasted from about AD 400 to 900, although some areas such as Greenland returned to warmer conditions sooner (Lamb 1985:159). But conditions in Europe were again warmer from the late tenth to the twelfth centuries. There was a short period of wet and cold summers in the late eleventh century, but the twelfth century saw a climax of warmth in Britain, Scandinavia and the sub-arctic. In Greenland Norse burials were dug into earth which in modern times has been permanently frozen (Lamb 1985:166). In Iceland grain was cultivated from the time of the Viking settlement in the ninth century until grain cultivation was abandoned in the late sixteenth century (Lamb 1985:167). In Norway, settlement spread 100-200 m further up in the valleys between AD 800 and 1000.

However, even by the 1190s the warm phase had ended in Greenland and the Arctic sea ice had returned, and in the thirteenth century there was a major climate deterioration in northern Europe with a new cooling trend (Lamb 1985:172). The farms at higher elevations in Norway were abandoned in the fourteenth century, particularly after the Black Death. The following centuries were erratic, with some warm decades interspersed with what Lamb (1992:3) refers to as "decades of appalling wetness and disease of crops, cattle and mankind, notably around 1315 and the 1340s." In the fifteenth century there were sequences of hot and very wet summers and very severe winters. In Norway the authorities were recognizing by the 1460s that the changes were permanent and taxes were adjusted. Not until the beginning of the sixteenth century did more pleasant conditions return, although by mid-century conditions changed once again and we see a span of 150 years which Lamb regards as the broad climax of the Little Ice Age (1985:202). He dates the Little Ice Age from 1420, or even 1190, to 1850-1900.

Temporal Constraints

As mentioned above, in this research I will be dealing with the period from approximately AD 800 to 1350. This segment of time actually falls into several traditional chronological periods depending on the research tradition in each geographical area. In Norway, the Viking period (c. AD 800-1030/1066--there is disagreement about the closing date of the Viking Age) is the final period in the Late Iron Age. Thus it is part of prehistory, not history. It is only in the mid eleventh century that Norway moves into the Middle Ages. Within this period several subdivisions might be made, for example, *folkekongedømmet* (1030-1130), civil war period (c. 1130-1230), Golden Age (c. 1230-1319), and Late Middle Ages (1319-1536). But the question remains whether these subdivisions are relevant to the object of study in this project.

In the Northern Isles the periodization scheme is different and this in itself can create confusion when comparing conditions in Norway and Scotland. In his classic monograph of the multiperiod site of Jarlshof in Shetland which has dominated Viking/Norse archaeology in the Northern Isles, Hamilton designated three periods: the Viking period of Norse settlement (AD 800-1000), the late Norse occupation (AD 1100-1300) and the medieval occupation (AD 1300-1600) (Hamilton 1956; see also Bigelow 1985:104). At the end of the Viking period there was a series of structural changes which, according to Hamilton, indicated a major change in the history of the site. The transition to the Medieval period included the appearance of large amounts of pottery on the site.

In his work on the site of Sandwick in Shetland, Bigelow (1985:104-105) uses the term "Late Norse" to refer to the period AD 1100-1500 because he sees:

no reason to set aside the 14th and 15th centuries in Shetland as a distinctly 'medieval' period until the archaeological or historical evidence emerges which demonstrates that a broad change in material culture occurred at that time analogous to the one which defined the earlier Viking/Late Norse transition at Jarlshof.

This critique raises an important question about the traditional chronology of settlement in Shetland, but it does not go far enough. Will a change in technology necessarily herald a change in social relations such as ethnicity, gender or class? Or are we privileging certain data sets and obscuring the richness of the evidence by trying to fit our analyses into these temporal pigeon holes?

The very name "Iron Age" defines that period in terms of technological innovation. As Conkey and Williams (1991:122) point out, this privileges the techno-environmental domain in considerations of cultural change. In a discussion of gender in archaeology, Conkey and Gero question whether chronologies derived from

technological or progressive evolutionary criteria are useful. As they (Conkey and Gero 1991:21) point out,

If items of material culture--technological features whose adoption is seized upon to characterize prehistoric periods--are not items used or made by women, are they acceptable or even useful for defining and bounding human experience into distinguishable segments?

This scepticism is useful to keep in mind when exploring other social relations besides gender. In other words, if the technological features in question are not relevant to ethnicity or class in a particular context, is it useful to bound our study by the period in which they are used? In this study I have chosen my temporal constraints partly with an eye to these problems and partly with an eye towards practical constraints inherent in the available data.

In my exploration of the social relations at work in the colonization of the Northern Isles by the Vikings, I am concerned to give the study as much time depth as possible. The temporal limits I have chosen will allow me to follow social relations and interaction over an extended period without artificially limiting myself in the beginning. Rather, I will be able to determine in the course of my research whether the traditional chronological periods in Norway and the Northern Isles have any meaning in relation to the strategies involved in the colonization.

The opening and closing dates I have chosen do have a certain significance, however. In the first place, AD 800 is seen by most scholars as the beginning of the Viking expansion³, and AD 1350 marks a crucial event in Norwegian history, the devastation of the Black Death. In addition, 1319 heralds the beginning of several

³However, recent work in Denmark indicates that the Viking Period there began early in the eighth century, e.g., the eighth century trading center at Ribe, and the Danevirke, begun in AD 737, which protected the southern border of Denmark (Roesdahl 1987).

centuries of union between Norway and Denmark, and the political heart of the Union lay in Denmark, not Norway.

Practically speaking, the available archaeological evidence fits into this period. It would be interesting and important to include an in-depth study of Norwegian and Pictish society before contact in order to determine exactly how each changed after the colonization of the Northern Isles began. Unfortunately, at this point in time such a project is impossible. Work has only recently begun on Pictish sites in the Northern Isles (see Chapter 2 for a brief discussion) and even today the Picts are an elusive group in the archaeological record. The situation in Norway in the Merovingian period, the two hundred years preceding the Viking Age, is scarcely any better. Not a single excavated house site from southern Norway has been securely dated to the Merovingian period, leaving the burial material as our primary archaeological source of knowledge about this period. This meagre evidence does not yet support a study of the type I am attempting here. On the other hand, the archaeological evidence does extend into the medieval period, thus allowing me greater time depth at that end.

Sources

I will use several types of sources in my interdisciplinary approach to this project. These include place name material, historical sources, medieval Icelandic sagas and, most importantly, the archaeological evidence. The place names in the Northern Isles are overwhelmingly of Norse origin, at least those for which an etymology can be constructed. This fact has frequently been used to bolster the argument that either the islands were uninhabited when the Vikings arrived or that the Vikings quickly disposed of the native population.

The situation was much more complicated, however. For example, Small's (1982) preliminary study of Norse place names in Shetland indicates that the initial

Norse settlers in Shetland avoided areas already occupied by the native inhabitants. In Orkney, as we shall see, Norse settlement remains are found directly above Pictish ones and Pictish material culture appears in Norse horizons, thus contradicting both the picture of an empty landscape and of complete annihilation.

With these difficulties in mind, it is clear that there are problems with the place name evidence. Place names do not reflect the ethnicity of the population in any simple way, if at all, and must be approached with due caution. In the Northern Isles the situation is particularly difficult since the native Pictish language is something of a mystery. There seems to have been a linguistic boundary somewhere around the Dornoch Firth at the southern boundary of the broch region in mainland Scotland. Many scholars believe that before the introduction of the forerunner to modern Gaelic, Goedelic or Q-Celtic, there were actually two languages spoken in Pictland (Jackson 1955). One was a form of Brittonic or P-Celtic which was closely related to Gaulish and the language spoken in Britain. The other, however, seems to have been a non-Indo-European language which may have been as different from other European languages as Basque is today and which may have been spoken by only a part of the population.⁴ Nicolaisen (1982:76) states flatly that "the Caithness Picts, like their counterparts in the Northern Isles and in other parts of the northern mainland, did not speak a Celtic language" and that their "linguistic affiliations are...obscure." In the Northern Isles the density of incomprehensible ogam inscriptions which may represent this mysterious language (9 in Shetland, 6 in Orkney (Ritchie 1990:185)) supports the

⁴Smyth (1984: 46ff) argues that the evidence for a pre-Celtic survival does not stand up to close scrutiny. While I am not qualified to judge the linguistic argument, I found some of Smyth's other statements regarding the Picts to be simplistic, e.g., "the difference between brochs and vitrified forts is culturally not all that great" (1984: 53). Also, Smyth is concerned throughout with the elite warrior aristocracy and seems to dismiss any influence other parts of the population may have had on society as negligible. Reviews of Smyth's work can be found in Sellar (1985), Alcock (1985) and Henderson (1987).

idea that this older element may have been stronger in the Northern Isles than further south.

The Vikings could then have happened upon a society mired in linguistic confusion. The *Ravenna Cosmography* of the late seventh or early eighth century may point to such confusion:

Also in the same ocean are thirty-three islands called the [D]orchades, not all of which are inhabited. Nevertheless, we would wish, Christ willing, to name them, but because of the confusion resulting from this land being controlled by differing peoples who, according to barbarian fashion, call the islands by different names, we leave their names unlisted. (Thomson 1987:5)

If these assumptions are correct, there could have been multiple names for specific locations when the Vikings arrived. It is difficult to search for these pre-Norse names when we do not know what the language looked like and when we are unable to decipher the ogam inscriptions we do find. We should remember, however, that a substantial proportion of the place names in Orkney are unexplainable, or at least a Norse explanation is not completely convincing, and there are even clear cases of borrowing from Gaelic (e.g., the element *airigh*, 'shieling') (Thomson 1987:8, 31).

The situation in nearby Caithness is also confusing. Nicolaisen (1982:77) argues that in Caithness there was never a time when Gaelic was spoken throughout the entire district, even in post-Norse times: "Otherwise there would have survived at least some minimal indication of Norse names passing through Gaelic before being adopted into English." The Gaelic and Norse place names in Caithness show two distinct areas of influence. Here the Gaelic forms were transmitted almost exclusively in oral tradition, while the English forms were passed on in both oral and written form, including on maps (Nicolaisen 1982:79). Clearly a distribution map of place names alone does not tell the story.

A further difficulty with using place name evidence uncritically is that it assumes the new names were given immediately upon settlement by the Norse. It is highly improbable that this was the case. We know that in England Scandinavian speech elements survived in parts of the country and were adopted into the local dialects. They were used in place name formation long after the Viking period had ended (Sawyer 1982:102). In the Northern Isles there was extensive contact with Scandinavia through the medieval period and the dialect up to the eighteenth century--Norn--was actually derived from Old Norse. It is ridiculous to assume that the pattern of place names changed overnight as the result of Viking aggression.

An examination of the evidence from the Western Isles reinforces the caution one must maintain in regard to using place names as evidence for prehistoric or historic ethnicity of a population. It is accepted that the Norse language was dominant there for a long period of time. For example, of 126 village names in Lewis, 99 are purely Scandinavian and 9 or more of the remainder contain Norse elements. According to Crawford (1987:97), "the Western Isles may once have been as wholly Norse in their settlement nomenclature as the Northern isles," a situation which persisted until the rebirth of Gaelic in the Middle Ages.⁵ There was never a blending of Celtic languages in Scotland, although there were some Norse loan words into Gaelic. The Western Isles were lost to the king of Norway much earlier than the Northern Isles, however, and there was a rebirth of Gaelic in the Middle Ages. Norse place names were adopted by Gaelic speakers, but in the process their Norse roots have sometimes become extremely difficult to trace (Crawford 1987:94). The difficulties involved when one of the languages is unknown can readily be imagined.

⁵It should be noted here that although Norse burials have been found in the Western Isles, archaeological evidence for Norse settlement there is almost totally lacking with the exception of the largely unpublished site at the Udal, North Uist (Armit 1990:8).

This is not to say that place name evidence is useless, simply that it must be used with care and in conjunction with other forms of evidence. Lindsay MacGregor (1984) made this point in an article discussing the usefulness of place names in the study of the Norse settlement in Shetland and Faroe. When combined with a study of local topography, farm division and expansion, land rentals, and proximity to other institutions, place names can give an indication of areas of primary and secondary settlement or of high status, e.g. because of the proximity of medieval chapels.

Hugh Marwick's work on the place names of Orkney is also extremely important. He was concerned with the sequence of settlement and his relative chronology of farm names still stands. For example, Marwick found that *-quoy* and *-setr* names tend to be found on the fringes of a *tunship* while *land*, *garðr* and *bolstaðr* names are found on fertile land located more centrally. Even these names seem to be secondary to *skail* names, however (Morris 1990:229-230). Here secondary refers not to absolute chronology but to local settlement sequences. Therefore, local place name studies must be combined with the archaeological and historical evidence for the district in order to build as complete a picture as possible for local settlement development.⁶ Used appropriately, place name evidence can enhance our understanding of social relations in the past, but we must guard against the temptation to use the material simplistically.

There are no contemporary historical sources from the Northern Isles or Norway which might help in the study of the Viking settlement of Orkney and Shetland. This is a general problem with study of the Viking period: all the written documentation of events was produced by outsiders, very often the clergy who were not well disposed towards the Norse. Even these outside sources make few references to events in the

⁶An example of such a multidisciplinary approach using place names, historical documents and the archaeological material is Barbara Crawford's work at Da Biggins in Shetland (see Chapter 5).

Northern Isles. There is a reference to Picts in Orkney in the eighth/ninth century Bern chronicle, a version of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, but this merely tells us that some people at this time felt it was appropriate to identify society on Orkney as "Pictish". It does not tell us what being Pictish meant.

Other references to Orkney or Shetland occur, not surprisingly, in conjunction with references to the Church there. The ninth-century account of the life of St. Findan mentions Orkney and indicates the presence of the Church there in the ninth century. Adam of Bremen mentions the consecration of a bishop for "the city of Birsay" in about 1076, saying that before this time Orkney had been ruled by English and Scottish bishops (Morris 1983:119).

A later source, the *Historia Norvegiae*, mentions Orkney and Shetland as well as Greenland and North America. This anonymous work was possibly written in Orkney around AD 1200, but today survives only in a fifteenth-century manuscript, a manuscript which was also apparently produced in Orkney (Crawford 1987:3). The *Historia Norvegiae* is the source for the longstanding belief that the Vikings ravaged and plundered the islands and thus that the initial Viking settlement was extremely violent. It mentions two groups inhabiting the islands when the Vikings came, the Picts and the papae or clergy. However, it also says that the Picts were no bigger than pygmies, that they built their cities in the early morning and in the evening, but that during the day they hid from fright in their underground houses. Clearly the brochs and earth houses of earlier periods were being confused with the later Pictish population and there was no longer any memory of the native inhabitants of Orkney. Since this work was written at least 250 years after the initial Norse settlement of the Northern Isles, and since it includes a clearly fanciful description of the native inhabitants, the *Historia Norvegiae* must also be treated with caution.

The final category of written source material for this project is the saga material. *Egil's Saga*, a thirteenth-century work probably by the great Icelandic author Snorri Sturluson, implies that the Northern Isles were uninhabited before the arrival of the Vikings (Chapter 4). *Orkneyinga Saga* is actually set in the Northern Isles. There are several problems with it, however. It was written by an Icelander, not an Orkneyman, around 1200--long after the original Norse settlement of the Northern Isles (Pálsson and Edwards 1978:9). This individual was probably associated with the intellectual center at Oddi in southern Iceland, a region which had special connections with Orkney in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, and *Orkneyinga Saga* was one of Snorri Sturluson's sources in writing *Heimskringla*, the history of the kings of Norway.

In addition to the problem that the saga was written much later than many of the events it claims to describe, it deals with the Northern Isles after the Norse Earldom was founded so the initial settlement is still a mystery. The saga reports that the Earldom was a gift from Harald Hårfagre to the Earl of Møre and was therefore held in fief from the king. The story goes that one summer Harald Hårfagre sailed west over the North Sea to teach a lesson to the Vikings there who were harrying the coasts of Norway. On this journey he is said to have conquered the Northern and Southern Isles and immediately gave the Northern Isles to Earl Rognvald of Møre, who in turn passed them on quickly to his brother Sigurd. Other Icelandic sources place these events after the Battle of Hafrsfjord, now dated to c. AD 890. However, an Irish source and the *Historia Norvegiae* support the view that Orkney was annexed independently by the earls of Møre a generation before Harald's reign, being instead an inherited title from Møre and not a fief held from the king of Norway. Sawyer believes the account of Harald's expedition to the Northern Isles is really a later construction based on Magnus Barfot's expeditions in 1098 and 1102. Finally, the "settlement" referred to in the saga may

simply apply to organization of the land by a new Earl (Morris 1990:212-213). Clearly the information in the saga can not be accepted uncritically and we must be wary of biases, e.g. in favor of a strong royal power. We have archaeological evidence of Norse settlement around AD 800 which again calls into question the reliability of the saga.

On the other hand, the saga also traces the development of the Earldom over 300 years, so later events are not as distant from the author as the settlement period was. These more contemporary descriptions of events may be of use to us in building a general picture of the nature of society in the Northern Isles and what *it* considered relevant, if not in determining the precise course of events. This method involves using anthropological rather than literary or historical methods to analyze the sagas. I will discuss this kind of saga interpretation in more detail in Chapter 3.

The most extensive source for the study of this period in Norway and the Northern Isles is the archaeological material which has come to light over the past century. This is the only group of data which actually originates within the temporal and geographical limits of this project. The material culture remains in Norway and the Northern Isles are physical remains of the societies which existed in these areas in the Viking and Medieval periods. They were produced by all segments of society, not just the literate or the elite. Determining the origin of each individual artifact and its meaning within the social relations existing at the time is not a straightforward task, however. A Norse-style artifact does not necessarily reflect the presence of a Norse individual, and there are many questions about which artifact groups can be used as ethnic indicators.

In this research I will concentrate on the house remains from Norway and the Northern Isles. House styles have often been used as an indication of the ethnicity of the inhabitants. For instance, rectilinear architecture in the Northern Isles is usually seen as strong evidence for a Norse presence. I will develop a justification for this approach

in my discussion of theory Chapter 3. Where possible, I will also review the artifact assemblages found within the houses. Many of the sites in Norway were excavated by Jan Petersen in Rogaland in the 1920s and 1930s before modern methods of excavation had been developed; this is a limiting factor. Also, some of the house sites in both regions are incomplete, either because the site had suffered later damage or because the excavation itself was limited. Finally, some of the material has been published only partially if at all.

As is true for the place name material and the written sources, the archaeological evidence does not speak for itself. It requires interpretation. This interpretation should be done within an explicit and consistent theoretical framework. The evidence from all the different sources must be analyzed and compared. None of the sources should be seen a priori as the most accurate or informative. By moving back and forth continuously between the written and archaeological sources, one can attempt to explain discrepancies and ambiguities rather than immediately discarding a "fact" that does not fit the picture. My interpretation of the data is only one of many possible interpretations that can be written about society in Norway and the Northern Isles during the Viking and Medieval periods. My point of entry into this period is the archaeological material simply because it is the most plentiful and because it is was produced by the groups I am studying, not by outsiders or individuals from a later period. Before turning to this material, however, I will survey the previous research which has been done on the Viking/Norse settlement of the Northern Isles.

Chapter 2

History of Viking and Norse Studies in the Northern Isles

In the early part of the twentieth century several works dealing with the Northern Isles and the Norse connections and impact there were published. These took different approaches to the problem of studying the Norse in Orkney and Shetland with the use of *Orkneyinga Saga* and historical documents and the study of place names being particularly important. The archaeological material then available was rather meager and, as will become clear, was misunderstood. Here I will review the contributions of some of the more important scholars who studied the Northern Isles of the Viking and Norse periods.

J. Storer Clouston

In 1932 J. Storer Clouston, a native Orcadian, published the first comprehensive history of Orkney. This lively account was the standard work until Thomson's *History of Orkney* was published in 1987. Clouston managed to synthesize what was then known about settlement in Orkney. Although the work covered the history of Orkney down to the twentieth century, it is interesting to note that fully 17 of the book's 31 chapters cover the Viking and Norse periods. This is perhaps due to two factors, the existence of *Orkneyinga Saga* and the attachment felt by Orcadians (and Scandinavians) to that glorious and exciting part of their past.

Clouston relied heavily on *Orkneyinga Saga* in his own account of the period of the Earldom and provided a very entertaining retelling of the saga. While he does at times compare the stories from *Orkneyinga Saga* with accounts in other Icelandic sources, or outside sources where possible, his work closely follows the story line of the saga. Other classes of data, e.g. church organization, land divisions and social

structure, are reviewed and tested based on their conformity to the information gleaned from the saga. This necessarily means that Clouston's history is very much a history of the Orkney elite, not Orkney society in general. This does not have to be a negative criticism of his work, merely a reminder that there are other stories to tell about life in Orkney during this period.

One of the greatest discrepancies between Clouston's work and current accepted beliefs about the history of Orkney is in the area of the organization of the Church. Clouston does not discuss the possibility that a Pictish Church was already established in Orkney when the Vikings settled there. Instead, Clouston accepts the saga's account of the conversion of the Norse Earls (under duress) by Olaf Tryggvason late in the tenth century. As will become clear below, recent work reveals the continued existence of a Pictish Church even after the Viking settlement began.

It must be noted here, however, that Clouston did not accept all aspects of the saga or popular interpretations of it uncritically. For example, he objected to the assumption that Harald Hårfagre's ambitions in Norway precipitated the beginning of Norse settlement in Orkney. He based his objections on a number of facts including that Viking raids began in England in AD 793 "and it would be very surprising indeed if they had not, long before then, reached the neighbouring Orkneys" (1932:1). Certain place name evidence also seemed to indicate Norse settlement before the reign of Harald Hårfagre (1932:7-11).

Clouston also argued that the Picts were still present in Orkney when the Vikings arrived. In the first place, he argued, how could Pictish or Celtic place names have survived if there were no native inhabitants left to pass them on (1932:7)? He does refer to the Norse settlers as the "conquering race" (1932:7), however, as well as to folk traditions of the first Norsemen on Rousay being met by an armed host "with glittering

spears" (1932:3). He also believed that the brochs found in the Northern Isles and in northern Scotland were defensive structures built by the Picts and sometimes taken over by the Vikings.

This illustrates the dearth of archaeological data and the misunderstandings Clouston was faced with. As a specific example, the brochs have long caused confusion for archaeologists. It is now clear that they were built much earlier in the Iron Age and had been abandoned by the period immediately preceding the arrival of the Vikings, although the later settlements might be built on earlier broch complexes. This is something which has only become clear in the last fifteen years, however, so Clouston can hardly be criticized too harshly for his interpretation.

Clouston's lack of archaeological data meant that he was unable to deal with aspects of life in Orkney not considered important by the author of the saga. As we shall see, the great leaps made by archaeologists working in Orkney in the last twenty years have changed this picture drastically. We are no longer entirely dependent on *Orkneyinga Saga* for our knowledge about events in Orkney during the Viking and Norse periods. It is interesting, however, that some of Clouston's conclusions, e.g. that the Vikings arrived in Orkney around AD 800, have gone out of vogue and made a comeback since his book was published.

Anton Brøgger

Another important work on the Norse influence in the Northern Isles was published in the same period, Anton Brøgger's *Ancient Emigrants* (1929). This book is actually a collection of lectures given by Brøgger at the University of Edinburgh in 1928. In them Brøgger also attempted to make use of all available data regarding the Norse in the Northern Isles and also in Scotland more generally. Throughout the lectures he compared the Viking emigration with the late nineteenth/early twentieth

century emigration to America and he used similar reasoning to explain both, a comparison which must be regarded with great caution given the 1000 year time gap between the two events.

Brøgger explained the different nature of the Norse settlements in the North Atlantic from those elsewhere in Europe by claiming that in France, Spain and Italy the "Norsemen came to Romanized countries, and hence their settlement took on quite another shape and its history reads differently from that of the early Norse colonization of the Atlantic coasts " (1929:2). The Norwegians lacked what he called "Latinity". While this may be true of the Norwegians, the claim that Orkney and Shetland were not Christian before the arrival of the Vikings is now a much more questionable one, as I have already stated.

Brøgger claimed that the Norwegian emigration to Shetland, Orkney and the Hebrides covered two generations, AD 780-850, and was followed by a second wave to Faroe and Iceland (AD 870-930) and a third from Iceland to Greenland (AD 980-1020) and North America (AD 1000-1020) (1929:5). He justified the early date for emigration to the Northern Isles on the basis of place name evidence and the fact that brooches found in Orkney apparently date to the early ninth century (e.g. oval brooches). Again, the early scholars agree on the early date for the beginning of the settlement. Brøgger estimated the population in Orkney and Shetland during the Norse period to be approximately equal to the population in 1800, i.e. 20,000-22,000 each (1929:7), but he does not provide solid justification for this estimate.

Brøgger presented the migration as a continuation of an existing process of expansion and prosperity in Norway, a process which began in the sixth century. The primary justification for this hypothesis was the evidence of expansion in the place names, the wealth of iron and the advanced art of shipbuilding (1929:18). He pointed

out that Norway was not isolated from western Europe in this period, as shown by the presence of English and Frankish weapons in Norway, and claimed that these trading contacts brought the Norse in contact with people who knew of the Northern Isles:

Directly or indirectly, it was the Irish missionaries who told of the Orkneys, Shetlands and Hebrides, and the power of geographical orientation which these Norwegian mariners possessed in so high a degree speedily enabled them to determine whither to sail in search of the lands of which they had heard so much. (Brøgger 1929:23)

The choice of northerly regions as the sites for new settlements was explained in an interesting fashion by Brøgger. He wrote (1929:26-27) that this choice was due to fundamental and primitive causes:

It was the craving for surroundings where something of the old was to be found in their new activities. They asked for the sea and fjord, mountain and hill, the fowling cliffs and sealing grounds. They needed the pastures, meadows, and heather, to which they had been accustomed in the land of their birth, and the light summer nights which brooded softly over farm and field at home in Norway. No sentimental spirit of homesickness lay at the back of all this, but the simple fact that the whole of their mentality, fostered by the toil of countless generations before them, was adjusted to a life in which all these things were to be found. All else would be in the nature of transplanting, obliteration, and sacrifice. It would deprive them of the powers which were their inheritance and their greatest asset.

In later chapters I will return to these ideas and discuss whether a similar view is possible today with perhaps more developed theoretical clothes.

Of great interest here is Brøgger's interpretation of the situation in the Northern Isles immediately before the Vikings came. His discussion included many of the misinterpretations of the archaeological record (shared with Clouston) which persisted until fairly recently. For example, the Neolithic site at Skara Brae was labeled as a pict-house (1929:plate opposite p 48). The brochs were seen as defensive structures, not

ordinary habitations, and the Northern Isles were seen as the original power base of the Pictish kingdom.

However, Brøgger believed that the society which had constructed these great stone towers had lost its vigor and ability to fight by the time the Vikings put in an appearance, otherwise the struggle between the two groups would have lasted much longer and left more of a mark. Like Clouston, Brøgger placed a great deal of confidence in the place name evidence. He claimed that certain names such as "Pentland Firth" show that the Norse did come into contact with the Picts, otherwise they would not have named that body of water after them, but that any strong Celtic presence was the result of a later importation of servants to the Isles, just as Celtic servants were brought to Iceland (1929:61). He clearly stated (1929:64) that the numerical proportion of place names is an excellent indication of power, thus the almost complete absence of Pictish place names in the Northern Isles indicates the absence of effective resistance to the Norse settlement.

Brøgger also used place name evidence from Norway to show where the settlers in specific areas originated. For example, he connected the place names with the *setr* element to the Møre region of Norway, where it was common, and thus to the beginning of the Earldom, the first Earl coming from Møre in the later ninth century (1929:77). He said that it is important to understand the development of place names in Norway at this time and went so far as to conclude that "it was in Møre the *setr* class which were more or less responsible for the emigration" (1929:84). According to Brøgger the *land* names in Shetland signaled the second wave of emigration from West Agder and Rogaland (1929:85). On the basis of the place names, Brøgger concluded that the two main districts in Norway where the emigration west originated were the coastal region between Fjordana-Møre and Trøndelag (*set* and *bolsta* names) and Agder-Rogaland,

especially West Agder (*land* and *sta* names) (1929:88). In connection with the latter, he mentioned the work of Jan Petersen on house grounds in southwest Norway. Brøgger used this to support his contention that this region was a major point of origin for the emigration west.

There are problems with this interpretation which I will discuss in more detail below and in Chapter 4. For the moment I will simply point out that Petersen was based in southwestern Norway (resulting in a bias of the sample) where the nature of the architecture resulted in more visible house remains. In Trøndelag, for example, wood was more readily available and more likely to be used as a building material without protective stone walls, so house remains are much more difficult to find. Furthermore, Brøgger's dating of these house grounds is incorrect. He claimed that they date from the fifth to eighth centuries and were the houses of entire families who emigrated to the west (1929:90-92), but in fact no house remains in southwestern Norway have been dated to the seventh or eighth century. Such a sweeping conclusion seems rather unsubstantiated in any case.

Brøgger also reviewed the archaeological remains then known from the Northern Isles. At that time this did not include any settlement remains, just stray finds of brooches and combs and some graves. Brøgger attempted to relate the grave forms found in the Northern Isles to those found in Norway and, as with the place names, tried to point to a region of origin for the settlers. For example, on the basis of the use of stone cist burials on Westray, Brøgger claimed that these people came from the coasts of Møre, Trøndelag and Nordland where the same custom was known (1929:122). As we know today, burial customs are very difficult to interpret and the sample size Brøgger had to work with was very small. Again, his conclusions seem to go beyond what the evidence can reasonably support.

The later chapters of Brøgger's book dealt rather generally with the development of the Earldom and the increasing "Scotticization" of the islands. He pointed out that Shetland retained stronger ties with Norway than did Orkney, as shown in the Middle Ages when there was extensive Norse land ownership in Shetland but not in Orkney (1929:188). This is also a point I will return to in later chapters.

In all, Brøgger's attempt to synthesize the information then available on the development of the Norse settlement in the Northern Isles was praiseworthy given the limited evidence he had to work with. It had a longlasting effect on research in this area. However, many of the interpretations of the archaeological and place name material have undergone drastic revisions since his time as new information has come to light and new syntheses which take this into account are required.

Research Since 1930

The first evidence of actual Norse settlement in the Northern Isles began to appear in the 1930s with the discovery of the important site at Jarlshof on the southern tip of Shetland, and this single site has dominated the stage ever since (see Figure 2.1). Alexander Curle was the first to examine the Norse structures at Jarlshof (1934, 1937, 1954). Curle attempted in these early reports to relate the Jarlshof structures to house sites found elsewhere in Scandinavia, e.g. Petersen's sites in Rogaland (1954:17). He also noted a possible connection with the Black Houses in the Western Isles. The artifacts uncovered in the initial excavations of the site included combs which Curle dated to the ninth century (1954: 18).

Hamilton published the results of large scale excavations at Jarlshof in 1956. These included not just the Norse remains but also the Bronze, Iron Age and Medieval remains. Hamilton cited both grave and place name evidence to show that the Viking expansion west began around AD 800 and also argued that Harald Hårfagre did not

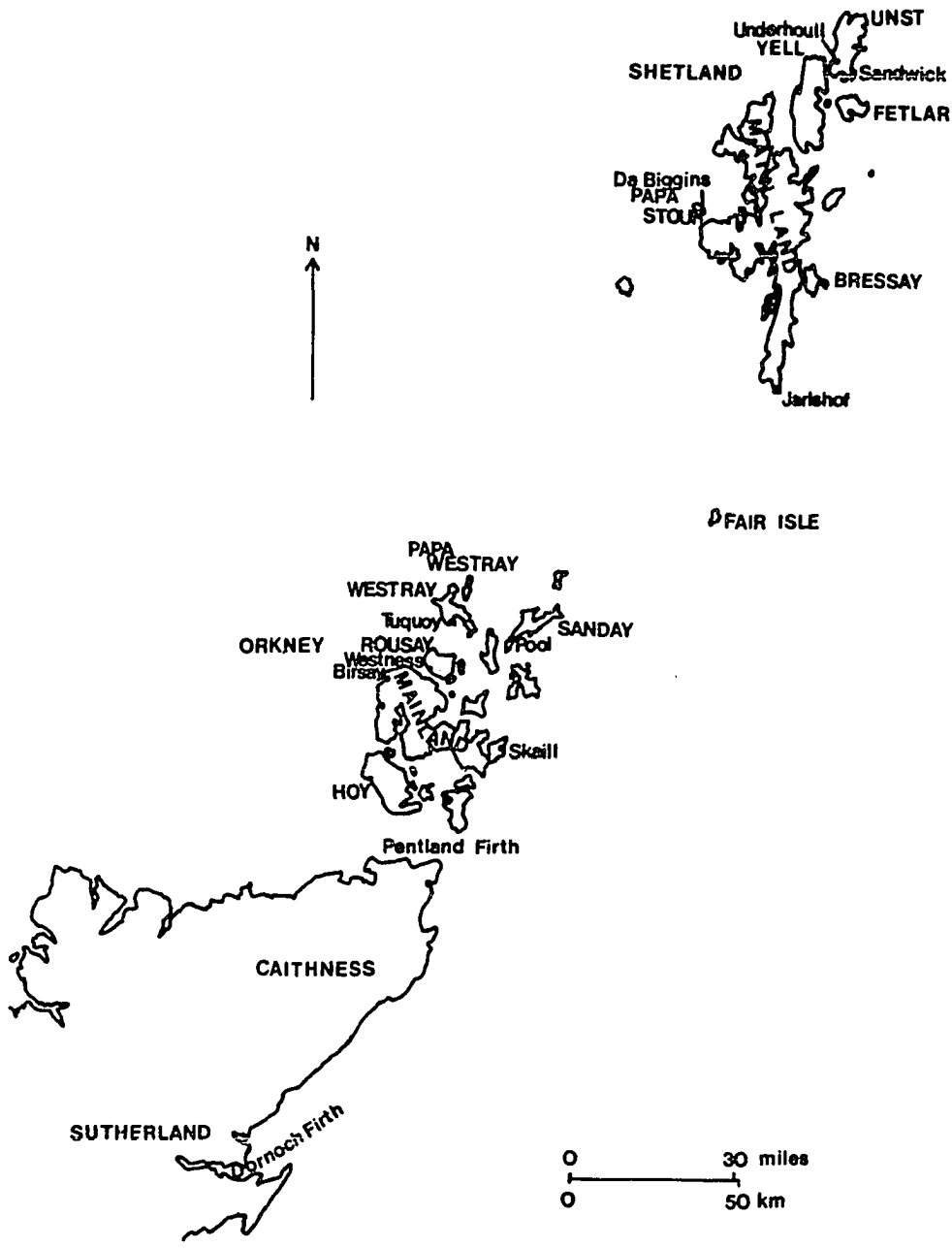


Figure 2.1: The Northern Isles, redrawn after Crawford (1987:20).

found the Earldom; rather, the Møre family established itself in Orkney a generation before (1956:93, 106). He did not provide archaeological evidence to substantiate this claim, however.

Hamilton also claimed close parallels with his discoveries at Jarlshof in the Icelandic material and in Norway, with the site of Oma being singled out for attention (1956:94). As I hope to show in Chapter 4, this simplification of the Norwegian house material obscures the variety present in the archaeological record, although the attempt to place Jarlshof within a wider context was certainly laudable.

The excavations at Jarlshof formed our sole source of data on actual Norse settlement in the Northern Isles until Small's work at Underhoull in Shetland in the 1960s (Small 1966). Even today Jarlshof enjoys a preeminent position in Viking studies in this region, in large part because of its spatial and temporal extent. Rightly or wrongly, it is used as a basis for comparison when any other Norse sites are discovered.

Before turning to more recent research, I will discuss briefly the work of Aage Roussell (1934) on Norse building customs in the Northern and Western Isles. Roussell saw house styles as ethnic markers and embarked on a journey through the islands of Scotland to find the traces of the Norse settlement which at that time had been found in Iceland and Greenland. He rightly challenged the assertion by the Royal Commission in 1928 that the Norse built only in wood, not drystone masonry (1934:8), but he was incorrect in claiming himself that the houses of that period in southwestern Norway were built of stone; in fact, as came to light in the 1960s, these were also built of wood but with stone insulation walls.

Roussell claimed that the houses he found in the Western Isles were the most interesting as they resembled not the Norse houses discovered in Iceland and Greenland

but prehistoric Scandinavian houses (1934:9). These houses had then recently been revealed by the excavations of Jan Petersen, among others, in Norway, though Rousell also mentioned work in Sweden and Denmark (1934:34-48). But he felt that the Black Houses were most closely related to the prehistoric houses in Jæren or Jutland 1500 years ago. Rousell also saw Scandinavian parallels to Orkney loft houses (1934:102-105).

But how convincing an argument is this? There is a huge time gap between the prehistoric Scandinavian houses and the Black Houses Rousell observed in the Western Isles in 1931. During this time many other influences came into play in the Western Isles as well as in Orkney and Shetland, not the least of which was the introduction of capitalism. But Rousell was not alone in seeing the presence of rectilinear architecture as a sign of Norse influence. To this day the change in architectural form from cellular or curvilinear structures to rectilinear structures is used as a marker for the advent of the Norse colonization.

However, without further theoretical justification for why similar house styles should indicate the presence of the same ethnic group, one should be leary of sweeping generalizations made from incomplete evidence. In addition, one must be careful to examine the evidence of house styles in Norway in its entirety, not just choose examples which result in a "good fit." Jan Petersen's contributions to our knowledge of Iron Age architecture in southwestern Norway were tremendous, but a significant amount of work has been done since he published his results in 1933 and 1936. I will discuss the theoretical aspects of this problem in more detail in the following chapter and the Norwegian evidence including Petersen's work in Chapter 4, but here it is important to realize that the architectural argument has had a great impact on research into the Norse settlement in the Northern Isles.

Current State of Pictish Studies

I have mentioned several times the misunderstandings of the archaeological data with regard to the Pictish population in the Northern Isles immediately before the Viking colonies were founded. Here I will attempt to summarize the current state of knowledge about this elusive group of people and their initial contact with the Norse. Thomson's recent book (1987) on the history of Orkney provides an excellent overview of the historical sources for Orkney.

The first priority is to understand who the Picts were. Written sources mentioning the Picts in the Northern Isles are few and far between. The anonymous *Historia Norvegiae*, dating to the twelfth century, reports that Orkney was originally inhabited by Picts and *papae*. The *papae* were the Christian clergy and place names such as Papdale and Papa Westray demonstrate the presence of this group in Orkney and Shetland (Thomson 1987:8).

The source goes on to say the Picts were no bigger than pygmies, that they built walled cities, but during the day their strength disappeared and they hid themselves out of fright in their underground houses. It also claims that they were destroyed by the Norwegians (Salveson 1969). Obviously at the time this was written there was no real memory of the original inhabitants of Orkney. The impressive structures from earlier in the Iron Age, e.g. the brochs and earth houses, were clearly being confused with the later Pictish population.

If we turn to Scandinavian sources we are again left in the dark. *Orkneyinga Saga*, written in the thirteenth century, begins its story with a tale of Harald Hårfagre's journey from Norway to teach a lesson to the Orkney Vikings who were raiding the coast of Norway. It does not mention a native population. *Egil's Saga* implies that

Orkney, Shetland, Faroe and the Hebrides were all wilderness and uninhabited before the Viking colonization, which was supposed to be the result of people fleeing from the tyranny of Harald Hårfagre (Pálsson and Edwards 1976:IV). Again, this is a thirteenth-century source.

There are passing references to Orkney by classical writers and from these we can piece together part of the story. Tacitus claimed that Orkney (*Orcades*) was "discovered and subjugated" by Agricola's fleet when it circumnavigated Scotland in AD 84 (Mattingly 1979:60), though others felt that the Orkney chieftains had made a formal submission to Claudius in AD 43 (Thomson 1987:3). This indicates some kind of power base in Orkney though the story itself may not be true.

The name *Picti*, the Painted Ones, did not actually appear until AD 297, when it was used in a Latin source (Ritchie 1990:183). The *Bern Chronicle*, written by an Englishman in about 800, adds to the account of Claudius's annexation of Orkney and says that the Orkney islands were the islands of the Picts. As Thomson states, "As evidence that Orkney was actually Pictish in AD 43, the chronicle is probably valueless, but the important point is that the author...found it natural to assume that it was" (1987:3).

According to Ritchie (1990:183), the history of the Picts properly begins with the reign of Bridei mac Maelchon. The geographical extent of Pictland on the basis of both archaeological and historical sources included all lands north of the Forth-Clyde line (except for Argyll after about AD 500). The Picts were united with the Scots in about AD 843 under the Scottish king Kenneth mac Alpin (Ritchie 1990:183).

Adomnan, Columba's biographer, reports the presence of the Orkney king at the court of King Bridei mac Maelchon near Inverness in AD 561. The passage, which is concerned with the safety of Christian missionaries sailing in northern waters, indicates

that the king of Orkney was in some way subject to the king of the Picts, but that he had a certain degree of independence (Thomson 1987:6). One hundred years later the *Irish Annals* record that King Bridei mac Bile devastated Orkney in AD 682, possibly as a reprisal for an Orcadian attack or in response to a rebellion. These tantalizing tidbits do not by any stretch of the imagination present a clear picture of what was happening in the north at this time, but they do indicate that society in Orkney was organized, that it had a ruler, and that it had regular contacts with Scotland at the very least.

There is also evidence that Orkney was integrated into the Roman Church before the Viking arrival. Adomnon's biography of St. Columba, already mentioned, indicates some contact between Orkney and the Church in the late sixth century. Northumbrian influences are evident in the story of St. Tredwell and her connection to Papa Westray. In AD 715 the Pictish church aligned itself with the Roman church by way of Northumbria and out of this seems to come the story of a large and successful mission to Pictland led by St. Boniface. A holy virgin named Triduana, Tredwell or Trolla was a member of the mission. The legend about her contains no connection to Orkney, but there is a chapel dedicated to her in Papa Westray and other dedications in Caithness.¹ In addition, there is a St. Boniface dedication in Papa Westray. These demonstrate that there was at least a cult which had its origins in Northumbria and links the Orkney clerics and the Northumbrian mission. The known Christian sites in Orkney show strong Northumbrian influences and do not have to predate the eighth century (Thomson 1987:10).

¹Unfortunately for her, she attracted the attention of the Pictish king who sent messages to tell her how the sight of her fair eyes inflamed him. As Thomson relates, "With one of these splendidly impulsive saintly gestures, Triduana tore out her eyes, skewered them on to a twig, and informed the king that he could have what he so much admired" (1987:9). She died in Lothian after devoting her life to prayer and fasting.

Raymond Lamb (1992) suggests that the St. Peter dedications in Orkney may date from this period, as all were located near broch sites. According to Lamb, the brochs are the equivalent of hillforts elsewhere in Europe, and some of them remained occupied as centers of power into the early medieval period. Lamb suggests that the network of Peter dedications was a result of a planned system imposed from outside (1992:103), indicating an expansion of Pictish power to Orkney. The "papar" name element is common in both Orkney and Shetland and, not unexpectedly, occurs in areas of the best quality land. So again we have evidence that Orkney was drawn into the administrative structure of the Pictish kingdom and the Church 100 years before the arrival of the Vikings.

The archaeological evidence about the Picts is not plentiful, nor is it well-understood. Until recently even the use of the name "Pict" as an ethnic indicator was contentious since so little was known of that population. Much of the work in the Northern Isles has been focused on the brochs from earlier in the Iron Age, in large part because of their monumental nature and thus visibility on the landscape.

As Ritchie points out (1990:183-184), the identification of diagnostically Pictish artifacts "depends upon the coincidence of their distribution with the geographical and chronological span provided for the Picts by the historical record." Most obvious are the symbol stones, dated no earlier than the seventh century. The symbols on them can then be used to identify other objects as Pictish, e.g. silverwork. Ogam inscriptions form another clearly Pictish group. The painted pebbles seem to date to the early part of the historical Pictish period as they have been found in post-broch contexts.

Pictish burials are difficult to identify as there was no strong tradition of burying grave goods with the dead in Scotland from c. 1000 BC until the Viking Age (Ritchie 1990:189). Ritchie suggests (1990:189) that extended inhumations in stone built long

cists were favored in Orkney in late prehistoric times, and Morris's excavations south of Red Craig along the Brough Road revealed round burials from the earlier Pictish period (Morris 1989). A possible Pictish-type burial may also have been identified in Sutherland, Caithness, Orkney and Shetland. This consists of a long cist set centrally underneath a low circular or rectilinear cairn with a slab-built kerb (Ritchie 1975:31-32). Apparently the rectilinear type remained in use longer than the circular type, perhaps enabling the Norse to adopt this burial form.

Finally, one should remember that the Picts were a seafaring nation. There is little evidence regarding the type of boat used by these people, but they presented a naval threat to late Roman Britain (Ritchie 1990:203).

It is only fairly recently that evidence of the Pictish population in the form of settlement remains has actually been found. Excavations along the Brough Road, at Skaill, Buckquoy, Howe and Pool in Orkney have all revealed Pictish occupation into the eighth century (Figure 2.1, Figure 2.2). At Buckquoy, Anna Ritchie uncovered a 'figure-of-eight' type house beneath an early Norse farmstead (Ritchie 1977). A house of this type has also been found at the Udal, North Uist in the Western Isles and a simple figure-of-eight house was discovered by Morris's work at Red Craig along the Brough Road very close to Buckquoy (Morris 1989). It has often been assumed that a change from curvilinear to rectilinear architecture indicates the presence of the Norse, but as we shall see, this assumption may be faulty.

At Buckquoy, a spindle whorl with an unintelligible ogam inscription was found in the Pictish levels and dated to the early eighth century (Ritchie 1977:181). Also found was a painted pebble, a close parallel to one found at Jarlshof (Ritchie 1977:182). Animal head bone pins were found as well as three gaming boards, though the latter probably came from the Norse levels. The designs on these boards were essentially the

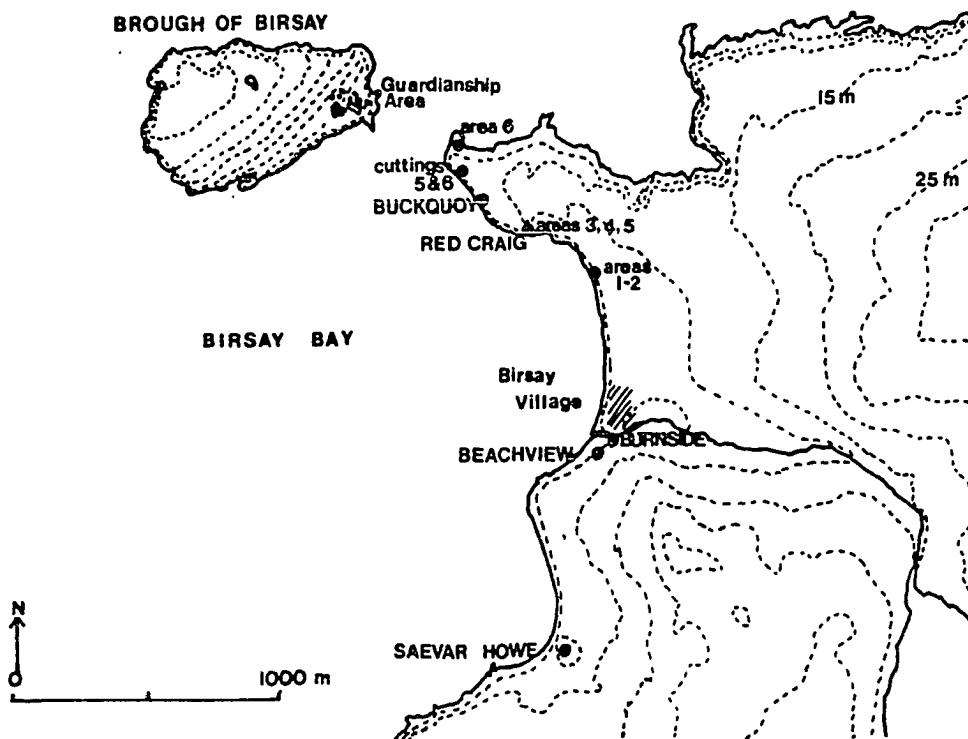


Figure 2.2: Birsay Bay, redrawn after Morris (1989:6). Areas 1-6 and cuttings are part of the Brough Road Excavations.

same as that on a wooden board found at Ballinderry in Ireland (Ritchie 1977:187). This game consisted of a battle between two players (see Chapter 5) and was common to both the Celtic and Norse traditions (*hnefatafl* in the sagas, *brandubh* in Ireland and *tawlbwrdd* in Wales), though the Buckquoy boards are thought to belong to the Norse tradition and the Ballinderry board to the Irish tradition.² Finally, several combs were found, the importance of which will be discussed below.

The excavation of the structure at Red Craig did not produce any diagnostically Pictish artifacts, but it also did not produce anything diagnostically Viking, although such material was present above the earlier phases in sites just to the south of Red Craig (Morris 1989:283ff). Morris prefers a Late Pictish date for the site, a date supported by the few radiocarbon dates from the site (Morris 1989:287). A stone gaming board similar to those from Buckquoy was found, although the Buckquoy gaming boards came from Norse contexts. Along with the incised lines for the game, there was a possible depiction of a ship with multiple masts quite unlike any remains or depictions of contemporary vessels from the British Isles or Scandinavia (Morris 1989:220). South of the Red Craig site, Morris excavated middens and graves from both the Pictish and Viking periods and there were clearly settlements in the immediate vicinity although these were not located. These excavations make it clear that the Buckquoy settlement excavated by Ritchie is not an isolated case but instead fits into the general picture of settlement in the Birsay Bay area as revealed by Morris's small sites excavations.

A cellular house similar to the Buckquoy example and dating to the Late Iron Age has also been found at Howe, although other house styles were also present (Smith

²Playing pieces are not uncommon in Norse contexts in Scotland. We have examples from the Brough of Birsay and Jarlshof, though none was found at Buckquoy (Ritchie 1977: 187). Board games were evidently popular and continued to be so with the introduction of chess sometime during the Viking period. Later manuscripts claim the Cnut the Great was a chess player (Taylor 1990: 6). The most outstanding example of chess pieces from this period are perhaps the clearly Scandinavian Lewis chessmen, carved in ivory in the twelfth century and discovered on the isle of Lewis in 1831.

1990). In it was found a stone gaming board similar to those found at Buckquoy as well as three double-sided composite combs (Smith 1990:40). Smith (1990:38) interprets the site at Howe as showing a decline in population in this period, but points out that even with this decline "a population can be receptive to new ideas of building shape and techniques, even when the dominant trend was to adapt the already existing pattern." She concludes that the people living at Howe were well aware of changing ideas and fashions.

Gelling has reached similar conclusions regarding the Pictish and Norse site at Skaill (1984). He points to the high quality construction of the late Pictish house, which was in fact a subrectangular structure, not a curvilinear one. In addition, the people at Skaill had a fine pottery tradition and had pins made from bronze. Combs were also found there.

At Pool on Sanday, there was occupation from the Neolithic to the Norse periods (Hunter 1990). The Pictish occupation was found underneath later Viking infill. As at Howe, a contraction of the settlement took place sometime after the beginning of the seventh century (Hunter 1990:189). The first sign of a Norse presence is a subrectangular structure which partially used existing wall remains. This structure was not of clear long house character, though, and the artifacts from it are not culturally specific and "showed an admixture of both native and Scandinavian types in what might be defined as a phase of cultural interface" (Hunter 1990:189). In fact, native pottery wares persisted on the site after Norse occupation began and the primary roundhouse may have been occupied by an indigenous population into the Norse period (Hunter et al. 1992:132). Hunter (1991:191) has concluded that:

although colonisation had a major impact it did not entirely obviate elements of an evolved native culture, nor did it occur overnight. While diagnostic indicators such as steatite support the notion of Scandinavian supremacy

(either politically or numerically), the persistence of earlier pottery traditions would tend to suggest not only that some degree of assimilation is to be considered, but also that a considerable period of overlap took place.

Here, as at Buckquoy, an ogam inscription was found. Preliminary work on it suggests a non-Celtic Pictish linguistic origin (Hunter 1990:186). A Pictish symbol stone was also found here.

All these sites indicate that the native society was not in serious decline at the time the Vikings arrived, although the population may have been more dispersed in the landscape rather than centered on the brochs as it appears to have been in earlier centuries. Smith (1990:38) suggests when discussing the evidence from Howe that this settlement dispersal may have required land reorganization before the arrival of the Norse. Armit (1990:208-209) notes a change in the first millennium "from an emphasis on monumental domestic architecture to elaborate personal ornament [suggesting] a fundamental change in the areas of stress within the power structures involved." After a consolidation and legitimation of power in the broch period, there was a switch to the use of personal ornament by individuals in claiming positions of power within the established structure. According to Armit (1990:209), "Personal ornament could communicate, far more easily than domestic architecture, the subtleties of power, legitimacy and dependency in the emerging kingdoms of the later 1st millennium AD." Thus Pictish society was a society in flux before the Vikings arrived, but it was certainly not a backwater as we can see from the archaeological material as well as from the written sources discussing the coming of Christianity to the Northern Isles.

Several difficult problems confront the student of Pictish society in the Northern Isles, one of them being the difficulties presented by the linguistic evidence. Many have argued, including some of those scholars mentioned above, that the Picts must have been removed somehow by the Norse because of the apparent lack of Pictish place

names. But as I demonstrated in my discussion of the place names as a source in Chapter 1, this argument is not convincing.

In the past two decades new archaeological material has come to light which also contradicts such a simplistic invasion and destruction hypothesis. The precise nature of the interaction between the two groups is difficult to determine, but several recent excavations (including those at Pool discussed above) indicate that there was non-violent contact between the Picts and the Vikings. This does not necessarily imply friendly relations, but it does indicate something less than the all out violence envisioned by some (e.g., I. Crawford 1981).

I have already mentioned several sites in Orkney where Pictish remains have been found. In most of these cases there are also Viking or Norse remains overlying these Pictish structures (see Figure 2.1 for map of sites on Mainland Orkney). At Buckquoy, for example, there are Norse structures above the Pictish ones. This is also true at Saevar Howe, at Skail and at Pool (Hedges 1983, Gelling 1984, Hunter 1990; see Appendix 2). These Norse structures are characteristically rectilinear though they do not always follow the pattern of the Norse long house. And as mentioned above, Morris's excavations along the Brough Road have produced Pictish and Viking cemeteries in close association, although here the Viking burials were placed in developing middens (Morris 1989:291-292).³ The small sites taken together illustrate that the Birsay Bay area was an important settlement area throughout both periods (and even before).

The initial Norse occupation at Buckquoy has been dated to around AD 800. Carbon 14 dates from Saevar Howe put the initial Norse settlement there at AD 800 or just before. In both cases the site may have been abandoned before the arrival of the

³The earliest levels of these middens are Pictish and the upper levels are Viking/Norse.

Vikings. At Pool the Viking arrival has been dated to the late eighth century or the early ninth century (Hunter 1990:189).

On the Brough of Birsay there is also at least one example of a native structure immediately overlain by a Norse structure. This structure has been dated to the late eighth or early ninth century (Hunter 1986:173). The Brough is obviously an atypical site, both in the Pictish and Norse periods, since the density of settlement on the Brough could not have been supported by the resources on the Brough alone. Some suggest that there was a monastic community on the Brough in the Pictish period which may have continued into the Norse period. There was certainly fine metal working going on there in the Pictish period (Curle 1982) and moulds from this site show that St. Ninian's Isle type brooches were being manufactured in the Northern Isles as well as further south (Ritchie 1990:186).⁴

The Brough has also been tied to the Norse Earldom in the tenth century and it is certainly interesting that the site retained its special status well into the Norse period. Hunter (1986:172-173) has pointed out that building plots within the settlement were retained through the transition; that is, Viking and Norse structures were built directly on top of Pictish ones and shared the same floor area. He suggests that this Norse conformity to a pre-existing pattern may have had political causes, that some element of local control existed whose roots lay in the organization of the native society and which retained its power for three centuries.

The changes in the material culture are not necessarily so clear-cut. As I have indicated, there is even some discussion about how diagnostic rectilinear architecture is for Norse occupation and how open the native groups were to new architectural styles

⁴A great Pictish treasure was hidden on St. Ninian's Isle in Shetland. Along with two symbol stones from Papil and Bressay, this shows that Shetland was not entirely out of touch with Pictish culture in the eighth century, although Shetland is not mentioned as often in the literature.

(Ritchie 1975, Armit 1990, Hunter 1990). And even when these architectural changes occur, we still find native Pictish artifacts in the Norse levels, indicating that there was some kind of interaction between the two groups.

At Buckquoy both native pins and combs were found in the Norse levels (see also Chapter 5). These include the animal head pins (Ritchie 1977:#24, #25), double-sided composite combs (Ritchie 1977:#53, #54), and single-sided high backed combs (Ritchie 1977:#47, #48). Excavations on the Brough of Birsay have also produced native-type combs in Norse layers. Curle's Type A double-sided combs (e.g. Curle 1982:#196, #197) were found exclusively in the Pictish layers, but her Type B double-sided combs were found only in the lower Norse horizons (Curle 1982:22). Curle regards these as native, not imports, and claims that they can be seen on Class II Pictish symbol stones (1982:58). Finally, the single-sided high backed combs from the Brough (e.g. Curle 1982:#215 from the Pictish horizon) were found in both the Pictish and Norse horizons (Curle 1982:22). They are also known from many other sites in northern Scotland and, along with the Type A double-sided combs, are seen on Class I Pictish symbol stones, so there does not seem to be any doubt about their native origin.

However, recently some very interesting studies have been made of these combs. Birthe Weber analyzed the combs from Orkney and Shetland (1992) and discovered that some of the single-sided high backed combs (Hedges 1983:#109-11 Saevar Howe, Gelling n.d.:1007 Skail) which are native were actually made of reindeer antler. This is also true of some type B double-sided combs (e.g. Curle 1982:#203, Ritchie 1977:#56, #57, Gelling n.d.:#1013, #1014). Other high backed combs (e.g. Curle 1982:#215) and one Curle double-sided Type A (Curle 1982:#196) were judged to be probably of reindeer antler. Also of reindeer antler are long-handled combs which came from areas not occupied by the Norse (Howe; Site 6 at Skail). These are

extremely important findings, since there is no indication of reindeer having been extant in Scotland and England after 8300 BP (Weber 1992:159). They pose the possibility that there was contact between the Picts and the Vikings before the settlement began in the late eighth/early ninth centuries.

I have already shown that the Church was established in Orkney before the Vikings appeared on the scene. There is also evidence that this church survived the Viking colonization. The *Life of St. Findan*, written in the latter part of the ninth century about events which occurred around AD 840, provides some interesting clues about the state of the church in Orkney. It includes a story of how Findan eluded Viking raiders in Orkney as he was being taken back to Norway. He escaped from an uninhabited island and found some benefactors who took him to a bishop, apparently a native Pict whose seat was nearby, possibly on Papa Westray. Thomson (1986:280) concludes that because the *Life* describes Orkney as lying next to the land of the Picts it was not regarded any longer as part of Pictland and therefore must already have been under Norse control. But if so, some Pictish institutions such as the Church had survived.

The historical system of taxation of ouncelands and pennylands in both Orkney and Shetland also hints at a pre-Norse origin (Thomson 1986:116-177). There are no clear parallels to this system in Norway, even though the terminology for the system is Norse. The taxation system in the Northern Isles is very similar to the one in the Hebrides, however, and according to Sawyer (1982:111) this "strongly suggests that in the northern Isles, as elsewhere, the Scandinavians took over and adapted a native system of assessment." I have already noted in my discussion of the archaeological material that there is evidence to suggest a reorganization of land divisions in the Late Iron Age and that in several instances the Viking/Norse structures were built directly on

top of earlier native structures (e.g. at Buckquoy, the Brough of Birsay, Skail). Thus it appears through the archaeological record that the newcomers were finding their choices of settlement sites constrained by a native system. This refutes the hypothesis that the Vikings simply overran the islands. Clearly the native population exercised enough power in some way to sustain their own pattern of land division.

Recent excavations in Shetland by Gerald Bigelow and Barbara Crawford are beginning to shed light on the later Norse period there and the continued contacts with Norway. Bigelow's (1985) house site at Sandwick on Unst dates to the twelfth to late fourteenth centuries. The entire house was preserved and there was more than one phase of construction. Artifacts including combs demonstrate continued contact with Scandinavia and the rest of Europe.

Crawford's site at Da Biggins on Papa Stour was not quite as complete, as far as one can tell from the published material, but it is no less interesting (Crawford 1985). One record from Shetland drawn up by the lawthingman in 1299, considered reliable by Crawford (1985:129), describes a dispute over ducal rents owed to Duke Håkon of Norway (later Håkon V) from the island of Papa Stour. Norwegian kings had possessed estates in Shetland since the Battle of Florvåg in 1193 between the Øyskeggene from the Northern Isles and King Sverre of Norway. In the document mentioned above we have some evidence regarding the location of at least one of these estates. We also know that Papa Stour was held by Norwegians until the seventeenth century (Crawford 1985:155).

Work on house sites in Norway has also progressed since Jan Petersen's work in Rogaland. The excavation of Ytre Moa in Årdal in Sogn in the 1960s provided a completely new plan for Norwegian houses of the Viking period. These houses were shorter than the traditional long houses and had doors in the short gable wall, not the

long walls. In the last decade over 100 Iron Age house sites, many of them of this type, have been found in just one part of Sogn and Fjordane (Bjørge et al. 1992). Bjørn Myhre (1980) has collected the information on known house sites from the Iron Age to the early Middle Ages in southwestern Norway. Olav Sverre Johansen has similarly collected the available material on house sites in northern Norway (1978) and the recent excavation of the so-called chieftain's hall at Borg on Vestvågøy is very important even though this site is atypical (Stamsø Munch 1991a). Interestingly, work by Stamsø Munch on house sites in northern Norway reveals the difficulty in distinguishing between Norwegian and Saami structures.

This overview of the current state of research into the Pictish and Viking/Norse periods in the Northern Isles and Norway lays the foundation for my presentation of the archaeological data from these areas in Chapters 4 and 5. This will consist primarily of the data from excavated house grounds or *hustuffer* themselves, but will also include a brief discussion of the available artifactual material from these sites. Before turning to this data, however, I will present the theoretical framework through which I plan to view all this material.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Approach to Norse-Northern Isles Interaction

Theory and Explanation in Archaeology

There has been a debate within archaeology over the last two or three decades, sometimes an extremely acrimonious one, over the proper role of theory in archaeology and the correct form of scientific explanation. In the 1960s, the New Archaeologists rebelled against what they saw as deficiencies in the practice of archaeology and turned to one school within the philosophy of science, the logical positivists, to light the way from intuitive commonsense description to true scientific explanation. For them, the goal was the discovery of general laws applicable cross-culturally. Explanation and prediction were seen as symmetrical. Science was value-free and objective and there was a unity of science which meant that one method, the method of mathematical physics, was applicable to all sciences.¹

These claims have now been thoroughly criticized from a number of quarters. For example, the notion that science is value-free and that data are untinged by subjectivity has clearly been discredited. But the assault on positivism as a research program has left a vacuum in archaeology which appears to be attracting any number of positions, both radical and reactionary. There is particularly a fear of rampant theoretical relativism, the idea that anything goes, my explanation is just as good as yours because all facts are created anyway and one cannot be shown to be 'better' than another.

In response to this, several archaeologists have turned recently to realism (e.g. Gibbon 1989, McGuire 1992). Several have pointed out that archaeology is both a natural and a social science (McGuire 1992; Kosso 1991) and therefore requires both

¹For a thorough discussion of logical positivism in archaeology, see Gibbon 1989.

empiricist and dialectical methods of study. For the realist there is no symmetry between explanation and prediction; rather, the goal is to understand the structures that generate specific phenomena, to discover the necessary connections between phenomena (Gibbon 1989:149; McGuire 1992:112). The realist acknowledges that the world is an open system, not a closed one. However, realism accepts that there is a real world that exists independently of our own consciousness, although our knowledge of that world is necessarily incomplete and faulty because it is conditioned by human thought (McGuire 1992:112).

Theories within realism provide tools with which we can investigate specific contexts. They are arrived at through a dialectical process, what has been referred to as retroduction. This is neither induction nor deduction, but a continuous process of moving from actual observations about the world to theory, suggesting processes which could account for those anomalies which do not fit existing theory (McGuire 1992:113). Theories need to be logically consistent and coherent, they must fit our facts about the physical world. And yet facts do not speak for themselves but must be interpreted. The realist acknowledges that we are never going to arrive at 'the best theory', although we can reject some theories. Further, a change in theory or perspective can allow us to learn new things about the world from the same data. Theories are not the ultimate goal, they are conceptual tools which are useful as long as they provide us with interesting and useful insights about the world.

Hodder appears to be adopting some of these positions recently in his discussion of an interpretive archaeology. He advocates a three part method (1991:7): "a guarded objectivity of the data, hermeneutic procedures for inferring internal meanings, and reflexivity." Again there is a dialectic between present and past in which knowledge is created. But there are evidential constraints on that knowledge. We cannot just tell

any story that pleases us or satisfies our political agenda. As Hodder puts it (1991:12), "the organized material remains have an independence that can confront our taken for granted." Alison Wylie has also discussed the evidential constraints on our interpretations of the past. She claims that when a number of diverse lines of evidence all converge on the same hypothesis, they provide decisive support (though not proof) for that hypothesis "simply because it is so implausible that the convergence should be the result of compensatory error in all the inferences establishing its evidential support " (Wylie 1992:28).

From the beginning in this project I have engaged in a search for a perspective or theory which would allow me to approach the data with the questions I wanted to ask. I began very simply with the observation that Viking/Norse house styles in the Northern Isles were different from the native ones and yet similar to the Norwegian ones. Why was this so? What social relations were at work? What sort of interaction was there between settlers and natives, between settlers and homeland? I explored a number of approaches to questions of culture contact and interaction--World Systems Theory, peer polity interaction, core-periphery--and made some assumptions which, after examining the data more closely, I either modified greatly or abandoned, for example the notion that ethnic considerations were necessarily dominant in relations between settlers and natives. This has been a continuous process of working from the data to theory and back again and I will not describe all the twists and turns along the way. However, I finally came to the conclusion that the house remains and the use of space within these structures were an important source of information and that I needed to find a way to use that evidence to get at the social relations I was interested in. In the following discussion I will show how similar data have been used in past archaeological research, what

current approaches are being taken and why I have rejected some of those approaches although they may be fruitful in specific situations.

As I noted at the beginning of this chapter, the last thirty years have seen a tremendous growth in interest in explicit theorizing within archaeology. Until then, however, theorizing about the evidence was often of the commonsense variety, although many implicit assumptions were made. For example, in the traditional culture historical approach to archaeology, the construction of typologies was a major focus of research and groups were identified on the basis of consistent assemblages of specific artifacts. The artifact distributions were mapped and the heaviest concentrations of the so-called diagnostic artifacts were identified as the principle areas of occupation by the group in question. Sometimes these groups were even correlated with historically known groups speaking known languages. Thus, the material culture remains were taken to reflect in a very direct way the presence of certain ethnic groups.²

While typologies were and are essential to conducting further research, it often seemed that they became an end in themselves, that the artifact as artifact was what was important, not the artifact as evidence for certain social practices. Typologies can disconnect the artifact from the society which produced it, removing it from its spatial and temporal origins. Furthermore, typologies do not explain why an object was produced in that particular form and not another. For example, a typology which chronicled prehistoric houses in Orkney would only note a shift from curvilinear to rectilinear forms but could not explain such a shift satisfactorily.

²The concept of ethnicity has also been hotly debated in archaeology. I will avoid most of the discussion here, although in later chapters I will discuss the relative importance of ethnicity as one of the structuring social relations within Viking/Norse society. An intense focus on ethnicity can obscure other important social relations which may, in fact, be more important in a specific historical context. Archaeologists have often been guilty of assuming the preeminence of ethnicity as a structuring social relation, especially in colonial contexts, when other social relations may have been equally important (e.g. class, gender). However, it is also important for me in this project to be able to identify the ethnicity or affiliation (Norse or Pictish) of the people who built the houses and to be able to support my claims.

In dealing with the question of ethnicity, there was seldom any justification for why specific artifact types or groups were felt to reflect ethnic identity better than others. In fact, the distribution of different artifacts within the diagnostic assemblage may vary, with concentrations of different artifacts occurring at different geographical locations. It is often an accident of history which site is discovered first and therefore becomes a type site. Furthermore, there must be some justification for why a certain type of jewelry and weapon should define an ethnic group more satisfactorily than another group of artifacts. Thus the traditional approach, while it allows one to organize the data into a more manageable form, is often guilty of using implicit assumptions and does not allow the archaeologist to get at questions of ethnic identity or social relations.

The processual or New Archaeologists began by trying to get at processes in culture instead of statics. They held the view that archaeological evidence was a fossil record and that there were direct mechanical relationships between past processes and the surviving material evidence. If this were true, then one could assume that cross-culturally comparable processes would result in comparable patterns in the surviving evidence (Barrett 1988:5). Thus, as I have already stated, the New Archaeology stressed the search for universal laws of culture which would hold true across space and time. The ability to predict on the basis of these laws was seen to be an important part of the program.

New Archaeologists often adopted an explicitly scientific systems approach to the study of material culture. The various subsystems--e.g. economic, religious, technological--were seen as forming a self-regulating whole. However, as many have pointed out, such an approach makes it extremely difficult to explain change which originates within the society itself. Rather, it simply allows us to "describe the society at any given time by a large series of observations or measurements" (Renfrew, in Barrett

1988:7). In addition, the New Archaeologists stressed the need for objectivity, for hypothesis testing and theory building and therefore often concentrated on the economic, ecological and technological aspects of the societies in question since they felt that these were areas more amenable to archaeological investigation. Ideology and social meaning were thought to be areas more resistant to archaeological investigation because they were aspects of culture contained in the minds of individuals, not in material remains. Thus a house would be viewed in the light of the technological abilities of the culture, the environmental constraints present or the economic system which supported its construction with little discussion of the symbolic aspects of the house and the organization of space within it. The social production of space was not addressed.

As ethnographic work has shown, it is not so easy to isolate the different components of a culture from the influence of other parts of it; material culture is imbued with meaning. Furthermore, it is not clear that the conclusions made about the system of production, for example, were really any more objective than more recent attempts to study the social and symbolic meaning of material culture. In fact, Conkey and Spector (1984) showed convincingly that archaeologists have consistently made unsubstantiated assumptions about gender roles in past societies despite claims to objectivity. For example, while Binford and Binford could claim that we do not really know how past societies were socially partitioned, they could go on to write that casually made stone tools indicated women engaged in plant processing (Binford and Binford 1968: cited in Conkey and Spector 1984:6). More generally, certain artifact types have been identified consistently with either males or females (weapons and textile tools, respectively) without any supporting data from the society in question. More recently, Watson and Kennedy (1991) have pointed out that in two well known hypotheses concerning the domestication of plants in Eastern North America, either a

small group of men (shamans) is credited with the discovery or women are seen as unconscious agents incapable of intentional innovation. This despite the fact that ethnographic evidence indicates that in foraging societies plants tend to be women's business (Watson and Kennedy 1991:269). These examples illustrate the need for archaeologists to reexamine their assumptions about how society works and to develop more fruitful ways of approaching the archaeological evidence.

Structuralism

To combat the lack of attention to symbolism and the perceived dryness of the New Archaeology some archaeologists turned to the work of Levi-Strauss and tried to apply the ideas of structuralism to archaeology. The idea that culture is composed of series of binary oppositions which are always at work in the unconscious has had a tremendous effect on archaeological interpretations. It helped archaeologists construct models of how different aspects of culture from different 'subsystems' may all be organized according to a single 'grammar'. For example, the oppositions light:dark, dry:wet, male:female, culture:nature, may be repeated throughout a culture, thus making a unified whole, not a series of separate unconnected entities or subsystems. In this way it might be possible to explain how a seemingly disparate group of artifacts are connected as part of a greater social structure belonging to the same ethnic group.

However, there are many problems with structuralism. How does one determine the oppositions? Are these oppositions constant over time? How did they originate? Do the members of a culture consciously recognize them and act accordingly or does structuralism presume that there is little or no creative human agency? These oppositions appear to have a life of their own, unaffected by the members of a particular society. Since members of a culture can manipulate aspects of a culture to enhance their own positions, there is a strong argument for the role of creative human agency and yet

many of these manipulations of culture do seem to function below the level of discursive consciousness. In addition, structuralism seems to place structure outside of both time and space. It does not explain adequately how structures and the binary oppositions are reproduced through time and space.

In the case of space in particular, structuralists presented it as a non-verbal language structured by an internal grammar. This led to space being disconnected from its physical component and relegated to the sphere of ideology with a life outside human action. As Tom Saunders remarks (1990:184), "spatial structures are given powers that are rightly due to its constituents, as if space had some intrinsic qualities in itself."

In recent years researchers from a variety of social science disciplines have realized the importance of reincorporating both the concepts of time and space into social theory. Thus a geographer (Soja 1985:90) has argued that to be alive is to participate in the social production of space, to shape and be shaped by a constantly evolving spatiality which constitutes and makes concrete social action and relationships. He also writes (Soja 1985:94) that:

...[spatiality] can also be substantially restructured and radically reconstituted, invoking again its origins and grounding in social practice and the labour process. The production of space is thus not simply a mechanical extrusion of a frozen matrix which acts passively to contain society. Spatiality and temporality, human geography and human history, intersect in a complex social process which creates a constantly evolving historical sequence of spatialities, a spatio-temporal structuration of social life which gives form not only to the grand movements of societal development but also to the recursive practices of day-to-day activity.

Pierre Bourdieu

This idea that both time and space are socially produced is now stimulating debate in several disciplines as is the problem of the role of human agency. One of the most important contributors to this debate is Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu's contribution to the discussion centers on the idea of *habitus* and practical logic. The *habitus* are generative principles at work which are applied to all situations encountered within a culture. The *habitus* is an unconscious practical mastery of how to go on, not an abstract set of rules, and therefore these generative principles allow for fuzziness, flexibility and manipulation by individuals. Bourdieu's ideas are important for archaeologists because he develops them in relation to material culture and the use of space. They are particularly useful in explaining why the house may be able to indicate ethnicity or at least group affiliation. As Bourdieu states in The Logic of Practice (1990:76):

Inhabited space - starting with the house - is the privileged site of the objectification of the generative schemes, and, through the divisions and hierarchies it establishes between things, between people and between practices, this materialized system of classification inculcates and constantly reinforces the principles of the classification which constitutes the arbitrariness of a culture...The world of objects, a kind of book in which each thing speaks metaphorically of all others and from which children learn to read the world, is read with the whole body, in and through the movements and displacements which define the space of objects as much as they are defined by it.

Habitus or practical logic--the knowledge of how to get on in the world--is dependent on fuzziness in order to continue to work. As Bourdieu points out (1990:261), practical logic exploits the multiple meanings of the symbols which it uses and adjusts to the particular logic of each area of practice, thus explaining any uncertainties or incoherences one may find when comparing all the applications of

particular generative schemes. However, there is a tendency toward a consensus of meaning. *Habitus* is passed down through time and plays an active role in social action while being transformed by those actions.

Practical logic, according to Bourdieu (1990:262):

has nothing in common with logical calculation as an end in itself. It functions in urgency, in response to life-or-death questions. It therefore never ceases to sacrifice the concern for coherence to the pursuit of efficiency, making maximum possible use of the *double entendres* and dual purposes that the indeterminacy of practices and symbols allows.

Thus ambiguities are important and will always be present, unlike the basis of structuralism which seems to insist on rigid sets of oppositions within which it is difficult to see how change and negotiation can take place.

Bourdieu also believes that the specific historical context of a situation is important: one should not search for general laws in the practical answers which a particular group has given to their own practical, historically situated problems. For example, he discusses marriage among certain groups in Algeria and points out that the formal genealogies constructed by anthropologists do not really explain what is going on (1990:173-175). In order to understand the meaning of a particular marriage, one must collect a variety of information including the strategies employed by all parties and the conditions that made them possible and necessary: in the case of marriage between parallel cousins, was it concluded in the lifetime of the common paternal grandfather, possibly by him, or by direct consent between the two brothers, was the agreement reached when the future spouses were still children or already of marriageable age, do the two brothers live separately or have they maintained completely undivided ownership of the whole estate and the domestic economy, is it the elder brother who is giving his daughter or who is taking a daughter? There are many other considerations as well

which must be taken into account in any serious attempt to understand the forces at work in any specific example. Obviously there are many important elements at play in Bourdieu's marriage example which cannot be read out of a standard genealogy and the anthropologist must be wary of all such artificial constructions.

But this in turn raises serious problems for the archaeologist. While the notion of *habitus* and the idea of practical knowledge allow us to recognize the importance of the material world, and here specifically the house, in shaping and being shaped by behavior, it is impossible for the archaeologists to collect the same kind of data in the detail Bourdieu seems to find necessary in order to understand practice. As Donley-Reid points out (1990:116), when all the people in a culture have died there is little trace of 'practice' in Bourdieu's sense of the word and the symbolic meaning of the people's artifacts may be lost forever.

Bourdieu himself studied the Kabyle house with an eye towards the way it structured and was structured by activities carried on by its inhabitants and its relation to the world outside the house. But the wealth of detail in the information he compiled would be impossible to equal in a purely archaeological study. Thus, although his ideas are important and stimulating, they are not presented in a form which is generally applicable across a range of cultures and time periods. In contrast, Giddens's structuration theory is formulated on a general, not a specific, level. Although Giddens himself has not developed his theory with respect to the importance of the material world in structuring and being structured by action, the theory of structuration provides a useful means of discussing the importance of material culture, again the house in particular, as structuring structures. It therefore aids in understanding why a specific house type might be retained by a given population under changing environmental and social conditions.

Anthony Giddens and Structuration Theory

The most important idea in Giddens's theory is the duality of structure where structure is seen as both the medium and the outcome of the conduct it recursively organizes: "the structural properties of social systems do not exist outside of action but are chronically implicated in its production and reproduction" (Giddens 1984:374). This duality extends to material culture which both structures and is structured by practice.

Giddens gives great significance to the knowledgeableability of human actors. But this is not a discursive knowledgeableability. Rather, it is a practical consciousness--knowledge of social conventions, of how to go on in the many contexts of social life (Giddens 1984:26) and similar to Bourdieu's practical logic. It is rediscovered and reproduced by action and discourse. The distinction between practical and discursive consciousness is not rigid and can be changed depending on the agent's socialization. Further, this knowledgeableability means that human agents are capable of monitoring their world, although their knowledgeableability is always bounded. Human agency does not refer to people's intentions in doing things but to their capability to do those things in the first place (Giddens 1984:9). As Giddens writes (1984:27):

The flow of action continually produces consequences which are unintended by the actors, and these unintended consequences may also form unacknowledged conditions of action in a feedback fashion. Human history is created by intentional activities but is not an intended project; it persistently eludes efforts to bring it under conscious direction.

Concepts of direct relevance to the discussion of the importance of space and time are locales, regionalization and routinization. According to Giddens (1984:118), a locale is a space used "to provide the settings of social interaction." Giddens goes on to say that locales provide for much of the 'fixity' underlying institutions. One cannot simply define a locale in terms of its physical properties, however; a 'house' is only

perceived as such if the observer recognizes that it is a dwelling with a range of other properties specified by the way it is used in human activity.

Locales, such as houses, are often internally regionalized in both space and time in relation to routinized social practices, and these regions are extremely important in constituting contexts of interaction. This is clear in Bourdieu's analysis of the Kabyle house and in Soja's discussion, too. Routinization refers to the habitual, taken-for-granted nature of most of the activities of day-to-day social life. These routine activities and styles contribute to the individual's trust that the world is the way it appears to be and in turn are supported by that sense of security. Individuals move through what we can refer to as time-space paths in their day-to-day routine, through different locales, and the spatial organization of culture can be seen as a direct result of spatial organization of activity, including these routines of day-to-day activity; but the spatial organization of culture will also structure that activity. Thus the house is not just a shelter from the elements: it plays an important role in the reproduction of society and culture on both the individual and institutional levels. The time-space paths which members of a society follow in their day-to-day activities are, as Giddens claims (1984:142-143), "strongly influenced by, and also reproduce basic institutional parameters of the social systems in which they are implicated." Consequently there is some reason to expect house styles to inform us about group affiliation and not just technological ability or personal architectural taste.

Also important are Giddens's notions of time-space distanciation and time-space edges. The first term refers to the "continuity of societies across time and space" (Giddens 1984:259), to the "stretching of social systems across time-space, on the basis of the mechanisms of social and system integration" (Giddens 1984:377). The second refers to "connections, whether conflictual or symbiotic between societies of differing

structural types" (Giddens 1984:377). These concepts take us from the level of the mundane, daily routine to the level of social systems extending through time and space. The idea of time-space edges will also be helpful in attempting to analyze the interaction between the colonizer and native in the examples to be considered in this project.

John Barrett and Fields of Discourse

John Barrett (1988) has made use of the work of both Bourdieu and Giddens in his discussion of fields of discourse. He argues that the archaeological evidence should not be regarded as a record of past events and processes but as evidence for particular social practices, as "the surviving fragments of those recursive media through which the practices of social discourse were constructed" (Barrett 1988:9).

Barrett uses the concept of the field of discourse to help archaeologists move toward the study of the structuring of relationships. Discourse is "the communicative action by which people reproduce social relations" (Barrett 1989:305). According to his definition (Barrett 1988:11):

The *field* is an area in time-space occupied by virtue of the practice of a particular discourse. Such fields 'shade off' in time-space and contain material conditions which contribute to the structuring of practice. Archaeological evidence is the residue of these various material conditions.

Fields are not closed and one may encompass another, or several may intersect at certain moments of existence. In addition, the same material components may be shared by several fields, and the symbolic components may be stored and transformed in another field, thus providing the possibility for alternative discourses.

Barrett (1989:309ff) gives concrete examples of such fields and transformations in his discussion of the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age in southern Britain. He argues that social relations, such as gender, were structured by several fields of discourse including those which controlled the reproductive cycles of agriculture, of humans, and

the preparation, service and consumption of food. Food is transformed by the process of food preparation from the product of one field of discourse, agricultural labor, to the resource of another field of reproduction, and it is at such points of transformation where conflict may arise between the different authorities reproduced by each field. An extension of institutional authority requires penetrating these daily and seasonal practices with a dominant reading of the structural principles which these practices reproduce. In his example, Barrett sees the development of a new residential pattern and new classificatory procedures in food preparation (e.g., in the appearance of some highly decorated ceramic vessels) as signs that a new form of dominant symbolism had evolved, "establishing particular modes of authority in these new forms of settlement organisation...[and perhaps drawing]...upon claims to control the fertility of the agricultural cycle" (Barrett 1989:313). The role of metal artifacts may have been determined by practices associated with the central role of agricultural reproduction as a field of discourse, contrary to the commonly held view that Bronze Age society was dominated by the supply of bronze itself.

Barrett formulates his concepts with an eye toward the nature of the archaeological evidence. In the context of this project, these concepts may provide a new way of thinking about the Viking/Norse colonization of the North Atlantic and the nature of the interaction with native populations and also with the homeland through the period under investigation here.

As with Bourdieu and Giddens, power plays an important role in Barrett's argument. He notes (Barrett 1988:10) that discourse reproduces particular lines of authoritative knowledge, for example, systems of rank and prestige. Further, "the authoritative demand of an individual or group over others is partly sustained by the mobilisation of symbols of domination, but that mobilisation itself involves some choice

on behalf of the agents," demonstrating their power to control a part of the cultural and human universe (Barrett 1989:307). For Giddens (1984:258), "Power...is generated in and through the reproduction of structures of domination." But with the possibility of alternative discourses always present, there is the possibility of challenging domination. It is also possible to extend authority into nearby fields. This extension of authority is clearly of importance when discussing an instance of colonization.

Barrett (1988:11-12) defines four primary analytical categories in the study of fields of discourse. Time-space is important, that is, the temporal frequency in which a field is usually occupied and the spatial extent of the field (often limited and involving face to face encounters within the residential spaces of a household). Third, there are the cultural resources drawn upon to define the authoritative demands of discourse and those which are used in acknowledging the existence of that authority. As Barrett notes (1988:11), these may include "the architectural settings which structure the orientation of the subjects' bodies, the adornment of dress placed on those bodies, or the items exchanged." Finally, there are the transformations which occur in the available cultural resources as the field is reproduced. Authority and domination are reproduced by these transformations, which at the same time transform the material conditions of future discourse. The third category discussed here will be of special importance in the later discussion of house types and other artifacts in Norway and the Northern Isles and their role in structuring and being structured by Viking/Norse society.

Recent Work on Domestic Architecture in Archaeology

Before discussing my own approach to the evidence, it will be helpful to discuss some of the recent work on domestic architecture. A brief and necessarily incomplete survey of this literature reveals a wide variety of approaches to the subject. Some of

them do not seem to me to be useful. Others may be productive in certain circumstances and I will therefore explain why I have chosen not to use them in this study.

There are two classic works in American archaeology which deal with architecture and meaning, Glassie's *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia* (1975) and Deetz's *In Small Things Forgotten* (1977). Glassie devised a transformational grammar for the Virginia houses and then explained changes over time by reference to other political and attitudinal changes. However, the detail required to attempt such a project is simply unavailable to the archaeologist working in the Northern Isles and Norway and one might question to what extent his eleven rule sets for the construction of houses represent past practice or an imposition of modern ideas on the data.

Deetz's work is eminently readable and takes a variety of archaeological data into account as well as the standing architecture. He used a structuralist approach to show the links between different categories of material culture--ceramics, graveyards, houses, etc. All these things were part of the mental template of seventeenth and eighteenth century Anglo-America. Although Deetz's explanation has received criticism (e.g., How do we know these things were related? Why did the Georgian way of thinking disappear?), it is still one of the most satisfying studies of its kind. It demonstrated that architectural data could be combined or perhaps reunited with data from other sources to arrive at 'the big picture.' Similar comprehensive analyses of archaeological material are few and far between.

In the past decade there has been a surge of interest in domestic architecture and the use of space in archaeology. Two edited volumes (Kent 1990, Samson 1990) contain a number of papers which take a wide variety of approaches to the study of domestic or vernacular architecture and social space. Some of these studies seem fairly traditional, some make use of the ideas of Giddens and Bourdieu, some attempt a formal

analysis of structures, and some are more interested in the symbolic meaning of the structures under investigation.

While Kent stresses the importance of an interdisciplinary approach in her introduction (1990a:2), she does not view houses as structuring structures. For example, she states in her own contribution to the volume (1990b:128) that "the use of space and architecture are specifically a reflection of the sociopolitical organization of a society." Further, "As groups become socially and politically more segmented (complex), their use of space and architecture also becomes more segmented" (1990b:150). While this conclusion may in fact be true, it does not seem to me to be very interesting and does not tell us anything about how individual societies work.

In her study Kent compared ethnographic data from about 73 societies which she divided into five sociopolitical categories based on their sociopolitical complexity. Despite Kent's claims to the contrary (1990b:151, note 4), it is difficult to see how this classification scheme differs greatly from the more traditional band, tribe, complex tribe, chiefdom and state. There is great variation among the societies grouped in a single category which often leads to intense debate over the proper classification of a given society and which obscures what may be very interesting and revealing differences or variations. The precise meaning or use of domestic architecture is also likely to vary greatly within categories. Kent's work may then address some very general questions, but it does not address the role of the built environment in structuring a specific society over time. In addition, I find it highly unlikely that we will ever be able to define all the relevant variables and ultimately construct "predictive models based on the interaction between the built environment and space utilization" (Kent 1990a:2). Cross-cultural comparison can certainly suggest variables to be considered in any study of domestic architecture, but the goal of constructing predictive models seems a dubious enterprise to

me and is not part of the realist approach discussed at the start of this chapter or the approach I am going to take.

On the other hand, in the same volume, Donley-Reid (1990) mentions the contributions of both Bourdieu and Giddens in her discussion of the Swahili house, noting that both stress the importance of space and the division of space in the reproduction of society. Even in the title of her paper ("A structuring structure: the Swahili house") she makes it clear that she views the house not just as a building which contains human action but as an integral part of the production and reproduction of society. With this position she can go on to claim the relevance of house type in determining the ethnic identity of the builders:

A group's house style is closely linked to cultural behavior and the symbolic systems of a given society. If we understand that link we can determine the ethnic identity of the people who inhabited the buildings we excavate.
(Donley-Reid 1990:114)

In her attempt to identify the ethnicity of the builders of the Swahili houses, Donley-Reid relies on Giddens's theory of structuration. Following Giddens, Donley-Reid, like Lawrence in his discussion of urban Swiss housing in the same volume (1990), stresses the importance of the built environment in creating and maintaining power relations. Thus the house is not just a 'container' of social activity, but rather is both the medium and outcome of social practices.

But it is difficult for archaeologists to obtain sufficient information to carry out a study of the symbolic or social meaning of houses. Many of the studies which have attempted to get at this sort of information have had access to written or ethnographic sources in addition to the bare house plans (e.g. Brown 1990, Lawrence 1990, Samson 1990a). In her study Donley-Reid (1990:115) integrates the archaeological data with ethnographic observations and claims that:

If we, as archaeologists, lack the means (written records or ethnographic observation) of studying the use of domestic spaces or artifacts, we cannot know the symbolic meaning of archaeological remains. We cannot know the relationship between the architecture and social organization without knowing how that specific culture lived in those spaces...I cannot learn symbolic meaning from the house remains alone. However, if cultural continuity can be demonstrated by the use of historical documentation or oral histories, present ethnographic data may be used to interpret archaeological remains from that culture's past.

Not only is the aid of historical or ethnographic data vital in Donley-Reid's eyes, but also the notion of the diachronic nature of culture (1990:116). Through the structuration process ideas are attached to people, spaces and objects. An archaeological study of houses will include a much greater time depth than can be obtained in purely historical or ethnographic studies of vernacular architecture. Without such time depth it is impossible to determine how the use of space and material culture has changed and how this use has grown out of specific historical contexts. As Jameson remarks (1990:12 note 25), purely formal comparisons of house types drawn from different periods (in his case Greek Classical and later structures) are of limited value "without consideration of the specific context of historical, social, and economic factors."

Meaning, between cultures and even within a culture, is not constant. Stoklund (1980) made this observation in connection with the comparison that was often made between the nineteenth-century blackhouses in the Western Isles and the house types known from the Viking/Norse period in the Northern Isles. Further, the symbolic meaning of the blackhouse itself has changed over the last 200 years: at the start of the nineteenth century it was the normal house in which the majority of the population lived, at the start of the twentieth century it was outmoded and represented poverty, while

today the few which survive are valued and deemed worthy of protection and preservation as one of the signs of the local identity (Stoklund 1980:131-132).³

Samson's volume (1990) contains a number of papers which are more explicit attempts to apply current social theory to the analysis of spatial organization. In his introduction (1990b:2) Samson discusses two of the major trends in recent British work on architecture, formal spatial analysis and a less defined trend toward applying social theory developed outside of archaeology or architecture. His volume certainly illustrates the variety of approaches currently being taken. For example, in his contribution Richard Hingley uses a traditional structuralist approach in the interpretation of domestic organization and gender relations in Iron Age and Romano-British households. He identifies the binary oppositions by means of empirical measurements--proximity to fire, amount of debris--although certain inferences must be made (e.g. cooking at the hearth). He stresses the symbolic significance of the house in many cultures and argues (1990:125):

that all Iron Age and many Romano-British houses were created according to the same conceptual model and that this model is expressed in spatial terms by the division of the house into 'public' and 'private' areas. The same conceptual model can be identified within some Iron Age and Romano-British settlements and patterns of settlement.

Thus the change in form from round to rectangular "masks continuity in the basic spatial organisation of the house" (Hingley 1990:135). It would be very interesting if the same conclusion could be reached about houses in the Northern Isles from the Pictish to the Viking periods.

³It should be added here that even at a specific space and time within one culture, an object may have different meanings depending on context and individual perception.

In contrast, Saunders takes a Marxist approach to his study of feudalism and the construction of space in nucleated villages in England. And yet he also reveals the influence of scholars such as Soja, Bourdieu and Giddens when he states (1990:183) that "we must reassert the basic premise that spatial structures are simultaneously both the medium and the outcome of human action." Saunders discusses necessary structural relationships for feudalism to exist--how surplus was extracted, how the lords were able to coerce the peasants through judicial powers, political coercion or physical force, and the existence of private ownership (1990:184-185). He then uses concrete examples of medieval villages to show how the class relationship between lord and peasant was articulated on the local level, partly through the use of space. In the nucleated villages given as examples, tenement plots were rigidly defined and roads limited access in and to the villages, allowing the feudal lord to supervise and control the activities of the peasants and to aid in his economic control of the peasantry.

Samson's own work (1990a:197-243) on post-Reformation tower houses in Scotland takes a more standard social history approach to the subject. However, he successfully challenges the commonsense view that tower houses were popular because they balanced the need for defense with the desire for comfort and that they fell out of favor because of an end to lawlessness and a growing desire for domestic comfort. The tower houses were of little use defensively but often commemorated an ascent in rank, thus playing a role in the politics of upward mobility (Samson 1990a:236). While the end of the tower houses did coincide with the end of feuding, this did not mean a decrease in violent death in early seventeenth-century Scotland. Rather, it coincided with political changes: increased central royal authority and a royal monopoly on violence. There was an increased formality in relations within the household which can be seen in the increased formality of the spatial organization of the house. Those closest

to this new authority (concentrated near Edinburgh which had the closest links with London) took royal office and, along with it, some of the trappings of that royal authority including a new style of architecture.

In contrast to the intuitive approach taken by Samson and others, some attempts at formal spatial analysis which also acknowledge the social meaning of structures have been made. The ideas put forward by Hillier and Hanson (1984) have had a particularly strong influence on the interpretation of the use of space. These authors suggested techniques for analyzing both settlements (alpha analysis) and houses (gamma analysis). For them, the ordering of space in a building is the purpose of that building and "is really about about the ordering of relations between people" (Hillier and Hanson 1984:2). Traditional plans are difficult to analyze and "give little sense of the experiential reality of the building" (Hillier and Hanson 1984:3). Hence their attempt to devise new techniques for analyzing the use of space.⁴ They argue that elementary generators can give rise to complex and varied spatial forms through the application of complex restrictions. This is true both of settlements as a whole and of individual structures. The authors are concerned to explain how space is organized with respect to meetings between inhabitants and strangers or visitors and therefore how power and control are exercised in a given society. In the case of space within a building, they argue that "spatial organisation is a function of the form of social solidarity--or the organising principles of social reproduction--in that society" (Hillier and Hanson 1984:143).

This approach to the analysis of space seems to have distinct possibilities. However, it should not be forgotten that it was devised with reference to modern urban

⁴These are much too complicated to describe here and the details are not really relevant to this discussion. Their techniques for alpha and gamma analysis are described in Chapters 3 and 4 of *The Social Logic of Space* (1984).

societies, not to prehistoric ones. Still, some archaeologists have attempted to modify it and apply it to archaeological material. For example, Sally Foster (1989) attempted to apply their method of access analysis (gamma analysis) to the purely archaeological data available for the brochs of the Scottish Atlantic Iron Age in Orkney. Gamma analysis, or mapping the paths of access throughout a given building in a justified access map, allows one to see at a glance how "deep" a structure is (in other words, how controlled the access is).⁵ As Foster notes (1989:41):

Access analysis is based on syntactic relations, and considers the arrangement of different spaces as a pattern of permeabilities, that is in terms of the interconnections between spaces.

Foster feels that the Hillier and Hanson technique is important because it provides the investigator with an unambiguous set of rules for its application. As mentioned above, the technique relates these rules to relations between inhabitants within a building and between inhabitants and strangers.

In her access analysis of the Orkney brochs, Foster concludes that the ordered layout of the buildings indicates that these were planned nucleated villages in which the center was occupied by a pre-eminent family (1989:49). Those in the peripheral structures may have been tribute-paying clients to these elite. Thus gamma analysis allowed Foster to investigate the nature of social organization in the broch period, not just the technological ability of that society. However, Foster's material was much better suited to this type of analysis than the house material from Norway and the Northern Isles in the Viking/Norse periods. Because several of the brochs are stone structures and can still be observed today with an eye toward the requirements of access

⁵A building may have many rooms, but if there is easy access to the outside from many or all of them, then the justified access map will have few levels and the building is considered very permeable. The justified access map of a smaller building may have more levels (and therefore be deeper) if there is only one entrance in an outer room and inner rooms have no direct access to the outside. This is usually interpreted to mean that access to these inner rooms is highly controlled.

analysis, it is possible to determine the "permeabilities" or doorways to a much greater degree of certainty than is possible with the later structures. The Viking/Norse structures were not as substantial as the stone brochs and usually the only remains are the foundation walls. This makes it difficult to determine exactly where the doorways were, whether there were actual walls separating the different parts of the house, and therefore to draw a justified access map. There are also more general objections to the technique. For example, it does not consider other properties such as shape, size and the actual building material used (Brown 1990:94).⁶ The same justified access map could result from two wildly different arrangements of space as long as the permeabilities remained the same. Finally, we can again question whether there is a law-like relationship between social structure and spatial structure. As Brown notes (1990:103), while depth may often be associated with the most privileged person in the compound, in medieval houses it was associated with profanity (e.g. the privy in the yard).

Chapman (1990) applied Hillier and Hanson's techniques to his study of Chalcolithic tells in Bulgaria. He concluded that these settlement sites reveal clear evidence for social inequality, just as the cemeteries of the period do (1990:86). He also identified trends in spatial arrangements within the settlements and attempted to correlate these with changes in social organization (e.g. changes in house size, how 'deep' or 'shallow' they were). Once again, criticisms have been leveled at the techniques (both alpha and gamma analysis), how they are applied and the variables they attempt to measure. And, as in Foster's study, the data set is much more complete than that which is available for Norway and the Northern Isles. Furthermore, nothing like an urban settlement existed in either area until the latter part of the period under investigation here

⁶For a detailed discussion of the drawbacks of the approach, see Brown 1990.

so in order to examine the organization of space on the level of settlement one would have to examine settlement data from a greater area. This would undoubtedly present many purely methodological problems of application, not to mention justification for including widely separated buildings within one settlement, and the evidence is simply not available anyway. This is not to say that the techniques are useless; they can, in fact, reveal striking tendencies in the material. But these formal analyses are not sufficient on their own--other material and if possible historical evidence should also be incorporated into the analysis to provide as complete a picture as possible of social relations and practices. And as already pointed out, the level of detail necessary to carry out such analyses is not available in the case under investigation here.

While it is not my intent to produce a detailed symbolic interpretation of Viking/Norse houses, I believe it is important to lay some foundation for using the available data on house types in Norway and the Northern Isles as an indication of Norse settlement and as a source of information for the nature of contact between settlers and natives on the one hand and settlers and homeland on the other. It may also be possible to extract information about social relations from the organization of space in these structures, although the quality of the excavations will obviously limit the extent to which this material can be manipulated. Clearly, we also have historical documentation of the Viking expansion west, and it might seem obvious to identify the archaeological structures with this movement of people. However, a closer examination of the data (see Chapters 4 and 5) shows that common assumptions about Viking house types have been in error, or at least greatly generalized, and until recently little was known of the native structures in the Northern Isles. Even if it can be shown that the native structures were curvilinear and the Norse ones rectilinear, there should still be some attempt to explain why the settlers retained their traditional house styles and why the natives

adopted the new style, if this is indeed what happened. Or, taking Hingley's conclusions on the change in form from Iron Age to Romano-British houses in England into account, how the same conceptual model is present in both cases. The preceding discussion of structuration theory and fields of discourse, of the view that the archaeological evidence is evidence for particular social practices, and of the role of the house as a structuring structure allows one to view the house in a broader context as a component of material culture which can inform us about much more than technological ability. And with the added information we can glean from other archaeological material, the saga material and historical sources, it may actually be possible in this case to make some general remarks about the symbolic and social meaning of the Viking/Norse house and how this may have changed over time and space. We should, however, keep Saunders' caution in mind (1990:194):

To make sense of space, however, form and content cannot be separated. It is important not to reduce social space to the manor, church, peasant tenements, and roads - the components which define it - and thus to perceive space as a passive reflection of human behaviour. Neither should form be abstracted from content, with spatial patterns analysed simply in their own terms. There is no universal or independent theory of space. The relationship between social relations and spatial structures can only be understood through careful examination, involving both abstract propositions and concrete research of historically specific social structures.

Interpretation of Written Sources

As I noted in Chapter 1, there are also written sources relevant to a study of social relations in the Northern Isles and Norway during the Viking/Norse periods. The most problematic of these are the Icelandic sagas. In the following discussion I will attempt to summarize the traditional positions within research on the family sagas especially and then, in more detail, survey more recent approaches to this material which

take a much different tack and which are far more useful for investigating the questions I am interested in here.

Carol Clover recently summarized the main trends in research on the family sagas (1985). Briefly, the traditional positions known as bookprose and freeprose took opposing stances on the question of saga origins. The bookprose theorists held the view that the sagas were literary creations of thirteenth-century antiquarians who, while they may have had some oral traditions at their disposal, relied on other literary sources and their own imaginations. The freeprose advocates, on the other hand, felt that the sagas were the result of oral traditions which were eventually written down.

For much of the history of sagas studies, source criticism has been predominant. The Icelandic school with Sigurður Nordal at its head was the heir of the bookprose school and concentrated on traditional methods of determining manuscript and text relations. They tried to determine the influences, including foreign ones, on saga authors (whom they also tried to identify) and attempted to date the various manuscripts and texts. They were not interested in the sagas as a whole, but in the individual parts, and they focused almost exclusively on the literary aspects of the sagas. They denied that the sagas could provide any useful information on social or historical questions because of the time gap between the writing of the sagas and the events they are supposed to describe. According to Nordal, historians ought to confine their interest to chronicle and should leave the sagas to those competent to study them (Byock 1988:40).⁷ To the outsider, much of the debate seems to have focused on proper categorization of genres and to have lost sight of the sagas themselves. One might question whether the literary categories used would have had any relevance to the original audience. Archaeologists face the same problem when they devise artifact

⁷Byock (1988:41; 1992) also notes the nationalistic undercurrent of the Icelandic school's position.

typologies, but it has taken some time for both groups of scholars to address this problem.

The traditional schools of thought have come under criticism in more recent years as scholars from various fields have once again begun to look to the sagas as historical source material. Clover has pointed to two new strategies which attempt to get at social and historical strategies (1985:254ff). In the first of these, the sagas' representation of events and customs is measured against those in the laws, the bishops' sagas, *Sturlunga saga*, *Íslendingabók* and *Landnámabók*, all of which are thought to lie closer to historical reality. When there are discrepancies, the sagas are usually assumed to be in error. The obvious problem with this approach is that it privileges the so-called historical canon and assumes that 'reality' is represented in these source; it ignores the very real problems of interpretation associated with these sources.

The second strategy for using the sagas as cultural documents is to ignore the question of historicity completely and to focus on their significance to the audience which produced and consumed them in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. These works often take a synchronic approach to the material, an approach whose advantages are clear. As Clover says (1985:256), "Freed from the obsession with reconstructing actual historical events, the critic can concentrate on the personal and social values that emerge from the study of themes, biases, patterns, structures, and oppositions." However, she goes on to say that one of the disadvantages to the approach is the lack of independent sources for the social and political history of the period. While this may be true in certain cases, she seems to ignore the contributions archaeology can make to the discussion. In any case, it is this strategy which I will now describe in more detail as it shows the most promise for scholars interested in social relations during the Viking period.

There has been a tremendous growth in this field of saga studies in recent years, even since Clover's survey article, and not all of the research is confined to the family sagas. For example, Sverre Bagge (1991) has published a thorough study of Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla* in which he attempts to get inside Snorri's mind, to determine what was important to Snorri and how he made sense of the events he was writing about. Bagge examines Snorri's analysis of politics, how the game was played, how his view was different from the European view of the time. His work is noteworthy for its use of anthropological concepts. Other individuals whose work is of interest are Preben Meulengracht Sørensen, Kirsten Hastrup, William Miller and Paul Durrenberger.

In his study of the concept of *nið* or libel in the sagas⁸, Meulengracht Sørensen takes the view that the examples he uses are a functional part of the sagas in which they occur. He claims (1983:12) that:

The text and the tradition it is based on formed part of a contemporary conceptual universe which the author and his readers - or the reciter and his audience - had in common. The tradition is seen in the light of the contemporary worldview, and from this it is formulated.

In an earlier work (1977) he attempted to understand Icelandic society in general through the picture presented in the sagas. However, I should note here that he is rather dismissive of the role archaeology can play in getting at such questions. He claims (1977:14) that archaeology is silent about most things we want to know about, that we can find the walls of a house but not the life that went on inside of it or how brooches or weapons were used; that archaeological finds do not contradict the written material but they do not add much to it either. Perhaps this is a problem of misunderstanding another discipline and its method of enquiry. I certainly hope I have demonstrated that archaeologists are, in fact, asking interesting questions and suggesting provocative

⁸Meulengracht Sørensen writes that it is difficult to give a precise definition of this word, but "accusations with sexual import form the core of the meaning" (1983:11).

answers to them with as much basis as a literary scholar arguing a point on the basis of relatively few saga references.

Together Hastrup and Meulengracht Sørensen (1987) have explored some of the theoretical issues involved in saga studies. They point out that there are theoretical problems involved in historical research as well as in archaeological research, problems which were ignored for a long time. For example, what is the past we are trying to get at, the past described in the sources or the past behind the sources? Historical sources, even such apparently clear-cut documents as laws, do not speak for themselves and must be interpreted just as archaeological material must be interpreted. Historical facts cannot be proven in the same way facts in the natural sciences can so historical explanation can never be 'the truth.' Truth is constructed in the present by the historian working from a certain perspective. This is again similar to the debate in archaeology.

Else Mundal also defends the use of the sagas as historical sources. She notes (1987:23) that descriptions of how relations as they were, how people lived and their political institutions, are just as good historical sources whether the particular events described actually happened or not. We must assume that these descriptions have their pattern in contemporary life and that such events *could* have happened in the manner described. The sagas were the product of a long indigenous oral tradition which responded to the specific needs of Iceland's population. This does not mean, of course, that one can ignore the biases found in these contemporary sources. But the sagas *are* important. As Byock notes (1988:10):

History is more than the compilation of facts, and the sagas are far from fantasy. The medieval Icelanders wrote the sagas about themselves and for themselves, thus opening an extraordinary window through which we can observe the operation of a medieval society...We learn how chieftains and their thingmen functioned in their communities and maintained power and status within a

decentralized society. We come a step closer to perceiving the essence of medieval Iceland.

With this understanding it is possible to return to material such as the sagas, asking questions about social relations and social history instead of trying to confirm the historical reality of specific events. As Hastrup and Meulengracht Sørensen point out (1987:11), it is not a choice between the sagas and some other source about the same subject, it is a choice between the sagas and nothing. For them, synthesis would receive greater weight along side analysis: one should attempt to find the model that incorporates as many facts as possible and gives them meaning of another order (1987:13). Thus history has much to learn from historical anthropology.

In keeping with the position taken here, Kirsten Hastrup has done a considerable amount of work on medieval Iceland. In *Culture and History in Medieval Iceland: An Anthropological Analysis of Structure and Change* (1985) she introduced to the field an anthropological approach steeped in structuralism. Although she relied primarily on the medieval Icelandic laws in this project, she attempted to provide a synthesis of categories within Icelandic society and how they were tied together (e.g. temporal, spatial and kin categories to name just a few). In spite of the criticism that she ignored the bulk of the ethnographic evidence from the sagas (Miller 1986a), this book illustrates how new questions can be asked of 'old' data. Furthermore she has continued her research on similar important questions such as the development of an Icelandic ethnic identity, an issue with obvious relevance to the research presented here (Hastrup 1990).

Others have begun to use the sagas themselves to investigate similar questions of social behavior and attitudes. Kari Ellen Gade (1986), for example, has researched attitudes towards homosexuality in Icelandic society using both the law codes and the sagas. Jesse Byock has explored the nature of the socioeconomic system, the flow of wealth and the use of power in tenth to twelfth century Iceland. He points out that the

family sagas focus on private matters and that they had to be plausible and credible and "useful within the context of Iceland's particular rules of social order and feud" (Byock 1988:36).

Miller has investigated how various practices were used in dispute resolution in the society of the sagas. For example, dreams, prophecies and sorcery have often been interpreted as literary devices, but Miller (1986b) shows how they were used to build community support for accusations of secret wrongs. More recently (1988) he tackled the subject of ordeal and demonstrated again how such a ritual could be used and manipulated in the ever-important world of public opinion, although it was applicable in only a narrow range of situations. Miller rightly cautions us to be wary of the biases we bring to our reading of these sources. For example, he notes (1988:212) that "I can't rid myself of the feeling that ordeal often acquires a special status in the subject culture because it would seem so strange in ours." Most importantly, Miller views all the sagas as possible raw material for research into social and legal historical questions. This in spite of the "annoying and excessive use of conditionals and subjunctives" it requires (1986b:116).

I now turn to two individuals whose use of saga material is most relevant for my own research. Paul Durrenberger, an anthropologist, has recently published several articles which approach the sagas from an explicitly anthropological point of view. He points out that the same procedures used by ethnographers in the field can be applied to the literature of medieval Iceland (1989). From *Hávamál* (The Sayings of the High One, i.e. Odin) and *Grágás* (the medieval law code of Iceland) we can arrive at the normative statements about culture which the anthropologists usually begins with.⁹ But these can

⁹*Hávamál* includes such pieces of advice as "Before proceeding up the hall, study all the doorways. You never know when an enemy will be present." "Better a house of your own, however small it be. Everyone is *somebody* at home. Two goats and a poor-roofed cot are better than begging." "A man of mark should be reticent, thoughtful, and brave in battle. Everyone should be happy and cheerful until he

be placed in their social context because of the "ample descriptions" of that context in the sagas (1989:243).

Recently he challenged the traditional criticism that the family sagas actually reflect thirteenth-century and not tenth-century norms (1990). Through a statistical analysis of the nature of economic exchanges described in both the family sagas and the Sturlunga sagas (purchase, inheritance and dowry, gift, trade, forced transactions, and legal awards), he found different frequencies in the kind of transactions taking place in the different periods (tenth vs. thirteenth centuries), even though both sets of sagas were written at approximately the same time. These differences show "That in their interpretations of themselves to themselves, sagamen appreciated the differences between their own society and that of their ancestors they described in the Family sagas" (Durrenberger 1990:89). The family sagas, then, describe a different social reality even though they are as much as three hundred years removed from that social reality. Furthermore, that social reality is one that we can expect from a stratified non-state society.¹⁰ This, Durrenberger concludes, adds to the credibility of the family sagas as sociological source material, whatever their value as 'historical' sources.

In closing this discussion of the problems and possibilities inherent in using the sagas as source material, I will turn to the work of Knut Odner. A Norwegian, he is trained both in anthropology and archaeology and as early as 1974 attempted to use the economic model he saw in the sagas to explain archaeological evidence from Migration Period rock shelters and caves on the west coast of Norway. He assumed cultural

reaches the end." "Confide in one, never in two. Confide in three and the whole world knows." "Cattle die, kinsfolk die, we ourselves must die. One thing I know will never die - the dead man's reputation." (Jones 1984:351-352).

¹⁰Finn Fuglestad (1979) has remarked on the similarity between old Norse society in Norway and Iceland as presented in the sources and pre-colonial societies in West Africa. He comments that many of those who study Norwegian and Icelandic history seem to lack an understanding of cultures with this type of organization, although he admits that the similarities he discusses are matched by wide differences.

continuity between pre-Viking society in western Norway and in medieval Iceland. Most importantly for his argument, both Iceland and western Norway are areas where a variety of resources were available so a transfer of ecological patterns was possible and the concomitant transfer of a redistributive economic system was likely.

Without going into the details of his argument it is clear that his approach has implications for this study. If one can take the society presented in the family sagas as a reasonable representation of pre-Viking Norwegian society, then it is a representation of the society of the first Viking settlers in the Northern Isles and can be compared to what we know of native Pictish society there. Odner's approach was thoroughly attacked at the time by Magnús Stefánsson (1974) who did not concede that anthropology could make any contribution at all to source criticism. While this view is not as strong today as it was twenty years ago, I have no doubt that Odner would still face similar criticism today. However, he rightly pointed out that there is a distinction between 'historical' and 'sociological' situations and individuals: "the historical person Hænsa-thorir is not the same person as the Hænsa-thorir of the sagas carrying his name" (Odner 1974:150). As is clear from my arguments throughout this discussion, I agree with Odner that it is still justifiable to study the individuals and events in the sagas in order to gain insight into the society represented. These insights can then be combined with a new interpretation of the archaeological material, in this case primarily the house remains, in order to arrive at a more complete understanding of social relations in Norse society as a whole.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to address several of the theoretical issues involved in undertaking a project of this kind using the type of source material available to me. I have indicated the form I believe explanation should take in archaeology and the

how evidential constraints will affect that explanation. These constraints also apply to non-archaeological data, of course. If evidence can be found in the sagas which substantiates hypotheses based on the archaeological material, so much the better. If not, the discrepancies must be explained, not ignored or interpreted immediately as solid evidence against claims made on the basis of the archaeological evidence.

After searching for a framework through which to view my data, I finally chose Giddens's structuration theory as a basis because it seems to offer the most scope and the greatest possibility to get at questions about social relations. It has been used fairly successfully in modified form by several archaeologists in recent years. Through the concepts found in structuration theory and Barrett's fields of discourse I have also justified my choice of the house remains as a key into a study of social relations in Viking/Norse society. The extended discussion on current research in archaeology into the use of space was meant to demonstrate the tremendous variety of approaches open to the archaeologist, but also to indicate why I have avoided many of them, either because I disagree with them or because my data are not suited to that kind of analysis (e.g. formal spatial analysis). I intend to use the concepts found in structuration theory to formulate hypotheses about social relations within Viking/Norse society and the contacts between the Northern Isles and Norway. Several of the studies I discussed were not focussing on questions of culture contact and interaction so it is not surprising that I cannot transfer the methods used in them directly.

My superficial discussion of the sagas as source material is merely intended to indicate new directions in this research as well. The most recent work includes examples of scholars asking questions of the sagas about social relations in the past, questions which complement those asked by archaeologists in their attempts to illuminate past social relations through their research. But in general these scholars still limit their

scope by ignoring what archaeology has to offer besides typologies and graves. Still, the new approaches discussed here provide a basis for using the sagas as ethnographic if not strictly historical sources. And Durrenberger's work, among others, justifies applying the descriptions of society in the family sagas to the tenth century, if not the Migration Period as advocated by Odner. Traditional saga scholars may cringe at this breach of disciplinary boundaries, but in order to gain new insights on the past it is essential to approach the problem from an interdisciplinary position.

I must stress here that although I have discussed the question of theory in a separate chapter, I do not mean for theory to be the primary focus of my work. It will inform the perspective I bring to the material, but it is a tool, not an end in itself. It will help me to collect the strands of evidence and weave them into a more complete picture. This picture will not be the 'truth' about Viking/Norse society in the Northern Isles; it will be one possible interpretation dependent on my own perspective and biases. But through the process of confronting all the data and rethinking my own understanding of that data, I hope I will be able to make some small contribution to the larger field of Viking studies. As McGuire points out (1992:262), "we lop off our ignorance one cubic millimeter at a time." In this case the houses will be the primary focus of the research, the key into Norse society, but they will not be the objects of a traditional spatial analysis. Instead, they will be integrated with other kinds of data in an attempt to investigate other social questions.

Chapter 4

Viking and Medieval House Sites in Norway

In this chapter I will present the archaeological evidence for house structures in Norway in the Viking and Middle Ages. The following chapter will concentrate on the material from the Northern Isles. For the sake of clarity, however, I have chosen to include most of the house plans and archaeological data in Appendix 1¹. I will refer to only the most important individual structures in this chapter, although the general conclusions will be drawn from the material as a whole. Figures 4.1 and 4.2 show the distribution of sites from the Late Iron Age/Viking Age, and Figures 4.3 and 4.4 show the distribution of sites from the Middle Ages.

Before turning to the evidence from the Viking and Medieval periods it is instructive to examine briefly the traditional house form of the Migration Period. The archaeological evidence for houses from the Migration Period is far richer than for the later periods of interest here and provides a useful starting point. In contrast, the Merovingian Period immediately preceding the Viking Age is extremely difficult to identify in the house material, so although it would be very interesting to compare it to the periods under study here, such a comparison is not yet possible. Bjørn Myhre has studied the Migration Period structures in detail and has shown that, contrary to longstanding belief, there is evidence for room divisions in the long houses of the Migration Period.

In his study of house sites from southwestern Norway, Myhre (1980) analyzed the distribution of artifacts and elements such as stone paving and hearths in his effort to

¹Both Appendix 1 and 2 contain discussions of the sites, sometimes critical, which could not be included in the main body of the thesis, but which are of interest nevertheless.

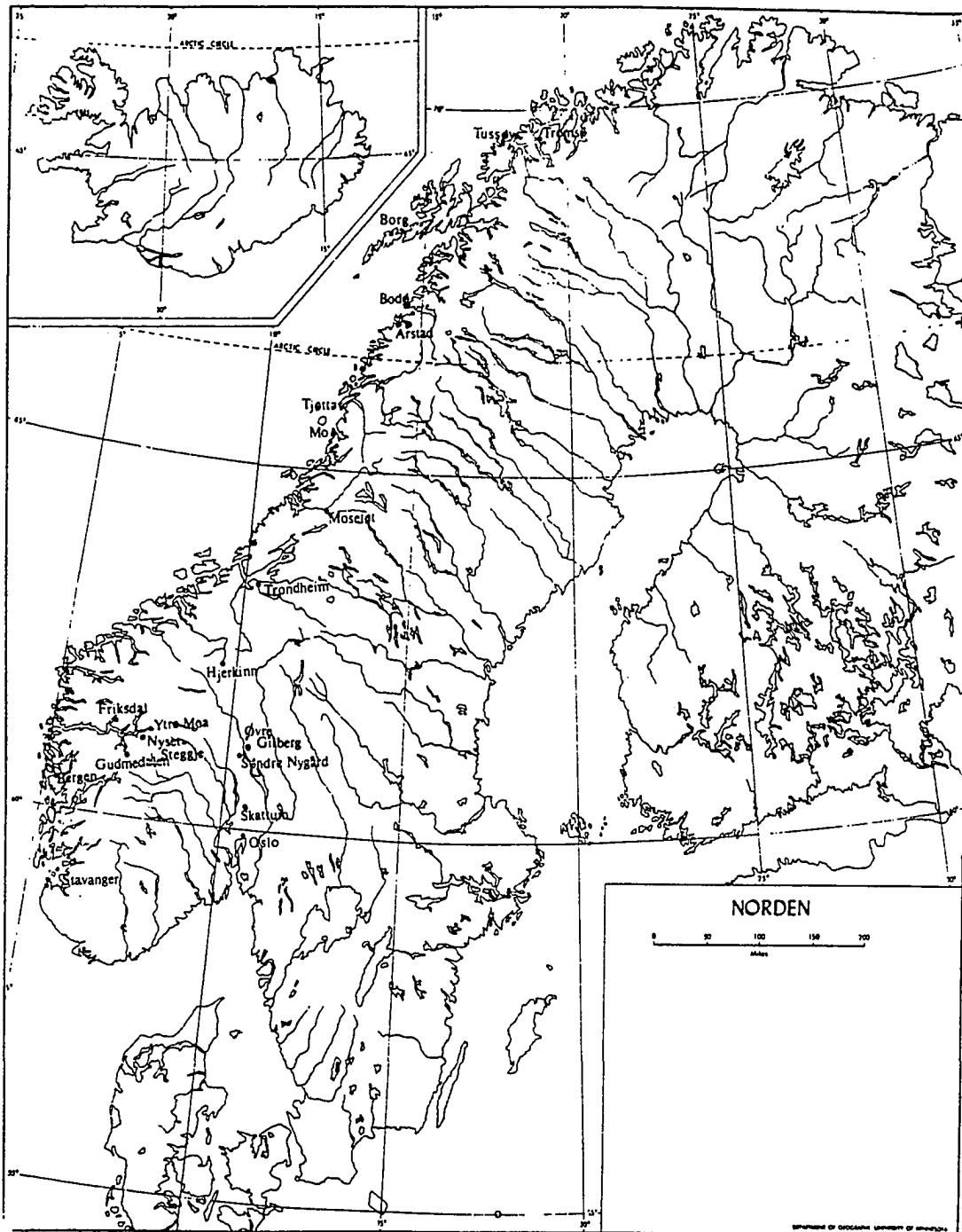


Figure 4.1: Late Iron Age/Viking Age house sites in Norway (except the southwest).

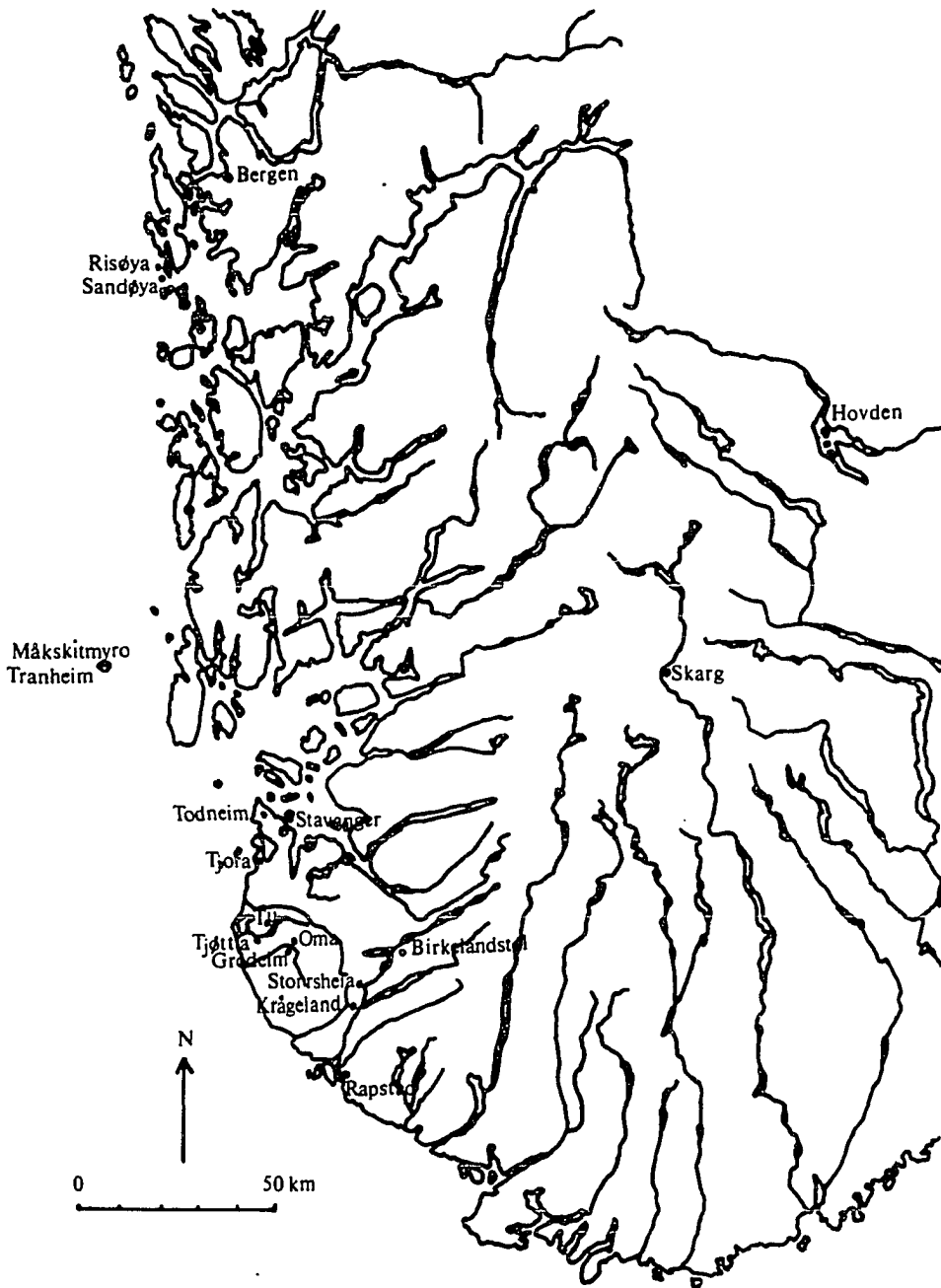


Figure 4.2: Iron Age/Viking Age house sites in southwestern Norway, redrawn after Myhre (1980:121).

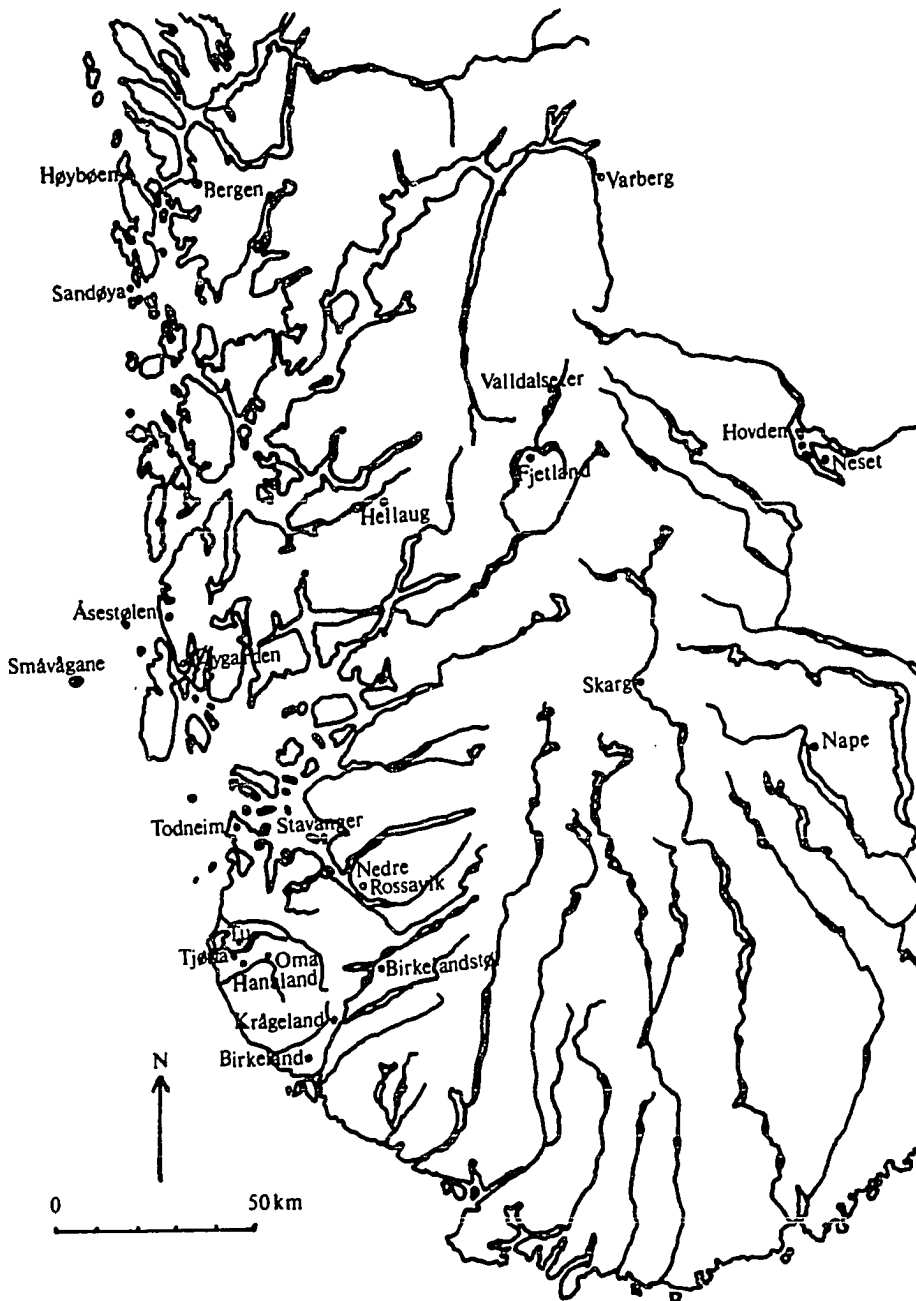


Figure 4.4: Medieval house sites in southwestern Norway, redrawn after Myhre (1980:121)

determine the function of different parts of the house and suggest room divisions. Migration Period houses were typically three-aisled with two parallel rows of posts supporting the roof. Recent excavations of the village at Forsandmoen near Stavanger show this construction was already used in the Pre-Roman Iron Age (Løken 1991). The houses included a byre for animals under the same roof as the dwelling area, resulting in particularly long buildings (up to 45 m and longer). The longest house on each farm was clearly the main house. The byre end was often paved in stone down the midline and in several cases a *gjeil* or cow path led to this part of the structure. In addition, artifacts are rare in the byre. In general there were two dwelling rooms in addition to the byre, but there could be up to four (e.g. Lyngaland 1 [Figure 4.5], Ullandhaug 3). The most important hearths were generally along the midline of the dwelling area nearest the byre and consisted of a flagstone hearth connected to a cooking pit or just a cooking pit. Fireplaces in the end room were either absent, small or placed near the wall. Myhre concluded that these differences in the layout of the dwelling rooms as well as the different artifact distributions indicate that the two or more dwelling rooms had different functions. These rooms could have been separated from each other by partition walls, perhaps made of wood, though they could simply have been separate areas. The entrances to these Migration Period houses tend to be in the long wall near the presumed crosswalls in the dwelling parts of the houses.

However, there were also shorter buildings from the Migration Period, some of which did not contain a byre. House 2 at Ullandhaug seems to have been a dwelling and had only one room (Myhre 1980:244). Several structures from the Roman Iron Age also appear to have been fairly small with entrances in a gable end: Mjølhus in Oгна (two structures approximately 5.5 by 3.5 m), Gjerland, Førde in Sunnfjord (two nearly identical houses 9-9.5 m long by 5.5 m wide at the middle, 4.5 m wide at the ends), and

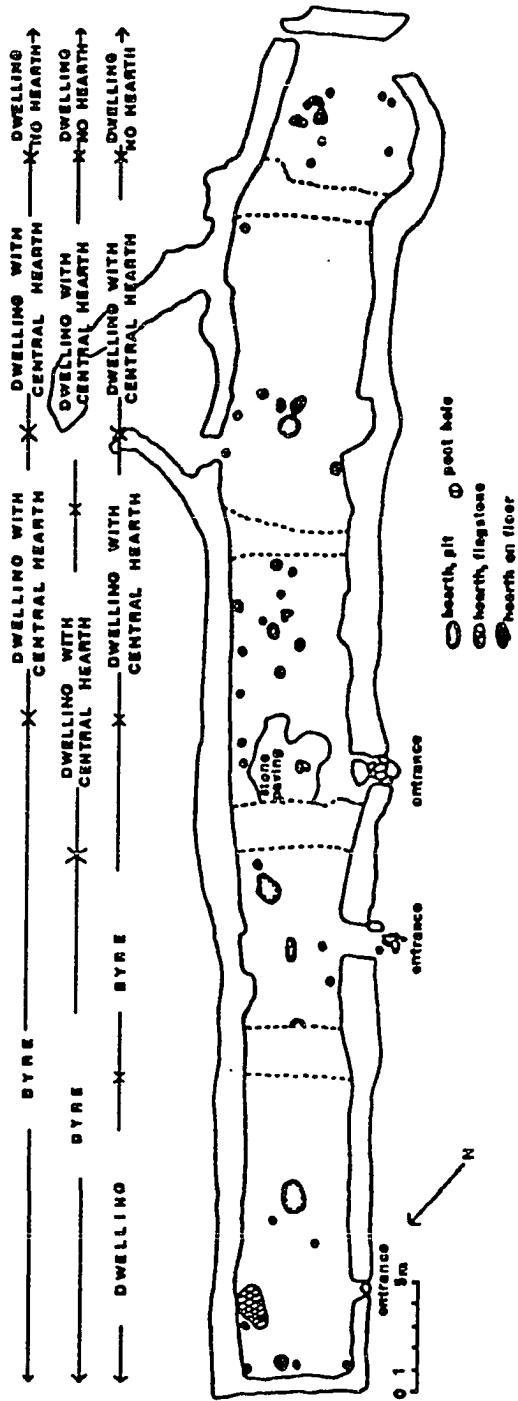


Figure 4.5: Lyngaland 1, redrawn after Myhre (1980:Figure 157).

Oddernes in Kristiansand (one house approximately 9.5 m long by 4.5 m wide, entrance not found) (Myhre 1980:111-112). Sostelid 1, Birkeland 3, and Lyngaland 2 (Figure 4.6) are all examples of apparently two-room structures, the latter two without a byre. Thus, while the particularly long houses are most common in the Migration Period, other house plans were used. Still, the three-aisled construction seems dominant regardless of the length of the house.²

House Construction

One of the most important contributions of Myhre's study is his discussion of the actual building techniques used in Migration Period construction. This discussion is also relevant for buildings from the Viking and Middle Ages since, as will become clear, the style of building did not change very quickly throughout the Iron Age. It was long accepted that houses from the Migration Period in southwest Norway had stone walls, sometimes mixed with turf and earth, rather than timber walls. These stone walls were thought to bear some of the load of the roof, along with the inner rows of posts. Sigurd Grieg and Jan Petersen, who both investigated house sites in southwestern Norway, generally accepted this view, although evidence for wood walls existed in some of their excavations. For example, at Øygarden Petersen found a line of stones set on edge across one end of the house, but he did not interpret them as support for a wooden wall dug into the ground (Myhre 1980:149). Grieg did leave open the possibility that there was wood panelling on the insides of the stone walls, e.g. at Nordberg on Lista, but he did not consider them to be true weight-bearing walls.

It was first with the excavation of a *naust* or boathouse at Bjelland, Stord in Sunnhordland in 1957 that clear evidence for inner wooden walls in buildings from the

²One exception to this rule comes from northern Norway and the Migration Period houses at Greipstad on Kvaløy. House 1 had a single row of posts down the center of the structure, while Houses 2, 4 and 5 had three rows of posts (Munch 1965).

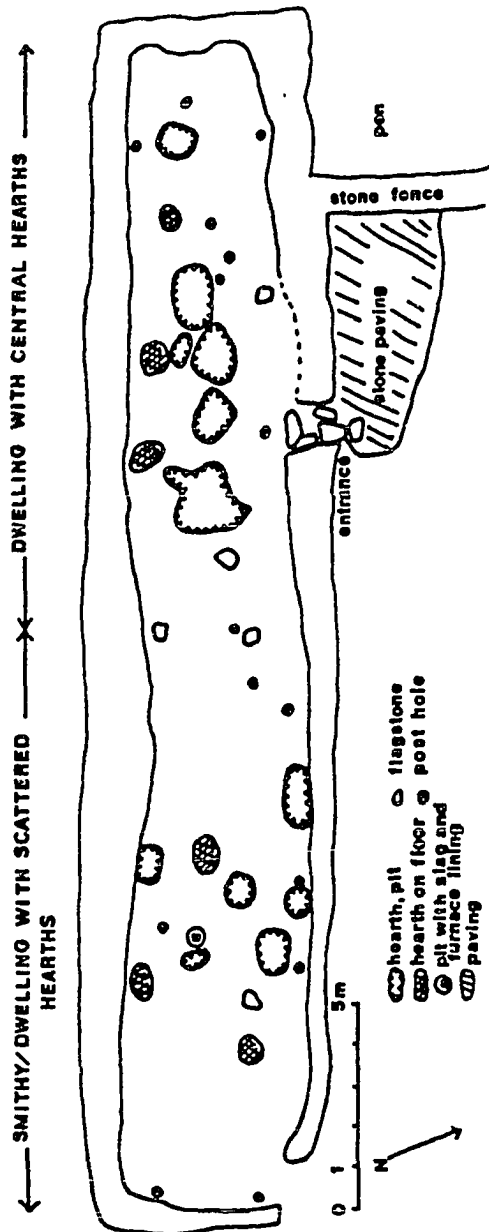


Figure 4.6: Lyngaland 2, redrawn after Myhre (1980:Figure 158).

Early Iron Age came to light (Myhre 1980:152). The *naust* was 27 m long and 6.7 m wide in the middle, 4.9 m wide at the opening in the gable wall. Although the outer walls were a mixture of earth and stone, there were trenches just inside these walls approximately 0.5 m deep which the excavator suggested held a timber wall. As the wood rotted, the stone and earth fell into the *naust*. As Myhre points out, if such a construction was used in a *naust* from the Migration Period there is no reason why it could not also be used in dwellings from the same period.

Clear indications for this appeared during the excavation of the house at Mogen by Møsvatn in Telemark in 1960-1961 (Martens 1973). This structure was a dwelling house 11 m long and 6.5 m wide at the middle, 4.5 m wide at the gables. Like the *naust* at Bjelland, the long walls were bowed. Martens concluded that the house was built primarily of wood because of the three inner pairs of posts and the powerful, deeply buried corner posts (1973:65). Along the long walls there were traces of a trench or ditch 20 cm wide and 6-8 cm deep. In the eastern gable end a wood sill on which the wall rested was partially preserved. Martens suggested that a wall of vertical untrimmed timber stood in this trench. This wall was surrounded by an earthen bank or berm which was bounded on the inside by a series of small postholes; these lay in a curved line from corner post to corner post. Martens felt that the earthen wall served only as insulation, not as part of the load-bearing structure.

Other wood houses were soon discovered. For example, at the ring shaped complex or 'court site'³ at Klauhagane in Hå, Jæren, a square building 5 m x 5 m was

³In Norwegian these are known as *ringformete tunanlegg* and are known from both southwestern and northern Norway. These complexes consist of a varying number of structures standing in a ring around a central courtyard. In southern Norway these sites seem to date to AD 1-400, but in northern Norway they were still occupied into the Merovingian and Viking Periods. Their function is unclear with suggested interpretations including villages, military barracks in connection with chiefdoms, and sites for courts and markets. A recent review of the material from northern Norway concluded that they were connected with chiefdoms (many occur on farms known to have been the residences of chieftains, but unlike normal houses not near the land best suited for cultivation), and probably connected to military, political and religious functions (Johansen and Sjøbstad 1978).

discovered in 1960-1961 (Myhre 1980:157). The wood frame stood in a deep groove in the earth and was supported on both sides with stone fill. There were no post holes visible inside the building. In 1964 and 1965, Perry Rolfsen excavated three *nausts* at Nord Kolnes in Sola. Again, wall trenches inside the stone walls were found. The gable walls may have been entirely constructed of wood since they lacked the thick stone walls of the long walls. Post holes from inner roof-bearing posts were not found (Myhre 1980:157). Excavations at Greipstad in northern Norway in the early 1960s also revealed small trenches filled with black earth along the walls which according to the excavator must be the remains of a timber wall (Munch 1965:22).

Then in 1966 Odd Espedal excavated Migration Period houses and graves in Espeland, Sandnes. In one of the houses he found several places where stones were set on edge into the ground inside the stone walls (Myhre 1980:158). All had a flat side which faced the foundation stones in the wall and between the stones and the wall lay small flagstones at floor level. Espedal suggested that they could have held in place a sill beam for an inner timber wall running along the long wall. This method of construction, with an outer row of large stones and an inner row of smaller stones, was also found by Myhre in houses 1 and 6 at Ullandhaug. Further excavations at Espeland revealed even more important details. In one house under a fifth-century grave, Espedal found small trenches 2-10 cm inside the stone walls. These trenches were 5-15 cm wide and 3-7 cm deep and were filled with dark earth and often fist-sized stones. Espedal interpreted these as the footings for an inner wood wall (Myhre 1980:160-161).

Myhre's own excavation of a Migration Period boat *naust* at Stend in Fana revealed the actual wood wall preserved below the level of the floor (Myhre 1977). The *naust* itself was 34.5 m long. In the middle it was 8.3 m wide while at the opening it was only 5.0 m wide and at the upper end 6.7 m wide. Inside the long walls there were

two rows of large roof-bearing posts set into the ground. Inside the earth walls wall trenches were discovered. These were up to 0.6 m deep and 0.7 m wide and were partially filled with stone which had supported a timber wall. Preservation conditions were particularly good in the clay here and the actual wood remains were discovered. The preservation was good enough that the marks from the axe could still be seen on the parts of the walls timbers below floor level. The timbers here were not uniform. The timber walls at the gables were even more carefully constructed with the appearance of almost a panel wall.

Obviously all these excavations have thrown important light on the construction details of Iron Age houses in Norway. As Myhre points out (1980:163), there are even indications now that some houses from the Roman Iron Age were built entirely of wood. Considering the large number of houses excavated before World War II, one might wonder why this evidence for timber walls was overlooked so consistently. Myhre notes that excavation methods at the time were insufficient to reveal what are sometimes faint traces. For example, it is clear from Petersen's reports that the houses were simply emptied out but the stone walls were not investigated. Stones which had fallen into the house were not cleared away so it was not possible to find the small trenches in which the timber walls stood. Furthermore, excavations were not extended outside the house itself, so the original outer extent of the stone walls could not be determined. Finally, the possibility of several building phases was not sufficiently considered so it is often impossible to distinguish cultural levels in the older excavation reports. It was only with the more sophisticated excavation techniques put into practice after World War II and particularly in the 1960s that the structural details of these buildings began to be revealed.

Terminology and Reconstructions

In recent years several attempts to determine the three dimensional appearance of prehistoric houses have been made. Jochen Komber (1989) analyzed six of the best recorded Migration Period structures in order to determine what the load-bearing requirements would have been for these buildings. Again, these conclusions have great relevance for studies of later buildings. Before turning to Komber's work in more detail, however, I will introduce some of the necessary Norwegian terminology for construction techniques used in these structures.

One of the most difficult terms is the word 'longhouse' itself which is often applied to many of the structures I will be discussing. There is disagreement over whether the term should refer to buildings whose width:length ratio is at least 1:2 or to buildings which house both people and animals under one roof (Komber 1989:28). Alexander Fenton, who has studied Scottish vernacular architecture, prefers the latter use, defining a longhouse as "a building which combines accommodation for men [sic] and cattle, especially cows and their younger progeny, under one roof, with intercommunication between the two elements" (Fenton 1982:231). This meaning is not used consistently, however, which makes clear discussion of the material difficult. In this study I will attempt to distinguish between 'long houses' (i.e., houses which are physically long) and 'longhouses' in Fenton's use of the term.

There are several terms which concern construction details in these houses. There are two primary construction methods to carry the weight of the roof, *stav* construction and *lafte* construction. *Lafte* construction is what we would call log cabin construction, where the walls are built of horizontal timbers which are joined in some fashion in the corner. These walls are the load-bearing elements in the house. A great deal of debate has been expended on the problem of exactly when *lafte* construction was introduced into Norway and what effect it had on building methods (e.g., was the

longhouse broken up into several small buildings because of the inability to find timbers of sufficient length for the old style buildings). I will return to this subject briefly later on when discussing individual houses, but concentrate here on explaining the rest of the Norwegian terms.

In *stav* construction the main load-bearing elements are vertical *staver* or posts. The method of wall construction may vary, as I will describe below, and the walls play a secondary role in supporting the roof compared to the vertical posts. Archaeologically we can identify this general type of construction through the presence of post holes or stone bases for posts. The two parallel rows of post holes found in many Iron Age houses give rise to the term 'three-aisled long house' and indicate what is called *grind* construction. The standing posts bear the weight of the roof and are bound together in pairs by beams running across the house. These beams are called *beter* or *tverrbjelker* (see Figure 4.7 for an illustration of terms). Long beams running the length of the house could be placed on each end of these *beter*. The long beams are called *stavlægjer* or *sidedser*. These beams can be used even if the walls of the building are bowed since their function is to bind the *grind* together lengthwise and to help support the roof construction, not to connect the posts themselves. Sometimes the *grind* or frames are further strengthened through the use of short beams which buttress the corners of the *grind* by connecting the *tverrbjelke* to the post, forming a closed triangle in the upper corners of the *grind*. These beams are called *skråbånd* or *kneer*.

There is now archaeological evidence that the wood walls also played a role in supporting the roof and did not consist of just simple panelling inside a stone wall. For example, at both Ullandhaug and Espeland the walls were clearly anchored in the ground, presumably to counteract horizontal forces inward (Komber 1989: 56). These

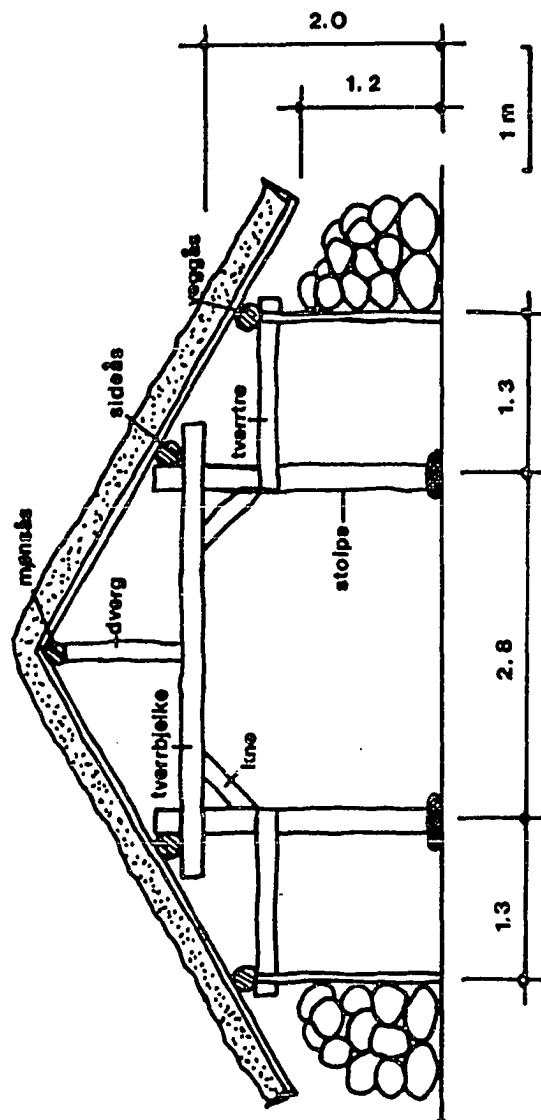


Figure 4.7: Norwegian construction terms, redrawn after Komber (1989:Figure 5.1-10)

forces might come from the outer stone wall which was built up against the wood wall after the latter was already in place. In many cases the stones which have fallen from the wall are all on the inside of the house, a further indication that the stone walls were built after the timber walls were constructed and that they exerted an inward force. Houses from the Viking period in Faroe and Iceland also indicate that there were inner wood walls which had a load bearing function (Komber 1989:57-58).

These walls could take different forms. They might be *flettverk* or wicker and clay, in which case pieces of the clay might be found in excavations. Other possibilities include standing planks (*reisverk*), perhaps set into a wall sill at the base, or horizontal planks slid into grooves in standing wall timbers, a construction technique known as *sleppverk* or *skiftesverk* (Danish *bulhus*) (Bakka 1971:159; Myhre 1982:100). The latter is virtually unknown in Norway. Obviously unless some of the wall timbers are actually preserved it is difficult to determine exactly what the walls looked like above ground level. The most important point, however, is that they were made of wood and in time became more and more a part of the load-bearing elements of the construction.

There is also evidence from some excavations (e.g., at Ullandhaug) that the posts were rectangular with the long axis perpendicular to the length of the house. If this fact is to have constructive significance, the load from the roof must somehow be transferred to the standing posts from the *tverrbjelke*. This in turn indicates a construction which is stable against forces from the side. Such a stable construction might be achieved through the use of a beam running horizontally from the upper part of the post to the foot of the roof, through a *mønsds-dverg* system, or through the use of the loft space above the *tverrbjelke* (Komber 1989:55-56). As we will see, however, the use of a loft is unlikely in the buildings discussed here because of the probability of a low roof angle in conjunction with a turf roof. The use of rectangular posts would

result in a more economical use of building timber, a savings which would be important in areas where such timber was not abundant.

Roof construction in these buildings may vary. In many of these three-aisled buildings, the roof consists primarily of two *sidedser* running lengthwise along the *grind* system and a *mønsds* or ridgepole at the apex of the roof. The *mønsds* may be supported by *dverger*, shorter posts which stand on the *tverrbjelker*. The surface of the roof itself may be formed by tightly laid untrimmed timbers which run perpendicular to these beams and rest on the wall's upper edge. Komber refers to these timbers as *rafter* (1989:35). Alternatively, the roof may be constructed of *sperrer* without a *mønsds* (*sperretak*). These *sperrer* always appear in pairs and are joined along the ridgeline of the roof. The pairs may be used in combination with load-bearing beams or *dses*. A *sperretak* may only be used when the roof beams are supported below their center of gravity so that they would fall into the house if they were not bound together along the ridge (Komber 1989:35).

Another option for the roof is the *dstak* in which the roof is carried by a series of beams running the length of the building and which rest on the gable walls. These beams are then covered by timbers running across them from the ridge of the roof down to the walls (Tobiassen 1988:14). According to Ágústsson (1982:184), this was the original type of roof in the Icelandic houses of the settlement period and into the Middle Ages.

There are several choices for the actual roofing material. A thatched roof requires a roof angle of at least 45° so that water will run off it (Komber 1989:36). Because it stands fairly high, this kind of roof is more vulnerable to wind. A turf roof, on the other hand, requires a much gentler slope so that it will not slide off and is therefore less susceptible to additional forces resulting from high winds. However, the

turf absorbs the water thus increasing the weight of the roof and creating a significant burden on the supports. Different regions in Norway had local rules for constructing this kind of roof, but the best solution is the so-called *fjerdingsrøst* where the height of the roof is one fourth the width of the house resulting in a roof angle of 27° . The angle can reach as high as 41° , however (Komber 1989:36).

Komber worked out possible reconstructions for five houses (Ullandhaug 1, Forsand 2, 3 and 6, Gjerland 1) and one *naust* (Stend) from the Migration Period. This work is very important if one is trying to address the use of space in prehistoric houses. The traditional house plans give only a two dimensional look at these structures, but reconstructions can give the researcher an idea of the height of the walls, the likelihood of the presence of a loft and the degree to which the roof-bearing posts impinged on freedom of movement within the house. The position and size of the roof-bearing posts and the presence of beams connecting the *tverrbjelker* to the posts clearly have an effect on the amount of open space inside the building. Myhre (1980) and Komber (1989) have both drawn attention to an important element in the construction of these buildings which has great implications for freedom of movement throughout the structure, the distance between the two rows of posts. This can be expressed in the relationship known as the trestle quotient, the width of the house divided by the width of the middle aisle between the posts. As the posts are moved outwards towards the walls, the trestle quotient approaches 1.0. As the posts are moved towards the midline, the trestle quotient increases (Komber 1989:26). Also important is the distance between each pair of posts. Obviously, the greater the distance the fewer the number of posts and the more open space there will be. And yet the *grind* construction must be able to support the weight of the roof which in the case of turf roofs is quite considerable.

Before turning to the implications of Komber's work for Viking and Medieval houses, I will review briefly his argument for a new reconstruction of Ullandhaug 1 based on details from the archaeological record (again, see Figure 4.7). This will illustrate the possibilities open to us in the future with more meticulous excavation techniques. He showed that the standing reconstruction of Ullandhaug 1 in Stavanger takes insufficient account of the archaeological evidence. In his discussion of six possible reconstructions of Ullandhaug 1, Komber pays particular attention to two pieces of evidence from the excavation of the site. First, the stone foundations for the posts consisted in part of flagstones set perpendicular to the length of the building. Second, the stone walls were, in all probability, built up against an inner wood wall which indicates that the wood construction was itself the more important load bearing unit (Komber 1989:81). As I noted above, for the existence of rectangular posts to have significance in the construction of the house, the posts must have been susceptible to forces running across the house. The only construction which fulfils this requirement is the *mønsås-dverg* system where the *dverg* transfers the load to the *tverrbjelke* at its midpoint and the *tverrbjelke* in turn transfers the load to the posts through the *skråbånd* (Komber 1989:82). According to Komber, rectangular posts set perpendicular to the length of the building argue for a turf roof. Only a turf roof would be heavy enough to require special construction elements like rectangular posts. The roof angle would then be relatively low, about 35°, so there would not be enough room above the *tverrbjelker* for a loft (Komber 1989:82).

For the stone walls to have only an insulating function, the outward forces at the base of the roof must be either zero or so weak that it is possible to transfer them to the system of posts. This requirement can be fulfilled either by a *sperretak* or an *åstak* where the roof angle is less than 30° (Komber 1989:82). The first possibility does not

explain the use of rectangular posts, however, so Komber concludes that the most reasonable solution based on the evidence involves the use of rectangular posts connected by *tverrbjelker* with a *mønsås-dverg* construction and *skråbånd* to transfer load from the *tverrbjelker* to the posts. There would also be beam, a *tverrtre*, running horizontally from the posts to the top of the walls which would also transfer load from the base of the roof to the post system.

In the case of Ullandhaug 1, the middle aisle was 2.8 m wide and the outer aisles were 1.3 m wide. In Komber's preferred reconstruction (1989:79, Figure 5.1-10; here Figure 4.7), the posts are 2.0 m tall but the walls are only 1.2 m tall. The beams running from the top of the walls to the posts and the *tverrbjelker* could both interfere with free movement in the house. The posts themselves would have been 10 cm in width by 20 cm in length.

In reviewing the material from the six buildings he studied, Komber (1989:121) concluded that the evidence presents a uniform picture at least in regard to roof construction. In all cases he found that the most probable construction was an *åstak* carrying a turf roof with a relatively low roof angle. The post holes from the six buildings show that the builders attempted to counteract the vertical force on the posts from the heavy roof in various ways, for example, by placing large stones at the base of the hole or packing the hole with stones. The actual shape of the roof is more variable, that is whether it was *avvalmet* with a short section of roof above the gable walls slanting up towards the ridge of the roof or a *saltak* with straight gable walls and a ridgeline running the entire length of the building. The construction of the entrances is more difficult to determine, but the evidence from Forsand indicates that in some cases the door was moved in towards the house away from the outer wall line. This would

give more head room, since the height of the walls was not very great. Other buildings seem to have had low entrances at the wall line.

Bjørn Myhre has noted two gradual changes in construction from the Iron Age to the Middle Ages (1980:368). First, the inner load-bearing posts disappear and the load-bearing construction is transferred to the walls. Second, the hearth is moved from its central position in the dwelling's midline to a wall or corner. According to Komber (1989:141), both of these imply an increase in wall height. As a result of this change, the *tverrbjelker* could run from wall to wall without impinging on activity in the house and the three-aisled house plan was abandoned. But what about houses in the Late Iron Age, the Viking Period? As the house plans in Appendix 1 illustrate, the three-aisled plan was still in use. In the Late Iron Age, however, it seems that builders in Norway were attempting to free up the space inside the house from the rows of posts. From an engineering standpoint it is not possible to move the posts towards the walls if one is using a turf roof because the load is too great for the posts to bear. The lighter thatched roofs used in Denmark were impossible to use in Norway. Instead, in order to free up space in the house the posts were moved towards the midline, resulting in a high trestle quotient.

In fact, Komber (1989:127) concluded that this movement towards the midline was necessary when the distance between the *grind* or pairs of posts was increased and the space within the house opened up in order to counteract the vertical load on the posts from the heavy turf roof. Again, only a turf roof would be heavy enough to require such special construction elements. Stone packing or foundations in the post holes also indicate that it was necessary to counteract the load on each post from the roof. With fewer posts in use the size of the posts also had to increase. Thus there is a tendency for high trestle quotients to indicate low roof angles and when high trestle quotients occur in

conjunction with greater distances between *grind*, one can be fairly sure that the roof was turf with a low roof angle (Komber 1989:128). It would be interesting to see whether Komber's suggestion (1989:130) that houses with fewer but larger posts and larger open spaces were high status buildings because of the expense of the large timbers necessary for their construction.

In my discussion so far I have attempted to show how house construction developed in Norway during the Iron Age. I have introduced the Norwegian terms for various elements of house construction so that discussions of reconstructions are possible. Since most of the archaeological material comes from Migration Period sites, this is the period that has been most extensively studied. However, there was not a radical change in construction technique from the Early Iron Age to the Late Iron Age/Viking Period so knowledge gained from these studies of the earlier period are very important to considerations of the Viking and Medieval material. Komber's analysis of the static forces involved in the construction of Migration Period houses is also relevant to a study of later structures and helps to explain why certain features occur together. His study also gives us a better idea of what these houses looked like in three dimensions instead of the two dimensions represented in traditional archaeological plans. With this as a foundation, I will now turn to the archaeological data from Viking and Medieval house sites in Norway.

House Sites in Norway: Discussion of Data

As I mentioned above, I have placed the archaeological evidence for Late Iron Age and Medieval houses in Norway in Appendix 1. This includes a summary of each site and plans of those houses where the information was available. An overview of this information appears in Table 9.1 which lists the 90 sites reviewed for this project, their archaeological date and the basis for this dating. Some of the entries represent a number

of remains on one site; in these cases little information is available on the individual structures. Those sites for which very little information is available are listed in italics. They will not be considered further except in cases where they may indicate general trends.

Even a brief glance at the plans in Appendix 1 should make it clear why techniques such as access analysis are impossible to apply here: room divisions are deduced mostly on the basis of artifact distribution and entrances are often difficult to identify. In many cases the structures were not completely excavated and in others plans are not available. As I have noted several times, those sites excavated before the 1960s were not excavated up to modern standards so different building phases and other details may not have been noted.

In the following section I will summarize the most important aspects of the data and discuss important sites in more detail. There are 41 sites in Table 4.1 which date to the Late Iron Age/Viking Period and 46 in Table 4.2 which date to the Middle Ages. There is a certain amount of overlapping between these two groups since some structures were used over an extended period of time and others cannot be dated more exactly and therefore must be included in both sets. Also, some sites which actually contain several structures but which have not been investigated very thoroughly are listed only once (e.g. Sandøya), while others where excavation has been more extensive are listed for each structure (e.g. Ytre Moa). The total is therefore misleading. Twenty-one of the entries in Table 9.1 are so poorly known that they will not be included in subsequent tables. Several of them are sites where Migration Period and Medieval occupation are both evident, but cannot be connected to actual structural details. It is possible that these sites were reoccupied in the Middle Ages after a period of abandonment, but this cannot be proven. Several of these 21 sites are located in north-

FARM NAME	HOUSE #	DATE	# ROOMS	BYRE?
Arstad		VA-MA	>3	no
Birkelandsstølen	1	VA-MA	2	no
Birkelandsstølen	2	VA-MA	1	no
Borg	1--main house	LIA esp VA	>3	yes
Friksdal	several	LIA	1?	no
Grødeim		EIA?/LIA	2	no
Gudmedalen	2	VA	1?	no
Hovden	1	LIA-MA	1	yes?
Krågeland	2	VA-MA	2	no
Mo	1	VA	1	no
Mo	2	VA--C14 to LIA	1?	no
Mosetet		VA-MA	2?	no
Måkskitmyro	1	LIA	2-3	no
Oma		VA/MA	3	no
Rapstad		VA	2	no
Risavika, Tjora, Sola	1 (13 in innb)	VA--C14	1?	no?
Risavika, Tjora, Sola	2 (16 in innb)	VA	1	yes
Sandøya	several	LIA/MA	?	no?
Skarg, Bykle	1	LIA-MA	>3?	?
Skattum	1	VA-MA	1	no
Skattum	2	VA-MA	1?	yes
Storrsheia	2	VA	2	no
Søndre Nygård		VA	3?	no
Tranheim		VA	2?	no
Tu, Klepp		LIA/MA	2?	?
Tussøy		VA	3	yes
Vesle Hjerkin	1	VA-MA	1?	no
Vesle Hjerkin	3	VA-MA	2?	no
Ytre Moa	A	VA	1	no
Ytre Moa	B	VA	1	no
Ytre Moa	C	VA	1	no
Ytre Moa	D	VA	1	no
Ytre Moa	E	VA	1	yes
Ytre Moa	F	VA--10th c	1	no
Øvre Gilberg	1	VA/MA	2?	no
<i>Nyset-Steggje project</i>	<i>several</i>	<i>EIA-LIA</i>	<i>?</i>	<i>?</i>
<i>Risøya</i>	<i>several</i>	<i>LIA</i>	<i>?</i>	<i>?</i>
<i>Tjøtta, Nordland</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>EIA-LIA</i>	<i>?</i>	<i>?</i>
<i>Tjøtta, Nordland</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>LIA</i>	<i>?</i>	<i>?</i>
<i>Todneim</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>LIA/MA</i>	<i>?</i>	<i>?</i>
<i>Vesle Hjerkin</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>VA</i>	<i>?</i>	<i>?</i>

Table 4.1: Late Iron Age and Viking Age house sites in Norway. Those in italics are sites for which the data were insufficient for determination of number and function of rooms.

FARM NAME	HOUSE #	DATE	# ROOMS	BYRE?
Arstad		VA-MA	>3	no
Birkeland	4	MA	3	no
Birkeland	5	MA	>3	no
Birkelandsstølen	1	VA/MA	2	no
Birkelandsstølen	2	VA-MA	1	no?
Birkelandsstølen	3	MA-LMA	2	no
Fjetland		MA	>3	yes
Hanaland	1	MA	2	no
Hanaland	2	MA	2	no
Hellaug	1	MA	>3	yes
Hovden	1	LIA-MA	1?	yes?
Hovden	2	MA	>3	yes
Høybøen	1	MA	3	yes
Høybøen	2	MA	3	no
Krågeland	2	LIA-MA	2	no
Liset	1	MA	3?	no
Lurekalven	1	MA	1	no
Lurekalven	2	MA	>3	no
Lurekalven	3	MA	2	w/byre
Låkabø		MA	1	no
Mosetet		VA-MA	2?	no
Neset, Møsstrand		MA	>3	?
Nordre Valldalseter	1	MA	>3	maybe
Oma		VA/MA	3	no
Sandøya	several	LIA/MA	1?	no?
Seltuftøyri, Flåmsdalen		MA	2	no
Skarg, Bykle	1	LIA-MA	>3?	?
Skattum	1	VA-MA	1?	no
Skattum	2	VA-MA	1	yes
Småvågane, Utsira		MA	1?	no?
Tjøtta, Klepp		MA/LMA	2?	?
Tu		LIA/MA	2?	?
Vesle Hjerkin	1	VA-MA	1	no
Vesle Hjerkin	3	VA-MA	2?	no
Vestre Nape	1	MA?	1	?
Vestre Nape	2	MA	2-3?	no
Åsestølen		MA-LMA	2	yes
Øvre Gilberg	1	VA/MA	2?	no
Øygarden av Fjøløy	1	MA	1	no
Øygarden av Fjøløy	2	MA	1	yes?
<i>Liset</i>	2	<i>MA</i>	?	?
<i>Nedre Rossavik</i>	2	<i>MA/recent?</i>	?	?

Table 4.2: Medieval house sites in Norway. Those in italics are sites for which the data were insufficient for determination of number and function of rooms.

(Table 4.2 continued)

<i>Todneim</i>	3	<i>LIA/MA</i>	?	?
<i>Vardberg</i>		<i>MA</i>	?	?
<i>Vesle Hjerkinn</i>	1	<i>VA-MA</i>	?	?
<i>Vestvatn</i>		<i>MA</i>	?	?

Table 4.2: Medieval house sites in Norway. Those in italics are sites for which the data were insufficient for determination of number and function of rooms.

ern Norway and have merely been surveyed with some samples taken for radiocarbon dates; they have not yet been excavated (e.g., Bøstad, Finnby). They are useful, however, because the radiocarbon dates demonstrate continuous occupation on the farm sites throughout the Iron Age. Northern Norway, in other words, does not display the same apparent break in occupation during the Merovingian Period that southwestern Norway does. Table 9.1 does list the site of Sørbo, Rennesøy, which has recently been radiocarbon dated to the Merovingian Period. It appears to be a typical long house (25 m long, 5 m wide) with two hearths, but thorough excavations have not been conducted so construction details are unavailable (Hemdorff 1990).

Scholars have long believed that the Viking Period and especially the Middle Ages saw a great change in building styles in Norway from the traditional longhouse to farms comprising several small structures with specific functions. These smaller structures were supposedly introduced around the time that the *lafte*-technique was adopted. The data presented here show that this theory is incorrect on two counts. Smaller structures had been known in Norway since the Early Iron Age and continued in use into the Middle Ages (e.g., Birkelandsstølen 2, the structures on Sandøya and at Vesle Hjerkinn). But longer buildings were also in use in the Medieval period (e.g., Arstad in northern Norway, Hellaug, Høybøen 1 and 2, Lurekalven 2 and Hovden 2). This last example is important because it demonstrates that the practice of having byre and dwelling area under the same roof was not unknown in the Middle Ages. For the

Viking Age the only good examples of byre and dwelling under the same roof come from northern Norway at the chieftain's site of Borg on Vestvågøy and at Tussøy, Tromsø kommune. It might be argued that all these examples--Hovden, Borg and Tussøy--lie in peripheral areas and are therefore more likely to continue traditional building practices after they have gone out of style elsewhere. Still, the site at Borg in particular does not appear to be at all peripheral since luxury imports from continental Europe are numerous. I will discuss this in more detail later.

Before leaving the subject of byres completely, I should also point out that there are examples from both the Viking Period (Skattum, Ytre Moa) and the Middle Ages (Hovden, Skattum, Øygarden?) of byres standing alone. At Lurekalven 3 the byre shares one building with the hay barn. In the vast majority of houses of both periods where any determinations could be made, however, there was no byre (27 Viking Period, 26 Medieval).

It is also clear from the data that there was more variation in the number of rooms than previously believed. In this set of data there were 19 Viking Age structures with only one room and 12 Medieval structures with only one room. The figure for the Viking Age is inflated because of the six one-room buildings excavated at Ytre Moa. In contrast, I have only counted the sites of Risøya and Sandøya once in each list even though several structures have been recorded at each site. These have not been excavated, however. Some of these one-room buildings appear to have had special functions such as shielings or fishing huts. I will return to this point below. The site of Låkabø from the Middle Ages seems to lie in a very marginal area which may explain its simplicity and lack of finds.

If we turn to buildings with more than one room we find a larger number from both periods. For the Viking Age there are 10 two-room houses and 6 houses with three

or more (the total is actually 17 two/three room houses, but for Måkskitmyro it is uncertain whether there were two or more so I have not counted it here). For the Middle Ages there are 13 two-room houses and 15 three- or more room houses. If we leave out the structures from northern Norway in the Viking Age (Arstad, Borg and Tussøy), the total number of three-room houses drops to 4. This is in line with Myhre's observation (1980:367-368) that there was, in fact, more variability in the Middle Ages. In my data there is only one medieval house from northern Norway with three or more rooms (Arstad again), so the numbers appear to be fairly even.

Looking at the plans one can also see that the placement of certain structural elements changes over time. In the Viking Age the post holes (where they were found) generally lay in two parallel rows as discussed earlier in this chapter. The entrances were located at the ends of the long walls and the hearths were located along the center line of the house. Several of the medieval houses do not follow this pattern, however. Instead, the posts have either disappeared or have been moved to the wall line thus freeing up space within the room. Some of the medieval houses also had a *gang* or passage between the major rooms. The entrances were moved to the center of the long wall and some of the hearths were now moved to a corner.

Important Individual Sites

I will now discuss some of the sites summarized in Appendix 1 in more detail as they are of great importance to the subject as a whole. The most important Viking sites I will deal with here are Ytre Moa, Oma, Rapstad and Borg, along with the possible specialized sites like Gudmedalen, Friksdal, Risøya and Sandøya. The major medieval sites I will discuss here are Hovden, Vestre Nape, Høybøen and Lurekalven, and Vesle Hjerkin.

The site of Ytre Moa (Figure 4.8) in Årdal in Sogn was excavated in the mid 1960s and is still the only complete Viking farmstead which has been excavated to modern standards. All six structures were much smaller than the traditional long house with internal dimensions approximately 7 m x 4-5 m. Unlike the long houses, the entrances were all located in one of the short gable walls. In House A remains of the inner wood wall were found, supporting the idea that the outer stone walls in Iron Age buildings were protective, not structural necessities. Artifacts found in the buildings suggest that this was not a marginal farmstead even though it lies on a terrace at the top of a steep ridge where there is no fresh water supply today. For example, a bronze ringpin from the eighth or ninth century and a fragment of a ninth-century trefoil brooch were found in House A (Bakka 1965). An unfinished gilt bronze pendant and a small file and chisel were also found at the site suggesting fine metalworking may have been done there. Finds from the site include agricultural tools, knives, textile tools, hunting equipment, weapons and personal equipment (e.g. razors). Three of the buildings have been interpreted as dwellings (A, B and F), one as a byre (E), one as a storage building (C) and one as an *eldhus* though it might also have been used as a dwelling (Nordeide 1990).

Bakka (1965) noted that the custom of building several buildings on one farm, especially buildings with different functions, shows continuity with the Middle Ages, not with the Migration Period, and that since the Ytre Moa structures were *stav*-built this custom cannot be connected to *laftet* buildings exclusively. He also notes that the entrance in the gable wall is characteristic for the buildings in the court sites from the Roman Iron Age in Jæren (and, one might add, the later court sites in northern Norway).

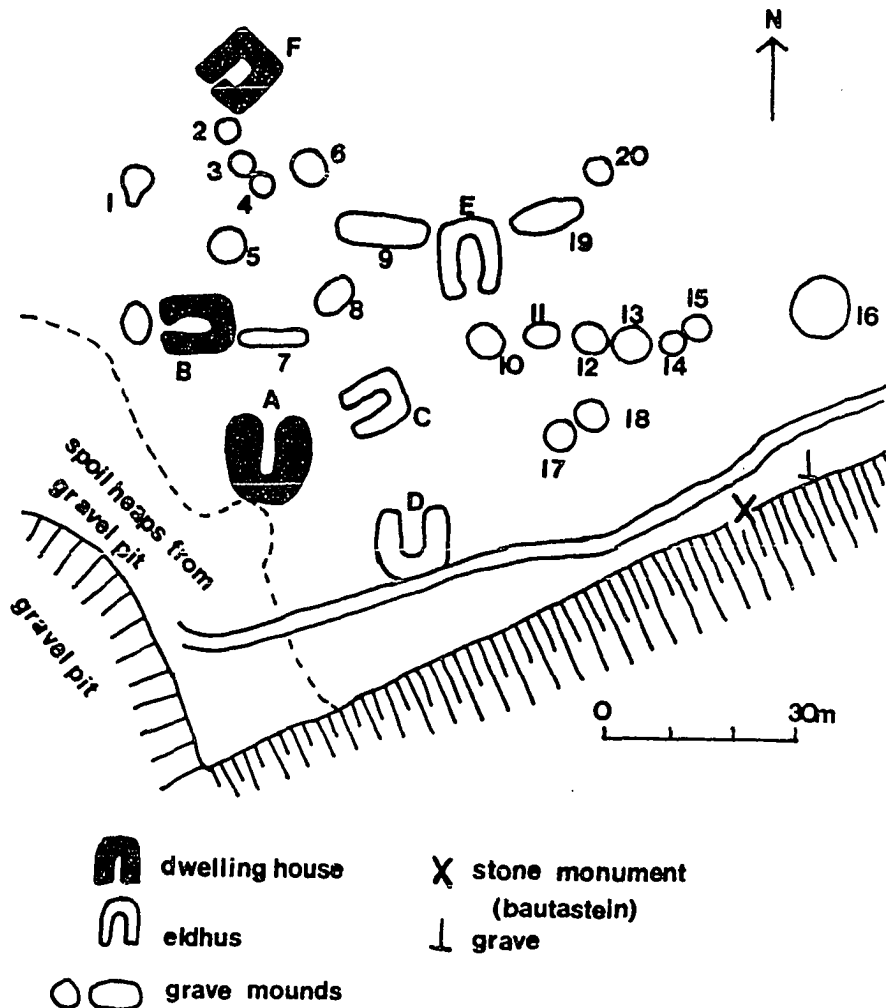


Figure 4.8: Site plan of Ytre Moa, redrawn after Myhre (1980: Figure 197).

In 1971 Arnvid Lillehammer wrote an article questioning the interpretation that House F succeeded House A and was in turn replaced by House B as each burned down. Instead he suggested that, since there is little evidence to support exact dating of the individual houses, all three dwellings could have been in use at the same time. This would mean that Ytre Moa was a *mangbølt* farm, a farm divided into holdings and supporting more than one family. They could have run the farm cooperatively with the

three outhouses each having a different function. Lillehammer pointed out that several of the monuments first thought to be grave mounds now appear to be clearing cairns or parts of a stone fence.

In a recent review of all the evidence from the site, Sæbjørg Walaker Nordeide (1990) supported Bakka's original interpretation of a single family farm. She believes the archaeological material does support a sequential dating of the buildings and points out that the terrace is only 80-90 *mdl* (1 mål-1000 square meters) which would limit the number of families it could support. However, she agrees with Lillehammer that several of the original 'grave mounds' are really clearing cairns or remains of a stone fence. There are indications that a flat cemetery lies out towards the edge of the terrace; a Viking woman's grave was found there in a boat shaped stone setting.

Nordeide suggests four phases for the site. In phase 1 in the Early Iron Age there was occupation of the area as evidenced by a large grave mound and bucket shaped ceramics. In phase 2 in the Late Iron Age Houses A (dwelling), C (storage house), D (*eldhus*/dwelling) and E (byre) were built. At the same time the stone fence which marks the inner tun area formed by A, C and D was built. House A then burned. In phase 3 House D was used as a dwelling while a new dwelling, House F, was built. The stone fence was extended to the north so that House F also had an enclosed area in front of it. House F then burned. In phase 4 House D was again used as a dwelling while House B was built. The stone fence was modified so that House F now stood outside the inner tun area. As an alternative, Houses D and B could have been built at the same time. This would mean that the buildings were differentiated, that the long fire was retained in the dwelling while the cooking pit and associated activities were separated into their own building. If this is the case, the *eldhus* originated at the transition to the historic period. At this time a new social structure developed with a new

economic system, a new religion and new technology. This may have precipitated a move away from this site since, according to Nordeide (1990:11), the site must be seen as marginal and unlikely to be exploited except in a time of maximum settlement. As I have already pointed out, however, the people who lived here were obviously not poor judging from the objects they left behind and terms like 'marginal' must be used with care.

This discussion of the material from Ytre Moa illustrates the difficulties one confronts when trying to interpret the archaeological data from even well-excavated sites. While some of the questions cannot be answered satisfactorily at this time (e.g. whether one or several families occupied the site), it is important to keep the various possibilities in minds. The problem becomes even more difficult for most of the other sites included in this study because few of them were investigated as thoroughly.

At the time it was excavated Ytre Moa stood alone in the Viking Period, first as the only well-excavated site from the period and second because of the plan of the buildings. These one-room structures with entrances in the gable wall did not fit the picture archaeologists had of Iron Age houses and were seen as an anomaly. Instead archaeologists turned to the site of Oma in Time (see below) when they wanted to discuss the 'typical' Viking house. In recent years, however, a great number of house sites with the same general plan have been discovered, e.g. Friksdal, Gudmedalen, the sites on Risøya and Sandøya, and the sites registered in the Nyset-Steggje project. Some of these are located in high mountain valleys and appear to be shielings (Friksdal, Gudmedalen). They have produced artifacts indicating the presence of women (e.g. spindle whorls).

The Nyset-Steggje project has shown that this type of building goes back to the Early Iron Age and that there is sometimes evidence for a partition wall. The fourteen

house remains excavated indicated a stable use of the area between AD 300 and 1000 (Bjørgero 1986:125). On the basis of the solid construction of some of these buildings, Bjørgero (1986:127) suggests that some of them could have been occupied year round. He also points out (1986:126) that we know from *Gulatingssloven* that summer mountain pasturing was common in the tenth century. These structures are also located along the most probable and comfortable route from western to eastern Norway. Svein Indrelid's site at Seltuftøyri, Flåmsdalen from the Middle Ages is of the same type as the Ytre Moa houses but, like some of the structures in the Nyset-Steggje project, had two rooms. The inner room had a central hearth and a bench (*pall*) in one corner where a spindle whorl was found. The structures on this site may also have been shielings.

Other sites with this general type of building (e.g., Risøya and Sandøya) seem to be connected with specialized fishing settlements and show no sign of women. Bente Magnus was the first to study these sites and published a review of the available material in 1974. While little excavation was carried out, the general shape of these structures was clear. Magnus also noted other areas in Norway where similar sites exist--Frøya, Sogn og Fjordane, Kirkøya, Østfold, and sites on Utsira in Rogaland to name a few. Sigmund Alsaker (1989) recently described a similar site on Hjartøy near Bergen.

Magnus (1974) discussed the possible function of these sites. She pointed out that most of the islands where these sites are found have very little arable land and the sites themselves are found at some distance from farms which were occupied in historic times. Among the soapstone material from Sandøya and Risøya there was not a single loom weight or spindle whorl. The bone material from the sites indicates that the people fished cod, herring and pollock. They also had pigs, sheep, cattle and reindeer to eat. The reindeer especially indicates that people came long distances with provisions.

Magnus therefore concludes that the oldest type of settlement in these areas was for seasonal occupation by farmers who fished for domestic use, though some of the sites in southern and western Norway might have been organized as seasonal fishing stations aimed at export and sale as well as domestic production. The medieval fishing industry may have begun at sites such as these.

Alsaker expanded on this interpretation. In his discussion of the Hjartøy sites, Alsaker (1989) turned to saga material which describes how Erling Skjalgson freed some of his slaves. He gave land for farming to some of them while others he set to fishing. Alsaker suggests it is possible that the Hjartøy sites may be the remains of a resident specialized fishing population which obtained meat and other necessities in trade with the nearby farms. There is still no evidence for the presence of women on these sites, though. Instead, the sites could be the remains of a seasonal but organized fishing activity. With four men per house, there could have been around 160 men living at Hjartøy at one time. This implies that fishing was very important to Iron Age society. Again Alsaker turns to saga material which tells us that the king's man on Askøy had control and supervision of Herdleværet, a fishing station just south of Hjartøy. So fishing may have been such an important element in the economy that the king or chieftain wanted to secure control of it.

This tradition is still visible at Herdlevær on Øygarden where fishermen's shelters which were used into the last century for winter fishing still stand. They were owned by *fjæremenn* who came from farms on Herdla, Toska and other islands east of Hjeltefjorde. The name *fjæremann* comes from the Old Norse word *fjarðarmadr* or *fjordmann*, a person who has his home in a fjord. Most of these buildings are several hundred years old and are probably the last traces of a more or less continuous tradition which can be traced back 1500 years in the remains on Hjartøy (Alsaker 1989:11).

This discussion may seem to stray from the subject of this study, the houses themselves. But it is necessary to try to put the material into a broader perspective and to remain aware of the different possible functions of the various sites. The previous discussion illustrates that Iron Age society was differentiated economically and alerts us to the dangers of lumping all the sites together in any interpretation without first taking into account the possibility that they may represent different social groups or economic activities.

I will now turn to a Viking house site often referred to in the literature, the site at Oma in Time in southwestern Norway. This site is often used to illustrate the house type the Norse settlers in the North Atlantic brought with them to the new settlements, especially to Faroe and Iceland. But the site has actually been dated to the Late Viking Age or even the Middle Ages, so this assumption seems to me to press the data farther than it reasonably allows. The house at Oma was excavated by Jan Petersen and published in 1933. It was 25 m long and 8.5 m wide (external) (Fig. 4.9). Petersen (1933: 66) interpreted it as a one-room structure, but in his review of the site Myhre (1980) suggested a division into three dwelling rooms, the central one having a flagstone hearth. Most of the artifacts were found around the hearth while few were found in the two suggested end rooms. Myhre's suggested division also fits with the placement of the post holes: there is a pair at each of the suggested partitions and partition walls could easily have been attached to them. The floor also sloped more steeply on the two ends than in the middle section (the total difference in floor level from NW to SE was 2.21 m (Petersen 1933:66)). Myhre points out that the main room at Måskitmyro may have had the same layout, but it is difficult to tell from the available data (1980:367). This house has been dated generally to the Late Iron Age.

Komber (1989:149) has pointed out that the house excavated by Sigurd Grieg in 1935 at Søndre Nygård in Gudbrandsdalen may have had a similar layout. This house was 17 m long and 5.8-7 m wide (external) (Fig. 9.23). As at Oma, the post holes seem to lie in two rows and there was a central hearth. Because of the presence of a post hole in the north wall line (number IV), Komber disagrees with Grieg's conclusion that the house was *laftet* and suggests instead a *reisverk* construction (1989:152). This post hole may be the remains of a door post, thus giving an entrance in the same position as the north entrance at Oma (Komber 1989:152-154). Grieg dated the site to the Viking Age on the basis of the few finds uncovered there, in particular a definitely Viking Age celt and scythe, but a more exact dating was not possible (Grieg 1937:105).

If Komber's suggestion is correct, it gives us two Norwegian sites of the same basic form. But again, neither of these sites can be dated securely to the early part of the Viking Period when the westward emigration began. We should keep in mind the possibility that ideas from the new settlements were transferred to Norway and not assume from the start that all the cultural impulses flowed from east to west. Alternatively, the sites at Oma and Ytre Moa may actually represent types found on larger farms, whereas most of the excavated houses lie in more marginal areas (Myhre 1980:370).

More typical of the Viking Age houses so far excavated is the house at Rapstad av Årstad in Eigersund. As I have already noted, most of the Late Iron Age houses in this study seem to have been divided into two rooms. Rapstad is an example of this. This site was also published by Petersen in 1933 and was 17 m long and 7 m wide (Petersen 1933:22) (Fig. 4.10). The internal length was only about 13 m. As with Oma, Petersen interpreted this structure as having only one room. Myhre, on the other hand, suggests that the house had two rooms with different functions, one with a hearth

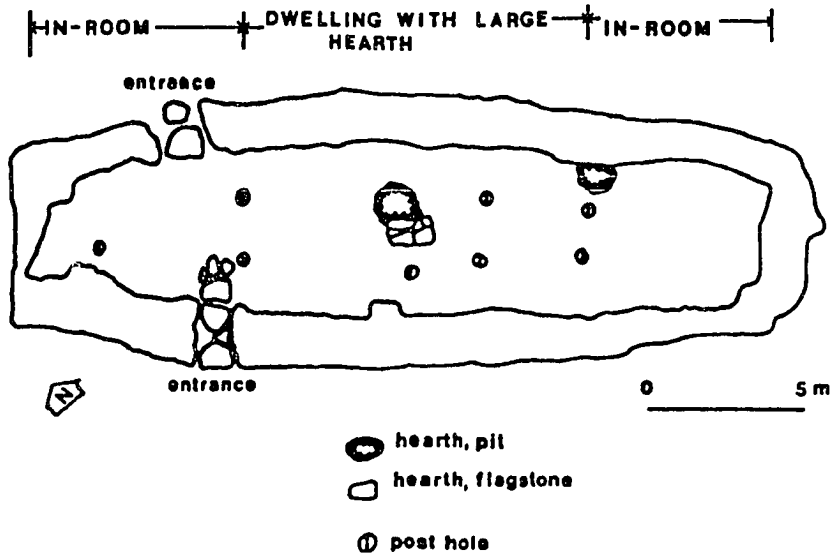


Figure 4.9: Oma i Time, redrawn after Myhre (1980:Figure 185).

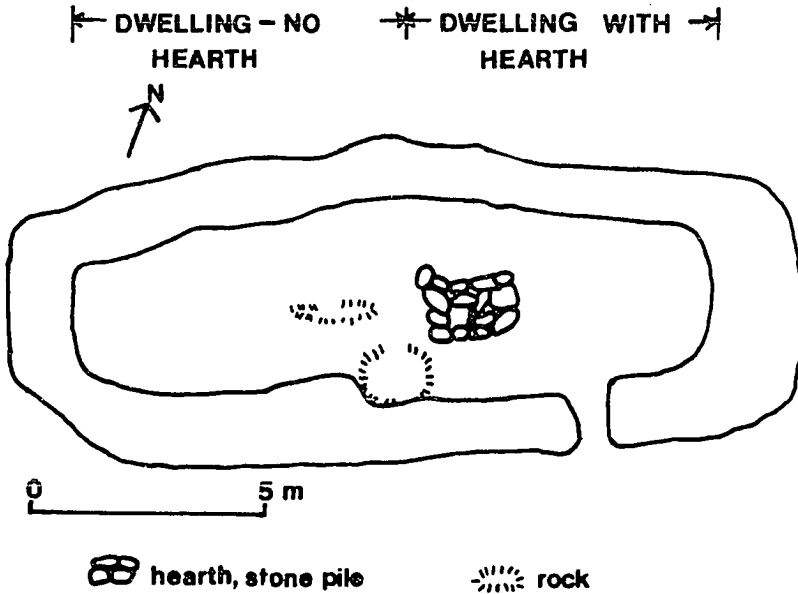


Figure 4.10: Rapstad av Årstad, redrawn after Myhre (1980:Figure 182).

and one without. There were artifacts in both sections. The single entrance led to the room with a hearth (Myhre 1980:342-343). The main room at Måkskitmyro may also have been divided in two instead of three as suggested above, and Krågeland 2, Storrsheia 2, Grødeim and Birkelandsstølen 1 also appear to have had two rooms.

The picture we get from the northern sites is very different. Borg and Tussøy are the only Late Iron Age sites in this study where dwelling and byre were under the same roof. The house at Borg actually had several rooms and was 83 m long (Stamsø Munch 1991b:45) (Fig. 4.11). One of the rooms has been interpreted as a feast hall with three possible functions: as a normal dwelling room, especially for women's work, as a feast/reception hall, and as a site for sacrifices, especially the north corner, because of apparently ritual artifacts found in this part of the room (Stamsø Munch 1991a). The house also contained another dwelling room, a storage room and a passage. The people here were clearly not out of touch with events farther south and had imported luxury goods (e.g., glass and ceramics) from continental Europe. This poses the possibility that the longhouse represented high social status in northern Norway, but not farther south. I will note in passing here that Claus Andreassen (1981) and Joel Berglund (1982) have both suggested that in Greenland the long halls lived on as an upper class tradition after less well-to-do farmers were forced to adopt different layouts.

The farm at Tussøy was not an especially wealthy one and here the house layout is similar to the Migration Period longhouses in the south. The excavator suggests a division into three rooms, two dwellings and a byre (Støren Binns 1978:82) (Fig. 4.12). Still, the information from the Early Iron Age site at Greipstad shows that separate buildings for separate functions were not unknown in northern Norway in the Iron Age. And as I have pointed out, there appears to have been continuous occupation on many of

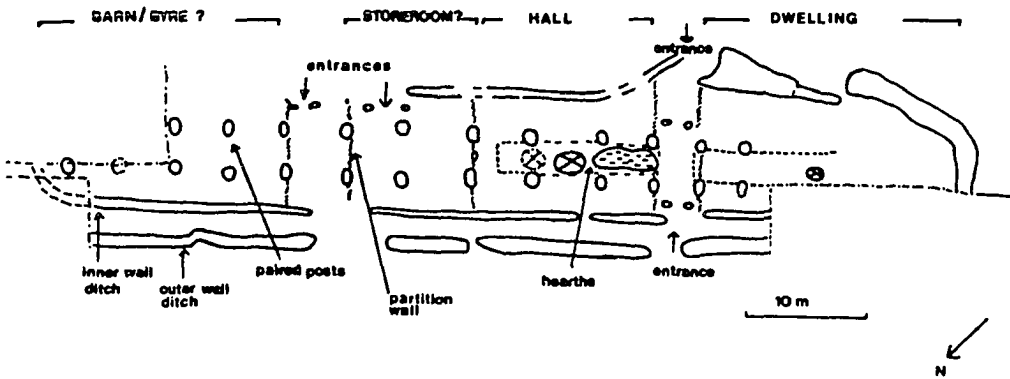


Figure 4.11: Borg, Vestvågøy, redrawn after Stamsø Munch (1991:325).

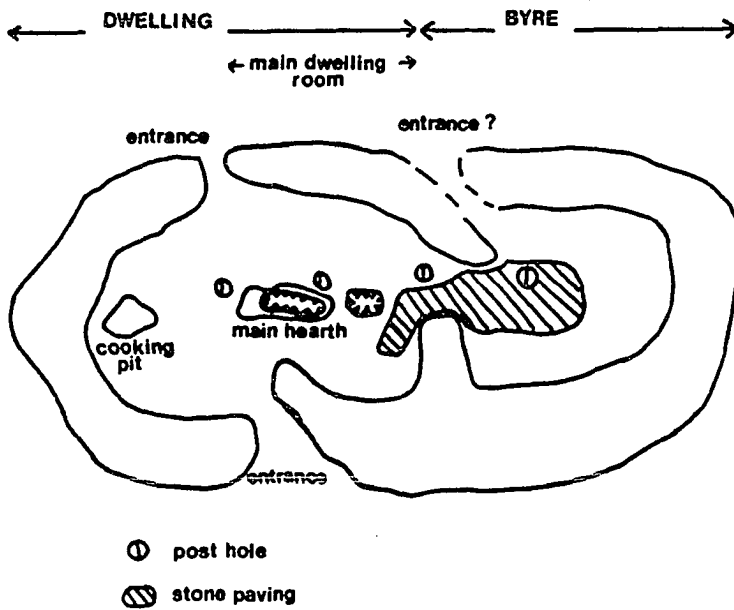


Figure 4.12: Tussøy, Troms, redrawn after Støren Binns (1978:Figure 46).

the northern Iron Age sites throughout the period unlike in the south and west where there is a break at the end of the Migration Period. We should take this as a caution against imposing modern political boundaries on the evidence. Society in the north could well have had a slightly different organization with different styles in vogue at different times.

I will now turn to a few of the important medieval sites. The houses at Hovden, Møsstrand, Telemark, were excavated by Irmelin Martens in the 1960s. Hovden 2 clearly dates from the medieval period.⁴ Its layout follows the layout of the traditional longhouse: it may have had six or seven rooms with a byre included. It may have been *laftet*, but could have been of *stav* construction. The stones along the wall lines evidently served as a foundation for the sill beams, whatever the construction above ground. The partitions were also marked with single rows of stones, again foundations for sill beams. Martens feels the primary occupation period lay between AD 1100 and 1300, but the dates could be pushed forward and backward.

Nordre Valldalseter 1 in Hordaland, also excavated by Martens, may also have had a byre along with the dwelling rooms (Fig. 4.13). Here the room partitions actually left traces, one as a berm like the outer earthen berms or walls and two as small ditches in the floor. These could have held walls of vertical planks. Another important aspect of this house is that the post holes lie along the wall line, not in pairs within the house as in the *grind* construction I discussed earlier. This construction method was known in the Iron Age, however (e.g., at the *naust* at Stend). As in Migration Period houses, the timber walls were surrounded by a protective earthen wall or berm. The entrances were located in the long walls right next to the partition walls, a practice also familiar from Migration Period houses.

⁴The baking plates or *steikeheller* found there are a clear indicator of a medieval date (see Chapter 5). In addition, there are radiocarbon dates which agree with the artifactual material.

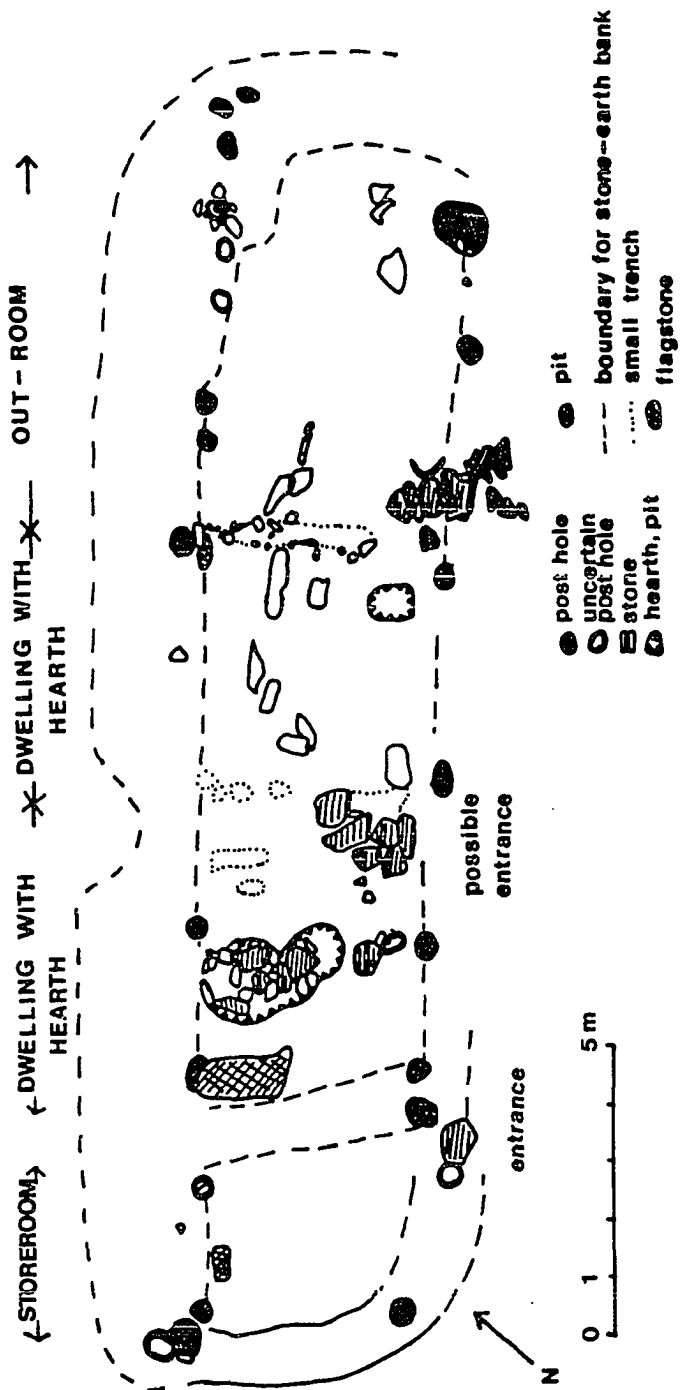


Figure 4.13: Nordre Valldalseter, Hordaland, redrawn after Myhre (1980:Figure 175).

A third important medieval site excavated by Martens is at Vestre Nape in Telemark. Nape 2 was probably built in the same way as Hovden 2 with sill beams lying on a line of foundation stones. According to Myhre (1980:332-335) a new feature appears here--the *gang* or passage (Fig. 4.14). It lies between the eastern and western rooms, both with hearths. There is no byre in this building.

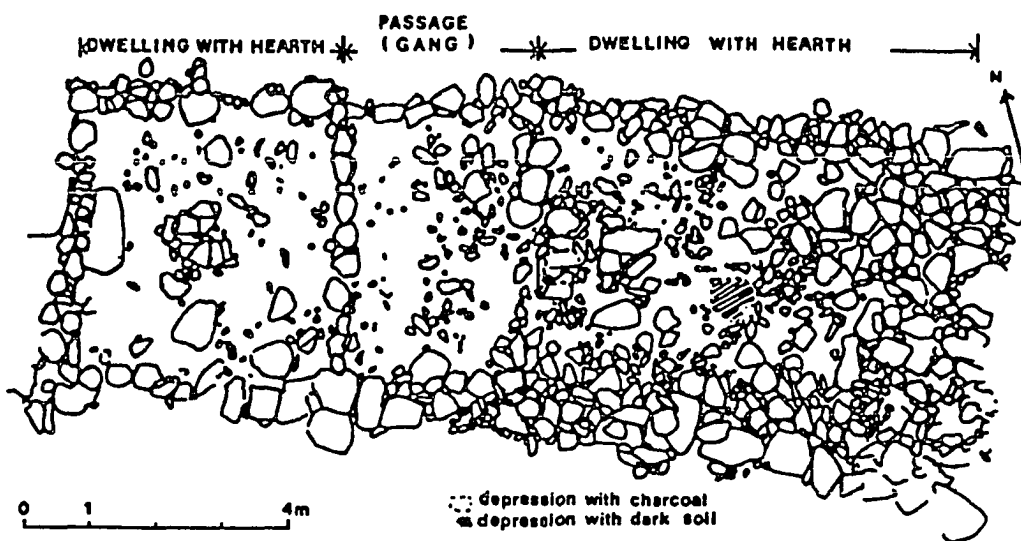


Figure 4.14: Vestre Nape, Telemark, redrawn after Myhre (1980:Figure 177).

In 1979 Martens excavated another medieval house site at Neset in Møsstrand, Fyresdal, Telemark in connection with a project to find deserted medieval farms (Martens 1989). This is in the same area as Vestre Nape. The house was 20 m long and 6 m wide and had five rooms, although the fifth probably was not actually attached to the rest of the structure. Room 2 had two hearths and thick cultural layers. Martens

(1979:10) interprets it as the most important dwelling room in the house. One of the hearths is particularly interesting because it lies in a corner, not on the midline of the house. According to Martens, the archaeological material does not indicate the functions of the other rooms. Again, the wall remains appeared to be low stone foundations for timber walls with low earthen berms outside. The site produced typical medieval finds and radiocarbon dates to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

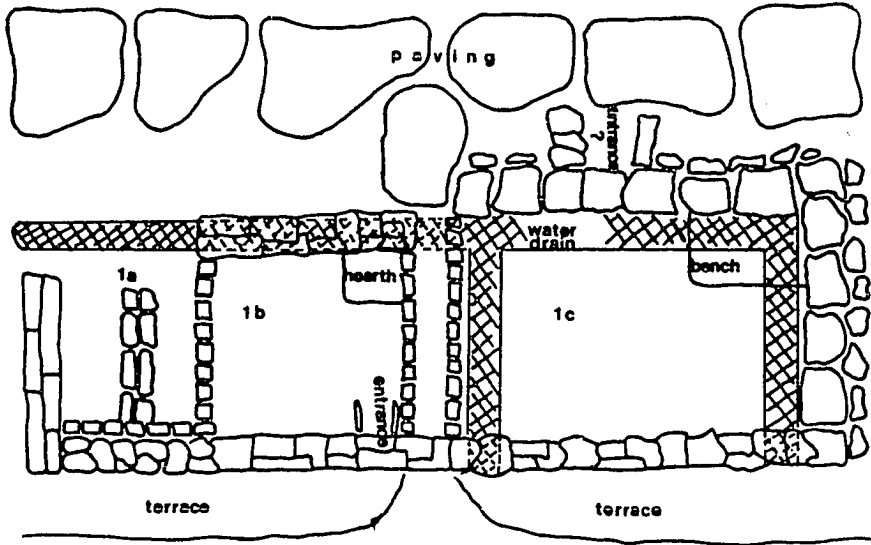
Recently Martens (1989) attempted to place the houses found in these marginal areas into a wider perspective. According to her, the associated fields indicate that cereal agriculture was prominent on the medieval farms registered in this area, but cereal ripening in several areas would have been uncertain (the farms lie between 450 and 750 m above sea level). Stockholding was therefore probably more important. Martens explains the settlement in this 'marginal' area by pointing to the many examples of specialized economic activity in marginal areas in the Viking and Middle Ages discovered by archaeologists in recent years (e.g., Friksdal, Risøya). Martens herself has studied the extensive iron production activity in areas where cereal agriculture cannot have been a major factor, e.g. Møsstrond in Telemark. Large-scale trapping systems for reindeer and moose in order to obtain raw material for comb making are now known (e.g. Vesle Hjerkin), and the export of furs must have involved transportation over the mountains of southern Norway. The archaeological evidence indicates that settlement in some of the marginal areas must have begun before population pressure actually demanded it. In addition, Viking grave finds in eastern Norway clearly indicate that the marginal areas contributed to the well-being of the more central areas. In fact, Martens claims (1989:82) that the cultural remains cannot be reconciled with the idea of cultural isolation either in the valley districts or in Øvre Telemark more generally. As she notes, cultural and economic contacts go hand in hand, and when the Black Death devastated

Norway in the mid-fourteenth century the subsequent depopulation hit the marginal settlements the hardest and destroyed the economic systems which had supported them. This also had a negative impact on Norwegian society as a whole. Again, we must be careful not to dismiss evidence from the so-called marginal areas as unrepresentative or somehow divorced from events in the more central areas. Clearly there was considerable interaction and it would be silly to reject the evidence from these house sites by claiming out of hand that the people who built them were backward and out of touch.

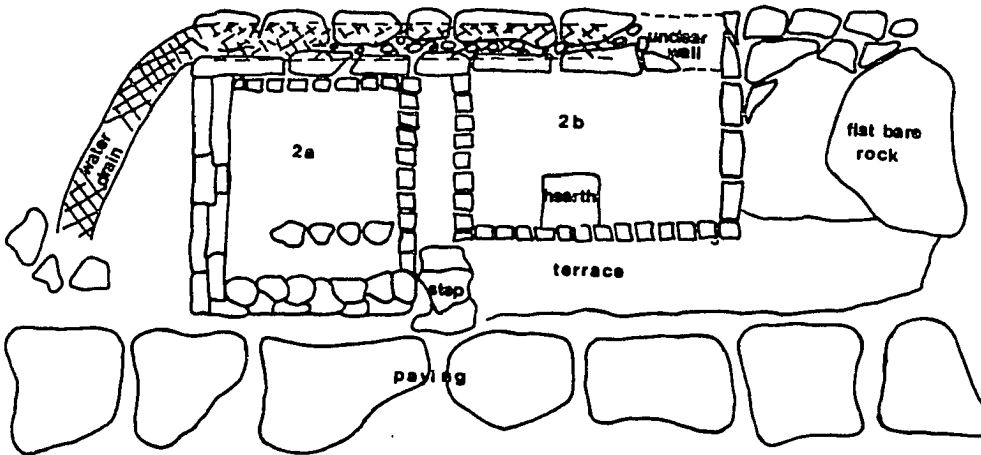
The publication of the sites at Hovden, Vestre Nape and Nordre Valldalseter in 1973 was very important because it allowed, in fact demanded, a reconsideration of the theory that the Iron Age longhouse was broken up into individual buildings with separate functions in the Middle Ages. Three buildings had been found with several rooms each, two with byres. Admittedly these structures lie in the mountains in possibly peripheral areas, but more recent excavations have also uncovered medieval farmsteads with houses with two or three rooms each.

In the 1970s Kjersti Randers excavated the deserted medieval farm of Høybøen on Sotra. The farm was deserted sometime between AD 1350 and 1400. There were two buildings, one with two rooms (House 2) and one with three (House 1) with a flagstone paved path running between them (Fig. 4.15). One of the rooms in House 1 may have been a byre (Randers 1981:84) while the other two were a dwelling room and some kind of workroom. House 2 contained only dwelling rooms. There were no inner roof-bearing posts. The finds indicate that the farm was relatively well-to-do (e.g., imported fine ceramics). This makes it difficult to understand why the farm was never taken back into use after the crisis of the Black Death.

In her discussion of the room functions, Randers discusses the requirement in *Gulatingssloven* that when a *leilending* leaves the farm, three outside doors must be in



a



b

Figure 4.15: Houses 1 (a) and 2(b) at Høybøen, redrawn after Randers (1981:Figures 10 and 17).

order--the *stuedør*, the *bursdør*, and the *eldhusdør*. These are the three 'buildings' which were seen as absolutely necessary on the Norwegian farm from saga times to relatively recently (Randers 1981:84-85). The *stue* was where the family spent most of its time on a day-to-day level, at least in more recent times. It contained the sleeping places and it was where meals were usually prepared. Bread was baked in the *eldhus* and clothes were washed there as well. In winter water was warmed there for the stock, and beer was brewed there. In addition, all the cooking in connection with the slaughter and with big feasts was usually done in the *eldhus*. The *bur* is first mentioned in the *Edda* where it is described as a building where the women spent their time. In more recent sources it is a storage room/house.

Randers then attempts to apply these terms to the three dwelling rooms at Høybøen (1981:85-86). Room 1b might be an *eldhus* as baking activity is clearly indicated by the archaeological finds, and since it lies next to the byre water could be warmed here for the animals. The hearth is in the corner. Room 2b may have been primarily a cooking and sleeping room and might therefore be interpreted as a *stue*. This leaves room 2a as the *bur*. Spindle whorls and loom weights may indicate that women spent time in this room. If this interpretation is correct, it implies that the farm supported only one family, not two as might be suggested in Vestlandet on the basis of the existence of two houses. Unlike the situation in Østlandet and Trøndelag, in Vestlandet the various holdings on a farm were not separated but rather located in a clump (*klyngetun*) with an associated system of strip farming. Clearly if the two buildings housed two different families, all three important rooms should be found in both houses.

In the final phase, both buildings at Høybøen were divided by a narrow passage approximately 1 m wide (Randers 1981:120). Such passages have already been noted for the medieval houses at Hovden and Vestre Nape (although here Randers feels that

the 2.5 m width at Nape is too great to be considered a passage as Myhre believes). This is a characteristic which seems to be introduced in the Middle Ages along with the corner hearth, the placement of entrances in the middle of the long wall instead of near the end, and the disappearance of internal posts. The presence of a passage is known in Icelandic buildings after 1300. This agrees with the date for the final phase at Høybøen which Randers places between 1250 and 1350 (1981:127). Again, the point of origin for this layout cannot be determined on the basis of current information.

We do know, however, that the passage was not necessarily included in buildings contemporary with Høybøen. Excavations by Sigrid Kaland at Lurekalven uncovered three medieval structures (Fig. 4.16). This farm is on a small island of the same name and therefore comprises a topographically limited area (Kaland 1987:175). It is mentioned in *Bergens Kalvskinn* as an independent farm from about 1360, but the area was soon deserted and has not been farmed since the fourteenth century. House 1 had one room interpreted by Kaland as an *eldhus* or a *stue*. House 2 lay parallel to House 1 and had three or four rooms--a *bu*, a *stue*, and *eldhus*, and a workshop. The final structure contained a byre and a barn and lay almost perpendicular to the other two buildings. Thus House 2 may have contained all three important rooms mentioned in *Gulatingssloven*.

Like the other medieval houses I have discussed the wall remains, including those of the cross walls, consisted of sill stones. The house walls were timber, but there was an outer stone wall. The hearth in the so-called *stue* in House 2 was in the corner while the two other hearths in the two *eldhus* were both in the center of the room.

The Viking/Early Medieval buildings excavated at Vesle Hjerkin in Dovre were constructed differently from the buildings just discussed. Most importantly, they were

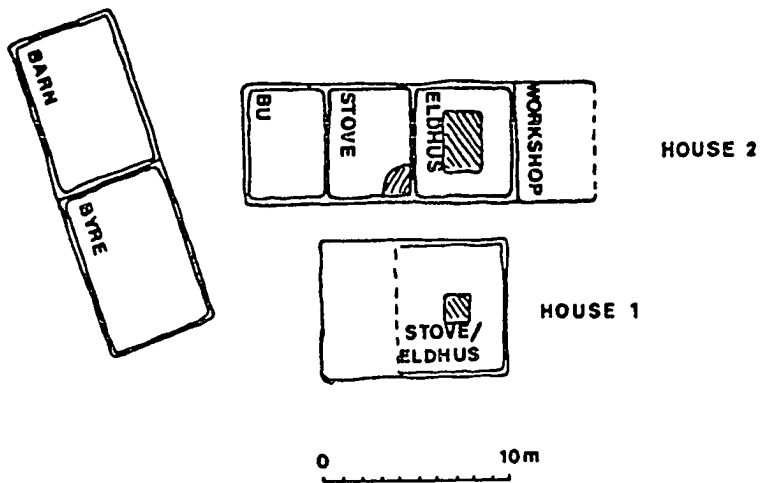


Figure 4.16: Lurekalven, Nordhordland, redrawn after Kaland (1987:Figure 7).

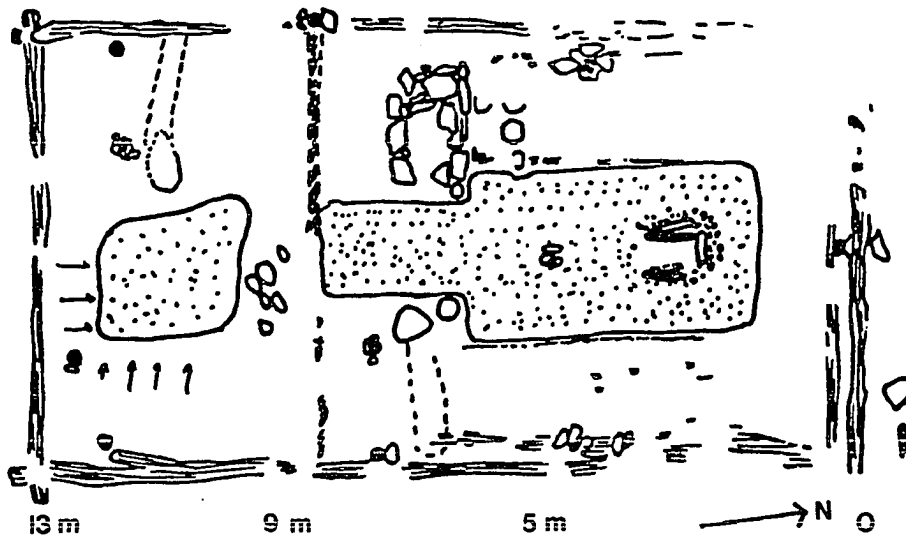


Figure 4.17: Vesle Hjerkin, Oppland, redrawn after Weber (1987:Figure 9).

all *laftet*--some of the timbers with the joints at the corners were actually preserved (Weber 1985). House 3 was 13 m long and 7 m wide (Fig. 4.17). Inside there were benches along three of the walls. Two hearths were found, one in the northern part and one more to the southwest. House 1 was longer (20 m) with three hearths, two along the center line and one in a corner. Unfortunately, the site has not yet been completely published so a further analysis of room functions is not possible. Still, even the available information shows that some of the same changes already noted for medieval houses were also found here, (e.g., placement of the hearth, lack of internal posts). At this point it is unclear whether the actual method of construction is relevant and made a symbolic difference (i.e., whether it mattered if a house was built as *reisverk* or was *laftet*). We must remember that wood is more plentiful in Trøndelag and Østlandet than in Vestlandet and was probably used more often and more extensively in these areas. This partially explains the lack of known sites in these parts of Norway when compared to western and southwestern Norway.

This site is another example of settlement in a seemingly marginal area but with clear evidence of contacts with so-called centers. Weber suggests that the inhabitants were probably farmers who chose this particular site because of the possibilities for hunting reindeer in the vicinity using a pitfall system. The seasonal hunts would have required a large degree of cooperation among the people in the area and it would be necessary for these people to profit from the hunt. The site was located along an important inland communication route through the Dovre mountains which in the Middle Ages was used by pilgrims on their way to Trondheim/Nidaros and the shrine of St. Olav. According to Weber (1985:110), these "rather unusual finds and the spacious houses [were] suitable for habitation purposes only [and] support the hypothesis of accommodation. And so do the broad benches which could serve as sleeping benches."

Remains of salt water fish have been found on the site and may indicate such traffic since dried fish would have been a suitable sort of provision for the trip (Weber 1985:110).

This discussion has touched briefly on some of the important points which emerge from the data presented in Appendix 1. I have also introduced a few ideas which I will return to in Chapter 6 in my discussion of the written evidence from both Norway and the Northern Isles. The change in the position of the hearths and entrances, the disappearance of posts in the building and the growing variation in house layout from the Viking to Medieval Periods will be investigated more thoroughly there along with the problem of identifying the *bu*, *stue/stofa*, and *eldhus* and whether such identifications are really helpful to our understanding of the archaeological data. First, however, I will turn to the available house data from the Viking and Norse Periods in Orkney and Shetland.

Chapter 5

Viking and Norse House Sites in the Northern Isles

This chapter will deal primarily with the excavated house sites in Shetland and Orkney. As with the Norwegian house material, the bulk of the data are presented in Appendix 2 with only the important trends discussed in the text here. The distribution of sites can be seen on Figure 5.1. In the second part of this chapter I will also discuss some of the artifactual material which has been uncovered in the sites in the Northern Isles. This will necessarily include comparisons with the Norwegian artifactual material, scanty though it may be. However, this discussion will not go into great depth; rather, it will demonstrate the major dating indicators within the assemblages and the general classes of artifacts to be found on these types of sites. Lack of recorded or published information on artifact distributions precludes intrasite functional analysis or detailed intersite comparisons.

A brief survey of the sites presented in Appendix 2 should reveal one problem very quickly: there are only 14 sites and these sites are almost uniformly high status sites. Several of them have been connected, however justifiably, with named characters in *Orkneyinga Saga*. The only exceptions to this elite status are Underhoull and Sandwick, both on Unst, Shetland, and possibly Buckquoy in Orkney, although it may have been connected to the unique settlement on the Brough of Birsay. This contrasts sharply with the vast majority of Norwegian sites which are generally felt to represent more marginal farmsteads.

It is also obvious that there are really very few excavated sites, especially when one considers the fact that the Scandinavian influence was the strongest and longest lasting in the Northern Isles of any area in Britain. Only 14 individual sites are included

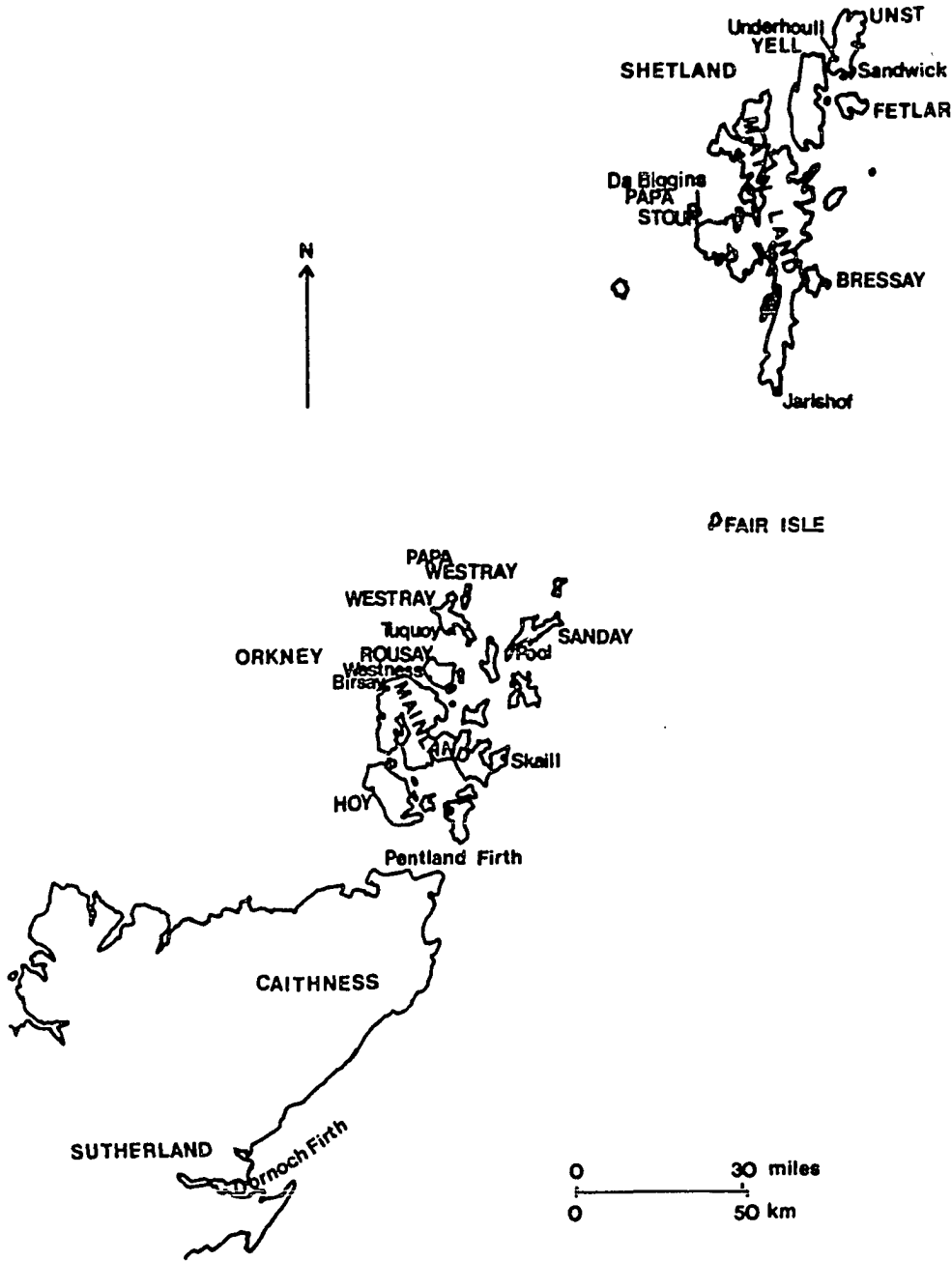


Figure 5.1: House sites in Orkney and Shetland, redrawn after Crawford (1987:Figure 7).

in Appendix 2 and of these several lack all but the most basic information. The lack of publications from those excavations which have been conducted is also extremely troublesome. There are only four sites from Shetland, although these are actually spread out geographically from the southern tip of Mainland Shetland (Jarlishof) to the tiny island of Papa Stour (Da Biggins) and north to the island of Unst (Underhoull and Sandwick). Of these both Jarlishof and Underhoull have seen final publication, although there are distinct problems with both of them as will be seen below. Da Biggins and Sandwick are still in the post-excavation phase, but the excavators of both sites have produced very useful preliminary reports.

The situation in Orkney is even more skewed. The majority of excavated sites, especially the most recently investigated sites, lie on Mainland Orkney in the Birsay Bay area. The site at Saevar Howe was only partially excavated and in a preliminary fashion because more thorough excavations were anticipated. As often happens in archaeology, the money for subsequent excavations was never forthcoming. As noted in Appendix 2, most of the excavations on the very important (but atypical) settlement on the Brough of Birsay have never seen final publication. Hunter's work on three cliff-side sites on the Brough is a distinguished exception to this rule, although Morris's work on the Brough is also in the publication stage. This leaves Buckquoy as the only fully published and completely excavated site from the area. The excavation of the multiperiod site at Skail on the east side of Mainland Orkney has also never been fully published because of the death of its excavator, Peter Gelling, although an attempt is currently underway to publish the site. Two important sites on other islands have been excavated, Westness on Rousay and Pool on Sanday, but the Westness site has never been thoroughly published and post-excavation work is still underway on the multiperiod site at Pool. The existing publication of Westness is particularly difficult to work with in the context of this project

because no plans were published (or drawn, for that matter), and the functional interpretations of the structures presented in the Norwegian text and the English summary do not agree. As I note in the appendix, in the Norwegian text Kaland (1973:88) refers to structure 2 as "*en slags bolighus, muligens et sovehus*" ("some kind of dwelling house, possibly a sleeping house"), while the English summary tells us that the structure may have been a cattle byre. Finally, the investigation at Tuquoy did not include major excavation. It was intended to record valuable data in imminent danger of eroding out of the cliffs.

That said, it must also be added that this is the *only* information at hand and it is pointless to wring one's hands in despair at the poor quality of data. Even seriously deficient material can point to possible trends to be kept in mind during future excavations and research. Furthermore, excavators of all these sites must necessarily relate their results to those of the others and have come to preliminary conclusions. They have also compared the structures from their sites with the Norwegian material, although mostly in a superficial fashion. What we can hope for here is a clear vision of what trends and similarities are indicated, even tenuously, by the available material. We can also show what evidence has been overlooked or perhaps over-emphasized. For example, several of the excavators mention the site at Oma, Time as a likely Norwegian model for the Viking/Norse structures found in the Northern Isles. But as I showed in the previous chapter, Oma is a unique site within the Norwegian material. Furthermore, if Myhre's functional analysis is correct, the internal divisions did not match those in the Scottish examples (see below).

Before turning to specific features of individual houses I will point out one very interesting and consistent feature of several of the sites discussed in Appendix 2. In many cases the same site was reused over and over through the centuries. In fact, at

Jarlshof, Underhoull, Skail, Saevar Howe, Buckquoy, Pool and the Brough of Birsay the Norse settlers even reused Pictish occupation sites. Hunter (1986) has pointed out that on the Brough the floor areas of the pre-Norse and Norse structures are often the same even though the shapes of the buildings may differ. In fact,

The evidence [from the Brough of Birsay sites VII, VIII and IX] might give reasonable grounds to infer the retention of existing patterns, or at least to suggest that the Norse settlement on the island occurred under some form of controlling authority which was based on an established native system. (Hunter 1986:111)

And Gelling (1984:20) stressed throughout his article the fact that the houses on site 2 at Skail were built on top of one another, referring to this as "a feeling of piety towards the position of an original house," a feature also seen in Iceland and at the sites mentioned above. Even the placement of the hearths seems to have been remembered over time at Skail. The recurrence of this tendency to build on the same spot for centuries does not seem likely to be purely coincidental.

Ritchie (1977:189) has also commented on the tendency to build on exactly the same sites over the centuries. She suggests that "There would appear to have been a distinct preference on the part of the Norse immigrants for settling on old occupation sites; since there was no shortage of good agricultural land in the areas involved, the preference may reflect an innate Norse habit of land conservation..."

I will begin the discussion of individual house sites with a brief survey of the site at Jarlshof. This site comprises remains from the Bronze Age through the Medieval Period with an extensive Viking and Norse component. Preliminary excavations took place in the 1930s, but full excavation did not occur until the post-war years. Hamilton published his final report of the site in 1956. Because excavation of the site took place before radiocarbon dating was available the phasing of the site is based on typologies and analogies with other sites. Furthermore, most of the artifacts contributing to these

typologies came from midden deposits; the house floors themselves had been kept clean over the extended occupation of the site. Thus the houses are dated by means of their stratigraphical relationship to the stratified midden deposits. This causes particular problems in determining the date of the initial Viking settlement on the site. However, a summary of Hamilton's phasing of the site is as follows:

Phase 1: This phase dates to c. 800-850 AD. During this period the parent farmstead, House 1, was built. It had bowed walls (but see discussion) and apparently two rooms and two parallel rows of posts for roof support. There were also three outhouses associated with this phase which Hamilton identified as a large byre/barn, a smithy and a bathhouse or *hof*. A wall enclosed the outhouses.

Phase 2: This phase dates to the mid-ninth century. House 2 was built perpendicular to House 1 and had straight walls. The building may have been divided in two with a byre at one end (see discussion). One of the original outhouses was demolished and two new ones were built.

Phase 3: This phase dates to the tenth century. At this time House 3, also rectangular, was added parallel to House 2. Like House 2 it may have had a byre at one end. House 3 had a yard wall surrounding it. The outhouses were also modified again with one being abandoned and two new ones built, one attached to the west side of House 2.

Phase 4: This is a minor phase dating to the early eleventh century. One outhouse was added at this time.

Phase 5: This phase dates to the late eleventh/early twelfth century and marks the start of the Late Norse period. Major changes were made throughout the settlement at this time. House 1 was enlarged with a byre

added to the east end and an extension built to the west. It may have had three rooms at this point. There was a cow path or *fegata* leading to the east gable entrance. House 2 was demolished and the area used for cattle enclosures. House 3 was also abandoned as a dwelling, but was converted to a byre with a paved *fegata* at the lower end. West of House 1 Houses 6 and 7 were built close together running down the slope. These buildings were shorter than the previous ones and in this stage only one room was evident, although byres were soon added. House 8 was also added at this time, but the remains were too damaged to reveal any structural details. The first pottery on the site appears in this period.

Phase 6: This phase dates to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. At this time Houses 6 and 7 were both extended to include byres. Several outhouses were built around House 1, some of them over the remains of Houses 2 and 3. The whole area was enclosed by a new yard wall.

Phase 7: This phase dates to the thirteenth century when decline was evident on the site. House 1 and some of the outhouses were abandoned. House 5 was built at right angles to House 1 and a slightly later small building was built within the ruins of House 1. House 5 had an annex along the east long wall. House 6 was modified and House 7 greatly altered with a porch added to the north gable and a small building (a byre?) added along one long wall.

There are several structural features in the buildings at Jarlshof which are relevant to Norse architectural developments in general. These include the presence of bowed walls, true longhouses with both byre and dwelling, benches and their position in the house, corner hearths and annexes. I will discuss each of these in turn. Table 5.1

lists the Scottish sites and the presence or absence of these features with the exception of annexes.

House Site	#	Date	Bowed walls	Byre w/ dwelling	Benches	Corner hearth
Beachview, Birsay, Orkney	2	Norse	yes?	?	?	
Brough of Birsay Guardianship Area	C1	Norse--9th c	yes	no	yes	?
Brough of Birsay Guardianship Area	C2	Norse--9th c	yes	yes	yes	no
Brough of Birsay Guardianship Area	D	Norse--9th c	yes	?	yes	?
Brough of Birsay Site IX	16a	Norse	no	no	yes--industrial end	
Brough of Birsay Site IX	17	Norse--after 16b	yes	no	yes	yes?
Brough of Birsay Site VII	1a/b	Norse	yes		no	
Brough of Birsay Site VIII	10	Late Norse	yes	no	yes	no
Brough of Birsay Site VIII	12	Late Norse	no	no	yes	?
Buckquoy, Birsay, Orkney	1	sealed by 10th c. grave	no	no	yes?	no
Da Biggins, Papa Stour		11th-15th c	no		yes--end	yes
Jarlshof, Shetland	1.1	800-850	yes?	no	yes	no
Jarlshof, Shetland	1.5	late 11th/early 12th c		yes	yes	no
Jarlshof, Shetland	3.3	10th c	no	yes?	no	no
Jarlshof, Shetland	5	13th c	no	yes	?	no
Jarlshof, Shetland	6.5	late 11th/early 12th c	no	?	yes	no
Jarlshof, Shetland	6.6	12th/13th c	no	yes	yes, end dais?	no
Jarlshof, Shetland	7.5	late 11th/early 12th c	no	no?	yes	no
Jarlshof, Shetland	7.6	12th/13th c	no	yes	?	no
Pool, Sanday, Orkney	3	Norse--no later than 11th c	no	yes	yes	no

Table 5.1: This table shows the presence or absence of bowed walls, true longhouses, benches and corner hearths in Viking/Norse houses in the Northern Isles.

(Table 5.1 continued)

House Site	#	Date	Bowed walls	Byre w/ dwelling	Benches	Corner hearth
Saevar Howe, Birsay, Orkney	2a	early Norse	yes?			
Saevar Howe, Birsay, Orkney	2b	Norse	yes?	no	?	no
Saevar Howe, Birsay, Orkney	2c	Norse	yes	no	yes	
Saevar Howe, Birsay, Orkney	2c	Norse	yes	no	yes	
Sandwick, Unst, Shetland	1	12th c	no	yes	?	no
Sandwick, Unst, Shetland	2	13th-14th c	no	yes	gable	yes
Skaill, Deerness, Orkney	1.1	11th c			yes	
Skaill, Deerness, Orkney	2.3	late 10th c?			yes--not hearth end	
Skaill, Deerness, Orkney	2.4	11th c	no	no	yes-N end	no
Underhoull, Unst, Shetland	phase 1	9th c?	yes?	yes?	yes; gable bench too?	no
Underhoull, Unst, Shetland	phase 2	12th c?	yes?	no	yes; gable bench too?	no
Westness, Rousay, Orkney	1	Viking--9th c?	no--tho some narrowing at 1 end	no	yes	no
Westness, Rousay, Orkney	2	Viking--9th c?	no?	no	yes	no
Westness, Rousay, Orkney	3	Viking--9th c?	yes	no	no	no

Table 5.1: This table shows the presence or absence of bowed walls, true longhouses, benches and corner hearths in Viking/Norse houses in the Northern Isles.

Bowed Walls

The presence of bowed walls is often interpreted as an early Viking feature. In houses with bowed walls, the long walls curve out towards the middle so the house is wider in the middle than at the two ends (e.g., Oma, Figure 4.9). Some have interpreted this feature as a symbolic representation of a boat or as a construction feature which made the building more aerodynamic against strong prevailing winds, but its significance is really not understood. The parent farmstead at Jarlshof was the only building there to have bowed walls. Small (1966) used this feature to date the house at

Underhoull to the ninth-tenth century by analogy with Jarlshof and, especially, Faroese sites. Small also noted that "late Iron Age sites such as Oma in Rogaland show some parallels" (1966:246). However, Oma was actually dated by its excavator to the Late Viking Age or Middle Ages and it did not have a byre. The other possible comparable Norwegian example to Oma, Søndre Nygård, was also dated to the Viking Age, but a more precise date was not possible to establish. The presence of bowed walls in the excavated Norwegian examples presented in Appendix 1 is not overwhelming.

A further difficulty with using bowed walls as an early characteristic is that we have at least one certain example of bowed walls in a Late Norse context in Orkney at Hunter's Site VIII on the Brough of Birsay, house 10. House 17 on Site IX also had bowed walls. It was from Hunter's Norse phase, but it was built late in that period, i.e. probably in the late tenth century. Interestingly both these structures were well-built dwellings. So again there is no reason to use the presence of bowed walls at Underhoull or Jarlshof as evidence of settlement in the first half of the ninth century. Furthermore, Ritchie has argued (1974:33) that the so-called boat-shaped houses (houses with bowed walls) at Underhoull and Jarlshof are really just irregular examples of the common hall-type of house. As she points out, in both cases only one wall is curved while the other is straight. All this seems to cast considerable doubt on the usefulness of this characteristic as a dating indicator and on its presence in Shetland at all.

True Longhouses

True longhouses have also been seen as a later development in the Northern Isles. For example, the first houses at Jarlshof did not contain byres. Hamilton argued that Houses 2 and 3 (tenth century) at Jarlshof were longhouses, but Bigelow (1987:27) disputes that interpretation because it was based on the presence of discontinuous stone paving in the lower ends. Therefore the first fusion of dwelling and byre at Jarlshof

occurred in the eleventh or twelfth centuries when a byre was added to the parent farmstead. In the same period Houses 6 and 7 were built, but they were initially dwellings only; byres were added later. This leaves House 5, a thirteenth-century structure, as the only example at Jarlshof of a structure built as a longhouse. The structure at Sandwick was a true longhouse from the beginning. Bigelow (1987:28) has compared the general artifact distributions at Sandwick and Jarlshof 5, 6 and 7 (in their longhouse phases) and has shown that in all cases by far the greater number of loom weights, line sinkers, steatite fragments and, in the case of Sandwick, ceramic fragments, came from the dwelling ends of the houses. This accords with the scarce artifactual evidence from byres in Norwegian houses.

The data from the other houses supports the suggestion that longhouses were a secondary development in the Northern Isles. One of the structures at Pool and both phases of the house at Sandwick (eleventh and twelfth to fourteenth century structures respectively) were longhouses. The only other possible early Viking examples are the house at Underhoull and House C in the Guardianship site on the Brough of Birsay. The Birsay house was dated to the ninth century, but since it has never been fully published it is difficult to know how certain this dating is.

I have already noted that there are some problems with the dating of Underhoull to the early settlement period. There are also some problems of interpretation in the functional division of the house. According to Small the eastern two-thirds was the dwelling area and the western end which was roughly paved and slightly raised was the byre. But in the other Scottish examples the byres were not raised and often had a door in the gable end. Furthermore, byres are not necessarily paved with stone. Bigelow notes the presence of an unbonded gable wall at the east end of Underhoull similar to the one at Sandwick and Jarlshof 6 (1987:29). In the latter two cases this wall was at the

byre end and conceivably could have been dismantled in order to clean out the byre, e.g. after overwintering of animals. This practice was known in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Shetland (Bigelow 1987:29). It would also allow the byre to be expanded or contracted as the size of the milk cow herd changed (Bigelow, personal communication). But at Underhoull this was the *east* gable leading to Small's dwelling area. In addition, Bigelow suggests the raised area in the west end interpreted by Small as a byre was actually an end dais. This seems to point to the *west* end being the dwelling end. If this interpretation is correct it indicates a later date for the Underhoull house as end daises are uniformly a later feature (see below). Underhoull also had annexes added to it, another apparently later feature. Finally, some of the finds also indicate a later date; e.g., baking plates (Small calls them "baking boards" [1966:244]) were found at Underhoull. As I noted in the previous chapter and will discuss in more detail below, these grooved steatite or schist baking plates appear after about AD 1100 in Norwegian sites. Therefore Underhoull must be considered a later settlement than Small suggested, no earlier than the eleventh century (for more detail see also Appendix 2 and Bigelow 1984).

Benches

The traditional long house or hall house usually had benches along the long walls in the dwelling area on either side of a long central hearth. Traces of these benches (such as fragmentary lines of stones marking their inner edges or even remains of their earth and stone fill) were found in several Norse structures in the Northern Isles: the houses from the Guardianship area on the Brough of Birsay, structures 10, 12 and 17 from Hunter's Brough sites, the dwelling house at Buckquoy, Houses 1, 6 and 7 from Jarlshof, two of the houses from Skail and from Westness, one of the fragmentary structures from Saevar Howe, and one of the houses from Pool all showed traces of side

benches or *paller*. Benches are known from the Norwegian material (e.g. at Ytre Moa), although the poor condition of many of the sites has probably obscured them in many cases. The Scottish examples span a large period of time from the initial settlement (Jarlshof 1) to the Late Norse examples (structures 10 and 12) from Hunter's excavations.

But in the Late Norse period we also see a new development, the introduction of end benches or daises. The clearest example of this is the house at Sandwick. As I mentioned above, Bigelow has suggested that the raised roughly paved area at the west end of the Underhoull house was also an end dais (1987:29). He has also pointed out the possibility that the mysterious structure at one end of House 6 at Jarlshof may have been an end dais. These all seem to date to at least the eleventh century if not later.

Such end daises or benches are known from medieval sites in Norway and Iceland and were mentioned in some sagas (see Chapter 6). Several examples of benches, apparently on three walls, were found in urban contexts at Gamlebyen in Oslo (Fett et al. 1989), at Bryggen in Bergen (Herteig 1969), and at Borgund (Herteig 1975; Sørheim 1990) to name a few examples. In these cases they were often built of wood with an inner earthen core. Fett claims that the point of these benches was to insulate the house against drafts (1989:74), but we should not forget possible social consequences of the internal arrangements of a house. But at least in Oslo these *moldbenker* seem to go out of use in the Late Middle Ages (Fett 1989:73), and the need for insulation certainly had not disappeared.

Corner Hearths

Another change which seems to occur at the same time as the introduction of end benches is the shift to the use of corner hearths instead of central hearths. This is also clearly demonstrated in the second phase of the house at Sandwick. The house at Da

Biggins also had a corner hearth and structure 17 on the Brough of Birsay may have had one, although the burn area did not seem to constitute a formal hearth. The plan of Underhoull does not include the artifact distributions and therefore is not detailed enough to indicate whether there was a partition of the dwelling area in the house. If there was, however, it is barely possible that the hearth along the north long wall was actually in a corner. In any case, it had been moved from the normal central position.

In Chapter 4 I discussed the introduction of corner hearths in Norway. This was a medieval development which can also be found in the medieval town material. At Gamlebyen in Oslo the benches were always found in buildings with corner hearths (Fett 1989:73) and these buildings were usually two-roomed *laftet* structures with wood floors (Fett 1989:124). Corner hearths dominate in the material from Bryggen in Bergen and have been found in Trondheim in eleventh and twelfth century contexts, not to mention in twelfth century Borgund, Tønsberg and Skien (Fett 1989:124; Herteig 1975:33).

In his detailed discussion of the hearths from Gamlebyen, Sørheim (1989) makes several interesting observations. He begins with the statement that a hearth can have three functions: giving light, warming the surroundings, or warming raw material (e.g. food preparation or industrial activity). We should not forget that a hearth may also serve an important social function as a focal point for interaction between individuals.

Sørheim (1989:143-44) also stresses the fact that in the material from Gamlebyen corner hearths are always found in two-room dwellings with wood floors, while free-standing or central hearths are found in buildings with earthen floors. In addition to providing light and warmth in these dwellings, it is likely that food was also cooked on them. Sørheim (1989:144) suggests the possibility that the form of the hearth may be

connected with the types of grains that were used in baking. In western Sweden, Norway, Iceland and the barley and oats regions of Great Britain, unleavened bread made from these grains was baked on stone plates over open hearths. The baking plates to be discussed below may have been used over these hearths. In the wheat and rye areas of southern Sweden, Denmark and northern Germany, on the other hand, leavened bread was baked in ovens. This could explain the lack of ovens in Gamlebyen and Sørheim proposes that specialist bakers in Oslo could have baked bread from imported rye and wheat for the Church and the elite, while the average person ate unleavened bread from home-grown grains.

While corner hearths were dominant in the medieval layers of Gamlebyen and other Norwegian towns, it is possible that they could have had far more prestige in the context of the Northern Isles, especially when combined with other features. It is striking that one of the few clear examples from the Isles, Da Biggins in Shetland, was found associated with a house with a wood floor and traces of wood walls, this in an area where significant amounts of wood for building material would have to have been imported. The implications of this will be discussed in more detail in more detail in Chapter 6.

Annexes

The addition of annexes attached to one of the long walls of a structure is clearly a later characteristic in Norse architecture in the Northern Isles. These additions are variously referred to as outshot rooms, outhouses and annexes. As Bigelow has noted (1987:29), some of these rooms were clearly intended for a specific purpose because they are equipped with drains and a paved floor. Whether they held small livestock, served as indoor privies, or had some other function, it was obviously important that these rooms have good drainage. There was often a second annex on the opposite side

of the entrance, but these had few well-preserved features and the artifact distributions are too scanty to be very informative about the function of these rooms.

Table 5.2 shows the structures in the Northern Isles which had annexes. Again, the house at Sandwick provides the clearest example of the annex with two rooms. Annexes were added to Underhoull and to Houses 1, 6 and 7 at Jarlshof; House 5 was built with an annex. In Orkney there are possible examples of annexes in structure 6b on the Brough of Birsay as well as in a later phase of House D in the Guardianship area. An annex was apparently added to the third house at Pool in a later phase and House 3 on Site 2 at Skail may have had an annex, although this is unclear from the available information.

house site	#	date	annex
Brough of Birsay Guardianship Area	D	Norse--9th c	yes--later phases
Brough of Birsay Site VII	6b	Late Norse	yes
Jarlshof, Shetland	2.2	mid-9th c	yes in phase 3
Jarlshof, Shetland	5	13th c	yes
Jarlshof, Shetland	7.6	12th/13th c	yes
Jarlshof, Shetland	7.7	13th c	yes
Pool, Sanday, Orkney	3	Norse--no later than 11th c	yes--later stage
Sandwick, Unst, Shetland	1	12th c	yes
Sandwick, Unst, Shetland	2	13th-14th c	yes
Skail, Deerness, Orkney	2.3	late 10th c?	yes?
Underhoull		2nd phase--11th c or later?	yes

Table 5.2: Houses in the Northern Isles with annexes.

The addition of annexes does not seem to be a common characteristic in Norwegian contexts, at least not in our material. There are several examples of lean-tos at the gable ends of Norwegian houses, however, perhaps equivalent to the 'porch' added to House 7 in the final Norse phase at Jarlshof. The traditional view has been that the Norwegian longhouse was broken up into several separate structures at this time. In

Chapter 4 I showed that this is not actually the case. However, outhouses may have been built separated from the dwellings and if they were built flimsily or of wood they would be almost impossible to find archaeologically.

Passages

In Chapter 4 I noted the appearance of the through passage or *gang* in several Norwegian houses from the medieval period. This is a feature which can be glimpsed in some of the Norse examples from the Northern Isles, for example in House 1 at Jarlshof in Phase 6 and in House 5, and at Sandwick. Structures 6a and 6b on the Brough both had opposing entrances in the long walls. Unfortunately, many of the sites in Orkney are not well enough preserved to determine the number and placement of entrances.

Bigelow has suggested a functional explanation for this arrangement since a through passage at the center of the house would allow good air circulation. As Bigelow (1987:31) states, "Although prejudicial to maintaining a warm dwelling, this arrangement would have permitted easy ventilation of accumulated smoke from peat fires." The passage may also have permitted winnowing of grain in barns under shelter, a technique used in the Northern Isles up to recent times (Bigelow 1987:31; Fenton 1978:372). However, in the best archaeological examples from Shetland the passage crosses the dwelling area as well as the annexes and the purpose of the annexes is unknown. The similarity to the pattern seen in some of the medieval Norwegian houses is striking, so we should also keep open the possibility of a connection between the two developments.

Use of Wood

In my discussion of the Norwegian houses I stressed the fact that the wood was used extensively in these structures even though we often find very little wood remaining during excavation. There was little sign of significant timber being used in

the Norse houses in the Northern Isles, but this does not preclude the possibility that it was present. The use of wood in the Northern Isles is far more significant than in Norway, however, since building timbers either had to be imported or salvaged from driftwood.

Few of the houses excavated so far in Orkney and Shetland show evidence of even the posts used to support the roof. For example, the only Jarlshof structure to have a number of post holes in a recognizable pattern was the parent farmstead, House 1. Here 19 post holes are shown on the plan with most of them lying in two parallel rows of posts as was common in the Norwegian houses. Komber was able to calculate the trestle quotient for House 1 and came up with 2.4, a value well within the range of Viking Period houses in Norway and Iceland (1989:140). Trestle quotients in this range indicate a turf roof with a low roof angle (see Chapter 4), a conclusion which certainly makes sense in Shetland.

In addition to this example from Jarlshof, there was evidence of posts in the C-structures in the Guardianship area on the Brough of Birsay. According to Cruden (1965:27), "The roofs were supported by double rows of upright posts approximately following the lines of the bowed wall face. The posts were set roughly but not exactly in pairs." No measurements were given for the distance between the posts in each row or between the two rows. The information that the rows were not paired seems to indicate that there was not a *grind* construction.

At Buckquoy there was evidence in the Norse dwelling house that one of the paving stones had been a foundation for a post used to support the roof. No other post holes were found, but Ritchie suggests on the basis of its position one third of the width into the house that there were two parallel rows of posts. Two post holes were found in the south half of House 2 at Jarlshof and these were also interpreted as part of two

parallel rows of posts. The two paired post holes found in House 6 were interpreted the same way. One of the Norse structures at Pool, however, had a single row of posts down the midline of the building supported on stones, not in post holes (Hunter 1988). The first phase at Sandwick also had a single line of posts down the midline of the building, but these were later covered with paving so the roofing system seems to have changed at some point (Bigelow 1987). At Underhoull two post holes were found, also on the center line of the building (Small 1966). In addition to saving timber this solution to the roofing problem would have freed up space in the house and divided the internal space into two rather than three sections. It would be interesting to have more well-dated examples in order to see if the single line of posts represents a later development in Norse architecture in the Northern Isles.

Before leaving the subject of posts and roof supports it would be well to consider the large number of structures with no visible post holes or stone post foundations. Hunter (1986) discussed the problem in connection with his excavations on the Brough of Birsay. With no evidence of vertical roof supports, it seems that the walls themselves must have taken over much of the load-bearing function. According to Hunter (1986:109), the estimated width of these structures was not great enough (only about 3 m) to require vertical supports. Therefore, the roof may have been carried on rafters which rested on the tops of the walls and which were connected by horizontal beams running above head height. Hunter estimates that the original wall height was about 1 m and that the pitched roof was built above the walls. The pitched roof would have required a central ridge beam running the length of the building to which the rafters were attached. But if these roofs were turf, the roof angle could not have been very great, a fact which has important implications for the amount of 'head room' in the house. It would be interesting to see an analysis of the various loads and forces

involved in such a roofing system, as Komber has produced for the Norwegian Iron Age houses, in order to see if such a reconstruction is possible. In any case, the most substantial and well-built structure from Hunter's excavations, structure 17, was too wide at 6 m for such a system to have been possible, but no signs of vertical supports were found.

Besides the problem of the use of wood as roof supports we might wonder if the Norse structures in the Northern Isles had timber walls inside the stone walls that are so obvious. We must not forget that in Faroe, an equally treeless environment to Shetland, medieval houses such as the one at Kirkjubøer were built of wood which had to be imported. In Iceland most of the turf houses were really timber structures with an outer wall of turf (Ágústsson 1982). There are few signs of timber in the houses discussed here, but the excavations at Da Biggins have produced clear evidence for a wood floor and internal timber walls. As I discuss in Appendix 2, Da Biggins was very likely a high status site. There are references to an estate on Papa Stour in the late thirteenth century which belonged to Duke Håkon (later Håkon V) of Norway. This estate remained in the hands of wealthy Norwegian families (and very often in the hands of women) even after the islands were pawned to Scotland in 1469. The site at Da Biggins certainly could have been part of this estate and the house may have contained the *stofa* where the argument between Thorvald Thoresson, the bailiff, and Ragnhild Simunsdatter over ducal rents took place.

Hamilton (1956:176) mentions that at the south end of House 5 at Jarlshof near the south gable a collection of iron nails embedded in wood and clay was found at floor level in the 1936 excavations. He suggests that this may indicate a superstructure built of timber with clay or wattle packing. Such evidence is extremely fragmentary, however.

I have already noted that timber houses (built using the *lafte* technique) were dominant in the medieval layers of Gamlebyen in Oslo. I also noted that these structures were usually two-roomed with a wood floor and a corner hearth. The partial house uncovered at Da Biggins had a wood floor and a corner hearth as well as a bench very like the *moldebenker* in twelfth-century Norway. This combination of features may well indicate that it was important in Shetland to demonstrate one's status by importing designs and materials from Norway. The artifacts also demonstrate close contact with Norway. Timber buildings were the norm in medieval Norway, but in treeless Shetland one can well imagine that they could make a powerful statement. Furthermore, high status buildings in Norway were built of wood well into the medieval period. For example, the first royal residence on Holmen in Bergen was built of wood and only replaced by a stone structure in the thirteenth century (Herteig 1975:21).

There is evidence that timber houses built from wood imported from Norway were known in Shetland through the Medieval Period. Brian Smith (1980) has found written references to "stock stove" houses, the name itself deriving from two Old Norse words, *stokkr* (a log of wood) and *stofa* (a room in a house). A nineteenth-century description of Shetland says that:

planks were cut in Norway of such a shape, as that they might form, when joined, proper habitations These were said to be constantly imported from the mother country in large, twelve oared boats, named 'Scudas.'

(Smith 1980:23)

These timber houses seem to have been confined to the wealthier farmers.

With all this in mind, future researchers working in Shetland and also Orkney should be aware of the possibility that timber walls may have existed inside the stone walls. It is unclear from most of the reports of excavated sites in the Northern Isles whether the excavators have been sufficiently aware of the practice in Norway and the

possibility that it could have been continued on a significant scale in the Northern Isles even though this would not 'make sense' to us economically.

Artifacts

So far I have mentioned the artifacts associated with the Norwegian and Scottish house sites only in passing. It is not within the scope of this project to produce a catalog of the finds from the approximately 150 structures mentioned, nor is there sufficient information from many of the sites on which to base detailed comparisons of use of space within structures. In most cases the exact find spots are unknown; it is doubtful in many cases that all the artifacts originated in the same cultural layer. Not all the artifacts were available for study in the various museums visited in connection with this project, either because they were on loan elsewhere, or the museum was in the process of moving its collections, or the artifacts were still in the hands of the excavator (sometimes 20 years after the end of the excavation). I also will not consider Norse finds from graves or stray finds. Because of these problems and because of the need to limit this project I will try to discuss the various find categories in the Norwegian and Scottish cases in a general way, giving a general impression of the variety (or lack thereof) and the possible significance of the major artifact groups.

There are some interesting differences between the finds from the average Norwegian site and the finds from the Scottish sites. In general the Norwegian houses produced few finds with little variety. While a house is occupied the floor will be cleaned regularly, precluding the build-up of material so useful in midden deposits. The most common groups were loom weights, spindle whorls, sherds from soapstone vessels, fishing weights or line sinkers, whetstones and knives. Medieval sites also had imported ceramics and soapstone or schist baking plates (*baksteheller* or *steikeheller*). In a few cases bone combs were found (e.g. at Moseidet and Hovden). Jewelry was

rarely found (e.g. at Ytre Moa and Arstad). So the most common artifacts are objects that do not change form or style quickly and they are therefore difficult to use as dating indicators.

The Scottish finds produced more examples of decorated objects more sensitive to changes in style, although the house floors here were also fairly poor in artifactual remains. For example, many bone pins were found at Buckquoy and at Jarlshof, along with a number of combs from several different sites. These can be used more productively in dating various deposits, although there is the problem of how long such objects were used before final deposition. Most of the finds from Jarlshof came from the stratified midden deposits, but they still assist us in building a chronology of the occupation there. One interesting group of artifacts found at several of the Scottish sites, but only in one case in Norway, was the gaming boards and associated gaming pieces; such finds are known from medieval urban contexts in Norway (see below).

However, I am not as interested in the dating potential of these artifacts as I am in what they reveal about cultural interaction, both between the Picts and the Norse settlers and between these Norse settlers and their homeland. As will be seen below, there are some very interesting conclusions indicated by this material. First, however, I will discuss the 'domestic' artifacts beginning with the soapstone vessels, loom weights and spindle whorls.

Soapstone

Soapstone or steatite was widely used in Viking Norway, which was basically aceramic. Soapstone is a soft, easily worked stone which has a high talc content. When scratched and rubbed the surface feels soapy, hence the name. Soapstone is a very good material for use in cooking vessels because it can withstand heat without cracking and is more durable than ceramics, it has superior thermal properties and it does not taste and

taint the food being cooked, something which coarse pottery may do. However, the wholesale switch from pottery to steatite in the Viking Age also indicates a change in attitude towards the two materials and the way in which their advantages and disadvantages were perceived (Butler 1991:229). Soapstone is readily available in Norway and Shetland, but had to be imported to Orkney. In both Shetland and Orkney, however, the appearance of soapstone artifacts on a site indicates the presence of Norse settlers since the pre-Norse population did not exploit the soapstone resources in Shetland to any significant degree. The issue of perception seems particularly important in the case of Orkney (and Faroe, where steatite also does not occur naturally).

There are two main groups of soapstone vessels, bowl shaped and bucket shaped. Bowl shaped vessels (of the type R729) are known from the entire Viking period and were possibly produced in the Merovingian Period as well. Different types of bowl shaped vessels were used throughout the medieval period. Vessels smooth inside and outside were produced in both the Viking and Medieval Periods, but they seem to have become more thin-walled as time went on.

Siri Myrvoll Lossius has identified four broad classes of soapstone vessels in the material from medieval Borgund. Three of these were bowl shaped and one bucket shaped with straight sides and a marked transition to the base. This last group apparently appeared at the end of the Middle Ages and continued in use into more modern times (Myrvoll Lossius 1979). In some cases the quarries from which the soapstone was taken have been identified. Also, in Norway there seem to be distinct distributions for some of the vessel types. For example, Myrvoll Lossius's type C vessels have a distinctly east Norwegian distribution while type A was predominant in western Norway.

However, Buttler has found the Shetland material less suitable for detailed typological studies than the Norwegian material because in general it is not as well made. It also seems that while the Norwegian steatite industry included a significant professional element, the steatite industry in Shetland was mostly composed of domestic quarrying (Buttler 1989:203). The Shetland sherds are often coarse inside and out so attributes such as rim form and wall angle are not useful in building stylistic groups (Buttler 1989:198). Instead, Hamilton (1956) grouped the Jarlshof sherds into groups such as "small round", "large round", "oval", "rectangular", and "handled". The bucket shaped vessels from Norway are not found in the Shetland material, but in Shetland a rectangular vessel type appeared in the Late Norse Period. Hamilton (1956) identified a rough chronology for the Jarlshof material: the earlier vessels were small and round, some having handles. In Phase 5 (late eleventh century or later) rectangular vessels were introduced. Large round vessels were present through all Norse phases.

At this point provenience studies on the Shetland material have not been successful. According to Buttler (1989:204), the basic mineralogies and major element chemistries of the Shetland steatites are very similar while the petrology and trace element chemistry vary as much within one source as among them all. He suggests that the use of reference specimens from the different quarries, comparing the overall appearance of the rock, will be more productive. In the future, then, it may be possible to trace the movement of steatite from the various sources, both in Norway and in Shetland. It would be particularly interesting to know where the steatite in Orkney and Faroe originated.

Soapstone was also used very often for loom weights, spindle whorls and line sinkers or fishing weights. In fact, these objects were sometimes made from sherds of vessels which had broken. This is especially obvious where the outside of the pot and

therefore one side of the new object was covered with soot. In the medieval period soapstone was also used for baking plates.

Loom weights were used with the upright warp-weighted loom. They were sometimes carefully made, sometimes very rough (e.g. reused sherds from broken vessels). Four broad categories of loom weights were identified in the material from Gamlebyen (Rui 1991), but the difference in shape does not seem to have been significant. The weight of the loom weights was more important, although the tension could be adjusted by changing the number of threads attached to one weight. In Norway most loom weights were made of steatite. Steatite loom weights predominated in the early Norse phases at Jarlshof, but were later replaced at both Jarlshof and Da Biggins by weights made from beach pebbles, perhaps because of the lack of a nearby source. Loom weights in Norway were sometimes decorated, for example with an incised cross (e.g. at Liset).

Large numbers of pagan graves are lacking in the Northern Isles. However, in Norway the majority of loom weights found in Viking Period graves were in women's graves. Loom weights and textile production in general seem to be connected with female activities in the Viking Age. Professional textile production in the Middle Ages is generally accepted to have used the horizontal loom (which did not need loom weights) and was apparently dominated by men (Rui 1991:127). The horizontal loom may have been introduced into Norway, at least Oslo, as early as the end of the twelfth century. At the same time the number of loom weights in Gamlebyen decreased. If the finds in Gamlebyen are representative, it is possible that all weaving disappeared from the home in medieval Oslo to be taken over by professional weavers. The Scottish sites seem to indicate continued use of the warp-weighted loom throughout the Norse Period. Also,

the medieval Norwegian rural sites considered here also produced loom weights (e.g. Høybøen).

Fishing weights or line sinkers are sometimes very difficult to distinguish from loom weights. For example, many of the weights found at the coastal fishing sites in Norway (e.g. Risøya) could easily be classified as loom weights if their fishing context were not so clear. However, weights with more than one hole are clearly not loom weights, since there is no need for more than one suspension hole in loom weights. Line sinkers sometimes have two holes. They may also have grooves where the rope held the weight. These weights were often, but not exclusively, made of steatite. As with loom weights, line sinkers were sometimes made out of soapstone sherds from broken vessels.

Several of the Norse sites in the Northern Isles seem to indicate increased exploitation of marine resources in the Late Norse Period. Hamilton noted at Jarlshof that line and netsinkers were very common in the later phases, unlike the early ones, and concluded that the Shetland economy had undergone a great change so that fishing now played a dominant role (Hamilton 1956:94). At Sandwick Bigelow (1985) set out to test this hypothesis through a thorough environmental sampling of the site, a technique not used on Norse sites in the Northern Isles until relatively recently. His results support the idea that the fishing industry intensified in the Later Norse period, although there was still a mixed subsistence economy. Line sinkers were also found inside the house where they were apparently carved near the fire (Bigelow 1985:119). These sinkers were intended for a specialized form of fishing in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Increased exploitation of marine resources is also seen in the Later Norse Period on the Brough of Birsay as evidenced by the quantity of fish bone recovered (Hunter

1986:149) and especially clearly at the Norse site at Freswick in Caithness which I have not included in this study (Batey 1987:313; Morris et al. 1992).

Spindle whorls were also common finds on both the Norwegian and Scottish sites. Very often they are made out of soapstone (sometimes reused sherds), although other kinds of stone may be used as well as bone and ceramics and even lead. Occasionally the spindle whorls are decorated, although in Norway this is more common in whorls from the Early Iron Age (Høigård Hofseth 1985). There were a few decorated whorls among the Norwegian material considered here, e.g., from Liset, Fjetland and Hovden. Several of the whorls from Norse levels at Jarlshof were decorated along with a number of stray finds in both Orkney and Shetland which may or may not be Norse.

There are a number of possible shapes for the whorls and these may have a broad chronological significance. These include flat with straight sides, flat with rounded sides, cylindrical, half spherical, half spherical with a narrower base, conical and double conical. The rounded shapes tend to be earlier than the flat ones (Molaug 1991:111; Høigård Hofseth 1985). Unfortunately a wide variety of terms has been used to describe spindle whorls in both Norway and Scotland, so direct comparison based on published descriptions can be difficult.

More important than form is probably weight. For example, heavier whorls would more likely be used for spinning heavy yarn or for winding while lighter whorls would be used for more delicate spinning. It is possible that an analysis of spindle whorl weights combined with paleoenvironmental data could indicate what types of fibers were most common in a particular region. Such paleoenvironmental data is beginning to be collected recently in the Northern Isles, but would also be important for Norway.

In connection with this project a number of the whorls from the Scottish and Norwegian sites were weighed (not, unfortunately, those from Jarlshof). There was sometimes a great range of weights on a single site. For example, the 11 spindle whorls from Ytre Moa ranged in weight from 9.5 g to 40 g. Six whorls from Underhoull were located and these ranged in weight from 12.8 g to 55.4 g. The spindle whorls from Gamlebyen showed a standard distribution for whorls weighing under 40 g and it is possible the same would be true for the Scottish material. More detailed work should be undertaken in this area.

Like loom weights, spindle whorls are generally connected to a 'female' activity, textile production. In English we refer to the 'distaff' side while in Norwegian the expression is *spinnesiden* ('spinning side'). This concept dates at least back to the Viking Age and appears in *Gulatingsloven* (Høigård Hofseth 1990:113). Spindle whorls begin to appear in Norwegian graves around AD 300 and perhaps had a symbolic value connected with fertility and the sun. Furthermore, spindle whorls produce thread which is a symbol of continuity so it is logical that they would be connected to women who carry new life and ensure continuity.

Spindle whorls on house sites in Norway are usually taken to show that women were present and active on that site and the lack of spindle whorls in the coastal sites has contributed to their interpretation as male-oriented fishing stations. Recent work on the numerous spindle whorls from Western Norway in the Viking Age indicates that the fine woolen cloth popular in that period may have been produced in that area. As Dommasnes remarks (1991:71), "If so, women in Sogn had a product very much sought after in international trade, and the concentration of female graves in areas where imported goods are common...becomes immediately comprehensible." It remains to be

seen whether textile production in the Northern Isles was highly organized or confined to domestic production.

Baking plates comprise the final group of artifacts generally made from soapstone, although they could also be made from schist or *klebersteinskifer* ("soapstone schist") which is not as soft as normal soapstone. Very often the actual material is not specified in the literature, although schist baking plates were thinner than soapstone ones (Bigelow, personal communication). I will consider baking plates as a group here and not separate them on the basis of stone type. Baking plates were generally 0.5-2.0 cm thick, grooved on one or both sides, and rim fragments show that they were round, 30-50 cm in diameter. They were apparently used in baking flatbread. As I have noted a number of times already, baking plates appeared beginning around AD 1100 in Norwegian towns (Martens 1973:33; Myhre 1980:134) and were still present at Gamlebyen in layers dating to the seventeenth century (Weber 1984). Of course, the towns themselves did not start to grow until the eleventh century, so one could argue that baking plates could be present at an earlier stage on other sites. Still, the Iron Age sites where baking plates have been found usually have other indications of later occupation as well, either in features of the building or other artifact types present. The numbers of baking plates in the Norwegian town sites indicate the presence of a large industry to produce them. Baking plates are also present on Late Norse sites in Shetland (Jarlshof, Da Biggins and Sandwick) and in Faroe. To date only five baking plate fragments have been found in Orkney, however, and four of these came from the site at Pool.

Birthe Weber has studied the baking plates from Gamlebyen and medieval Trondheim. One of the major production areas appears to be the soapstone quarries in Hardanger. In the Trondheim material local stone was used early in the Middle Ages,

but imports from Kvinneherad, Hardanger became important in the High Middle Ages and more recent times (Weber 1989:20). The same source was apparently exploited by the population in Oslo. To date we do not know if baking plates were imported to Shetland from Norway in any great numbers. Evidence for local production comes in the form of a fragment found on one of the spoil heaps at Cunningsburgh (Buttler 1989:202). It is also unknown whether the soapstone baking plates in Orkney and Faroe were imported from Shetland or Norway.

In my discussion of corner hearths above, I discussed the possibility that the corner hearths were related to the kinds of grain available for baking. These grains could be used for baking unleavened bread on baking plates. The sudden appearance of these baking plates in the Middle Ages gives the distinct impression that a new method of food production was suddenly introduced, since before this time only soapstone vessels are found. (Of course, there were undoubtedly significant numbers of wooden containers and utensils which have not survived.) Food and its preparation is an aspect of culture which is usually deeply embedded and resistant to change, so the widespread introduction of a new food technology in Norway and the Norse settlements in the North Atlantic is certainly significant.

It is possible that baking plates may be diagnostic of trade in grains.¹ Medieval Norway required large imports of grain beginning in the Middle Ages because climate deterioration made grain agriculture even more difficult than it had been. Eventually barley and rye had to be imported as well as wheat (Holmsen 1977:296). There were also shortages of grain in Shetland. In the sixteenth century summer could be entirely without bread if cereal stocks were low (Fenton 1978:333). Supplies had to be supplemented by imports of grain from Orkney and Scotland in exchange for which

¹Gerry Bigelow pointed out this possibility to me.

Shetland traded fish, milk products and textiles. Orkney, on the other hand, exported grain, particularly bere (a kind of barley), to both Shetland and Norway in the eighteenth century (Fenton 1978:333-34). It would be interesting to know how far back in time this state of affairs originated. If the distribution of baking plates is associated with grain imports, it would at least partially explain their scarcity in Orkney.

Bone and Antler Artifacts

I will now return briefly to two groups of artifacts which reveal interesting possibilities for the Pictish-Norse transition (see also Chapter 2 for discussion of Pictish-Norse interface). Both combs and bone pins have been found in Pictish and Norse contexts in the Northern Isles so it is possible to identify Pictish styles before the Norse settlement and their continuation in otherwise Norse cultural layers. Furthermore, combs from the Later Norse sites can be compared with combs from dated contexts in the medieval Norwegian towns.

The finds from the Buckquoy excavation were the first to really suggest the possibility of long-term interaction between the Pictish natives and the Norse settlers. Animal headed bone pins made in the Pictish style, with the animal head at an angle to the length of the pin rather than a continuation of it, were found in Norse cultural layers as late as Phase 5 (Ritchie 1977). Double-sided combs of native style were also found in these Norse layers. Farrer's nineteenth-century excavation at Saevar Howe also produced several native Pictish-type combs in Norse layers.

This impression of interaction was strengthened with Curle's work on the artifacts from the excavations on the Brough of Birsay 1934-74 (Curle 1982). Curle classified the combs from the Brough into two general categories, double-sided and single-sided combs. The double-sided combs could be divided into two sub-categories, Types A and B. The Type A combs were found exclusively in Pictish layers and the

Type B combs only in the lower Norse horizons. The Type A combs had graduated teeth leaving a D-shaped zone at each end of the comb which was often decorated. According to Curle (1982:22), no empty space was left undecorated. This type of comb was often found on the same sites as single-sided high backed combs and both are depicted on Class I Pictish symbol stones. Their presence on the symbol stones, along with their distribution on Pictish sites in Scotland and in Ireland, suggest that they are native Pictish combs.

The Type B combs are longer than the Type A combs, their teeth are not graduated and do not usually extend to the end of the comb, there is a narrow vertical band at the end of the comb, their connecting plates are not bevelled and their decoration is less ornate. Curle writes (1982:57) that "It seems appropriate to describe them as native in the sense that they cannot be claimed as Pictish, nor are they imported." This type of comb is represented on Class II Pictish symbol stones which were Christian, but because they have not been found in purely Pictish contexts, Curle apparently hesitates to define them as Pictish. Still, they are definitely not Norse.

The single-sided high-backed combs were found in both Pictish and Norse horizons, but they are known from other sites in northern Scotland and can be classified as Pictish. The decoration on the back sometimes consisted of groups of four perforations arranged in a diamond shape. The connecting plate was sometimes decorated with incised diagonal lines and/or dots-and-circles.

In addition to these, three single-sided Norse combs were found on the Brough, all with iron rivets. The upper side of the comb was curved and the connecting plate decorated, in one case with a dot-and-circle design forming an 'S' lying on its side. Similar combs are known from Hedeby, Dorestad and Birka, and Ambrosiani (1981:25) refers to them as Type A2 combs, dating them to the ninth century. Norse hog-backed

combs with animal head terminals were found at Jarlshof, Saevar Howe and on the Brough of Birsay Road, Area 1. These also date to the ninth century with other examples coming from Birka and the Oseberg ship burial. A keel-backed single-sided comb (ARC 65493) with an openwork decoration on the back and copper alloy rivets was found on the surface at Sandwick in 1960. Similar combs were found in medieval town excavations in Oslo from levels older than 1248 and also in the Bryggen excavations in Bergen. In the latter case, no chronology was available to date these combs at the time of study (August 1991).

Jarlshof, Sandwick and Skaill all produced Scandinavian comb types from later periods.² One diagnostic feature for later combs is the shift from using iron rivets to using copper alloy rivets which may leave a green stain. The copper alloy rivets are usually more closely spaced so more of them are used in a single comb. Also, the backs of the later combs are straighter and narrower. Also included in the medieval combs are examples of short double-sided combs with finer teeth on one side than the other, fluted connecting plates and closely spaced copper alloy rivets (sometimes in two parallel rows).

The 'green comb' from Skaill with one animal head terminal surviving and looking inward, two rows of copper alloy rivets on its connecting plates, and a zig-zag straight back with many perforations was very like a comb in a display at the Bryggen Museum in Bergen (# 77163). Several of the combs from Sandwick have parallels in the material from medieval Bryggen in Bergen and from medieval Trondheim (see Flodin 1989, figures 17, 18, 30 in appendix). Combs from the later phases at Jarlshof

²The combs from Skaill, Sandwick and Bergen have not yet been published, so illustrations cannot be included and the comparisons are based on personal observation. The Jarlshof combs were not available for study when I was in Edinburgh in June 1991, so these comparisons are based on the descriptions, drawings and photographs in Hamilton 1956.

included types with copper alloy/bronze rivets, single-sided combs with narrow stright backs and short double-sided combs (Hamilton 1956).

In Chapter 2 I discussed Birthe Weber's recent work on the Pictish and Norse combs from the Northern Isles (1992). She showed that some of the Pictish types from pre-Norse layers (i.e. Curle's Type A combs) were made out of reindeer antler, a resource which was not available naturally in the Northern Isles and which must have been imported.

One interesting group of finds remains--the gaming boards. I mentioned the gaming boards found at Buckquoy which were thought to belong to the Norse *hnefetafl* tradition. McLees (1990) recently analyzed the gaming pieces and boards found in the excavations of medieval Trondheim and provides a useful description of the possible games represented archaeologically. According to him (1990:25), *hnefetafl* is a game which may well go back to the fourth century and which may be a derivative of the Roman game *ludus latruncularum*. It is a battle game which requires skill and not the use of dice. There are two opposing sides on a board or *tafl* which has an uneven number of cells. A small force defends a single specially-empowered piece (the *hnefi*) and starts from a central position, trying to reach the edge of the playing area. The larger surrounding force attempts to impede and capture the *hnefi*, trying to enclose it at the edge of the board. The game is referred to in the sagas and was clearly a noble pursuit worthy of the gods. For example, according to Earl Rognvald of Orkney (c. 1125) it was one of the necessary accomplishments of a superior life (McLees 1990:25).

There were variants of the game. For example, the size of the board and the number of pieces could vary, although the balance between the opposing sides was constant (2:1). The boards could be 18 by 18 cells, 13 by 13, 11 by 11, 9 by 9, or 7 by 7. The boards from Buckquoy were 7 by 7 and made of stone, not wood. A possible

stone gaming board was found at Jarlshof (Hamilton 1956, pl XXXI), and fragments of gaming boards were found at Underhoull (Small 1966:244) and at a Norse site on the north tip of Unst called Skaw.³ Another fragment of a steatite gaming board was found at the Sandwick North site which lies north of the excavated house on the beach at Sandwick. This board was very formally incised. The site itself has not been fully excavated, but test pits did not produce any pottery or baking plates so it may be earlier than the twelfth-fourteenth century site to the south (Bigelow pers. comm). Accompanying some of these finds were gaming pieces. At Underhoull these consisted of serpentine pebbles. A gaming piece was also found at Jarlshof, this one a piriform bone piece. A round flat bone playing piece was found in the medieval farmstead there (Hamilton 1956:1930). Gaming pieces are also mentioned in one of the preliminary reports from Da Biggins (Crawford 1985:151).

In Orkney a bone gaming piece made from a femur head was found on the Brough (Curle 1982:75). Also found were part of a whalebone gaming board with incised lines and perforations at the junctions as well as a piriform gaming piece of antler (Curle 1982:110). Both these finds came from the middle Norse horizon and both came from the area around the church; in fact, the gaming piece came from under one of the stone seats in the northeast corner of the church (Curle 1982:17, 89). Hunter also found a gaming piece on the Brough (1986:195) and 25 bone gaming pieces were found in a man's grave at Westness (Kaland 1973:96). Possible stone gaming pieces were found at Skaill as well, but gaming boards have not turned up except for the ones at Buckquoy and the whalebone fragment on the Brough.

Gaming boards and pieces are interesting because they let us glimpse, however fuzzily, the leisure activities of the people we are studying. As I mentioned above, the

³This site was dug by an Air Force officer and the artifacts are in the Shetland Museum. The artifacts are numbered, but apparently no records survive.

game of *hnefetafl* was considered to be a noble pastime, probably played by both men and women, and according to McLees (1990:174) "was undoubtedly a popular pastime in status-conscious warrior circles." Evidence for this game is found in eleventh and twelfth-century contexts in Trondheim and, again following McLees (1990:174), "their presence among the first generations forming this incipient urban community argues for a strong measure of continuity of old customs..." The gaming boards and pieces from Orkney may well stem from elite contexts, although in the case of Buckquoy this status is only suggested because of its proximity to the Brough of Birsay. In Shetland, however, two and probably three non-elite sites have produced gaming pieces and boards (Underhoull, North Sandwick and Skaw). However, their presence in both places demonstrates yet again a strand of cultural continuity with the homeland.

In Norway *hnefetafl* was replaced by new games in the second half of the twelfth century as society there became increasingly complex with the growth of towns and Church and State power. In the later twelfth and thirteenth centuries, games from the Continent-- tables and chess--found their way to Norway, and in the thirteenth century there was "an increasing receptiveness to impulses and fashions from abroad evident among the local [Trondheim] populace...it may well be that the popularity and breadth of game-playing is a concomitant of increased economic interaction and security, political stability and a more relaxed, leisured attitude to life" (McLees 1990:181).

Gambling and games of chance were apparently rife in thirteenth-century Norway if one is to believe the town laws. And I have already mentioned the Lewis chess pieces (Chapter 2 note 2). Chess is usually seen as a high-status pastime, although it may have attained wider popularity in Iceland. Recently drawings of an ivory piece very similar to the Lewis pieces and found in nineteenth-century excavations of the twelfth-century St. Olav's church in Trondheim were rediscovered. This was a

queen and it was apparently produced in the same workshop as the Lewis pieces, possibly even in Trondheim (McLees and Ekroll 1990). The ivory may have been obtained via trade with Greenland. Commercial relations between Iceland/Greenland and twelfth-thirteenth century Trondheim are demonstrated through the wooden rune-inscribed mercantile identification tags found in Trondheim (Hagland 1986). These close commercial connections may well have facilitated the spread of chess to Iceland (McLees 1990:180). We do not yet have archaeological evidence for when and if these changes reached the Northern Isles, but they did lie on the route west. However, urban development in the North Atlantic colonies lagged far behind developments in Norway and especially the rest of Europe.

Paleoeconomic Data

Until recently bones and botanical remains were not collected routinely on Norse sites in the Northern Isles. Today we have such data from Buckquoy, Saevar Howe, Hunter's work on the Brough of Birsay and Sandwick. Although bone was collected at Jarlshof there was no sieving so fish bone is severely underrepresented. The data from Skail and Pool have not yet been published, although the preliminary reports are very interesting. For example, it appears from the data recovered at Pool that, "As far as the overall agricultural picture is concerned, the 'traditional' farming methods normally associated with Orkney life already seem to be in place by the time of the supposed Norse arrival" (Hunter et al. 1992:133).

In her BA dissertation for University College London, Rachel Harray (1990) surveyed the available material from Pictish sites in an attempt to reconstruct the Pictish economy. According to existing data the Picts operated a subsistence economy with pastoral farming forming the basic resource for food (Harray 1990: 53). Because of the lack of paleobotanical work it is not possible to estimate the importance of arable farming

to the economy. However, in the Viking Period bere/barley, oats and flax were all cultivated and probably played an important role in the economy. Animal husbandry patterns seem to differ very little between the two periods, so it may also be that cultivation practices were similar as well, although flax appears to be a Norse introduction (Hunter 1987). Harray (1990:53) argues that this similar response to the environment indicates a peaceful interaction between Pict and Viking. However, the Norse settlers seem to have been more efficient at utilizing marine resources (fish, sea birds), and as I have noted above, at some sites they seem to have turned to commercial fishing in the Late Norse Period (e.g. Sandwick, Freswick). Still, as Harray points out, the evidence for metal-working among the Picts indicates that something more than a subsistence economy was operating and that the Picts enjoyed a measure of material wealth. Much more work needs to be done on bone and botanical material from Pictish and Norse sites in the Northern Isles before we can reconstruct the economies of these peoples with any degree of certainty.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the information to be gleaned from the house sites excavated in Orkney and Shetland. I have tried to pick out the important developments and relate them to contemporary developments in Norway discussed in Chapter 4, while descriptions of the individual sites are included in Appendix 2. I have also surveyed the kinds of artifacts recovered from house sites in both Norway and the Northern Isles and I have included some comparisons with the results of medieval town excavations in Norway in order to provide some perspective on the Scottish material.

It is clear that some of the same stylistic changes were present in both areas, although the data are still too fragmentary for final conclusions to be drawn. In Shetland in particular we see the introduction of the corner hearth, end dais, annexes and through

passage or *gang* just as in Norway. Bigelow points out that there was a regularity of layout from site to site throughout the North Atlantic settlements. He goes on to note that:

...the similarities between Jarlshof and Sandwick are greater than one might expect *a priori*, considering their geographical separation and the differing scale and duration of their occupations. (Bigelow 1985:115)

Bigelow (1987) has suggested climatic reasons to explain some of the developments in vernacular architecture in Shetland, for example the need for strong, warm and wind-resistant houses built of stone, turf, earth, peat and driftwood. The faunal material from Sandwick includes a majority of cattle bones from very young calves indicating milk production was being maximized (Bigelow 1987:33). The material from Jarlshof indicates the same development, although not quite as clearly. Bigelow (1987, personal communication) believes that the longhouse in Shetland was a way to keep the milk cows warm⁴, and therefore increase their milk production in a wet and cold climate, and to keep them under maximum control. Of course, environmental explanations do not preclude the existence of other complementary and equally relevant explanations.

In his interesting discussion of vernacular architecture in Shetland Bigelow (1987) makes several important points. He has focused on house plans of vernacular architecture because, he argues, basic household economies are "revealed in the placement, design and habitation debris of peasant or urban worker housing" (Bigelow 1987:23). As I have noted previously, Bigelow divides the Scandinavian settlement in Shetland into two periods, a Viking Period c. AD 800-1100 and a Late Norse Period c. AD 1100-1500. Hamilton first observed changes in architecture and material culture in the eleventh and twelfth centuries at Jarlshof (Phase 5) and more recent excavations at

⁴In general, keeping cows inside through the winter increases the danger of disease. However, given Shetland's damp and cool winters, the advantages of keeping the cows warm inside may have outweighed the dangers of infection (Michael Scott, DVM, personal communication).

Sandwick and Papa Stour have confirmed that these were general changes throughout the islands.

However, Bigelow also claims that the original parent farmstead at Jarlshof was a 'hallhouse' very similar to the "primary farm dwellings that existed elsewhere in the Norse North Atlantic" (Bigelow 1987: 26). As I showed in Chapter 4, there was actually a variety of house types in use in Norway at this time and the same may be true of other parts of the Norse world. To point repeatedly to the site at Oma as several excavators have done (e.g. Hamilton 1956:94; Small 1966) is to give a misleading impression of the situation in Norway as we know it from the archaeological record.

The artifactual material also indicates continued connections between Norway and Shetland well into the medieval period. In both Orkney and Shetland we see the reuse of specific building sites over centuries. In Orkney recent work indicates the presence of Norse settlers early in the ninth century (e.g. Buckquoy, Saevar Howe). In Shetland, however, there is only one possible early structure, House 1 at Jarlshof. Underhoull was originally dated to the ninth/tenth century, but several features of the building and finds there indicate a later date, and the dating of Jarlshof has also been criticized. Bigelow (1992) recently pointed out that it is quite possible that the history of Norse settlement in Orkney and Shetland was very different. The fact that there were early settlers in Orkney does not mean that there had to be settlers at the same time in Shetland. We must not forget that Orkney is much more fertile than Shetland. Jarlshof could simply have been an early outpost situated at a strategic point in the islands on the way south to Orkney and the Western Isles. Supporting this notion is the fact that no pagan Norse graves have yet been discovered in Shetland (Bigelow 1992:10). If there was such a difference in the *landnám* between Orkney and Shetland, it is also quite possible that the interaction between Pict and Norse populations could have followed a

different path in Shetland. To date all the artifactual evidence for interaction between the two populations comes from Orkney.

In the following chapters I will attempt to tie all this material together in a coherent whole. I will supplement the archaeological data with historical and saga evidence and try to view it all through the theoretical framework introduced in Chapter 3. I will also attempt to compare the development of the Norse society in Orkney and Shetland and the various cultural interactions at work with the situation in two other contemporary areas of Norse settlement.

Chapter 6

The Norse Settlement in the Northern Isles and the Non-Archaeological Evidence

Before going any further it will be helpful to review some of the points I have made so far. In Chapter 1 I described the interdisciplinary approach I intended to use in this project in studying the interaction between Norse settlers in the Northern Isles and the Pictish natives on the one hand and the Norse settlers and Norway on the other. In Chapter 2 I presented what is known about the Pictish-Norse interface and I have now presented the archaeological evidence currently available from house sites in Norway and the Northern Isles from the Viking and Norse/Medieval Periods. I will now return for a moment to some theoretical issues raised in Chapter 3 in order to set the stage for my discussion of the written sources and the evidence they contain for social interaction between the Norse settlers and the Norwegian homeland.

In Chapter 3 I discussed my justification for using houses as a key into studying social structure and interaction. As I noted there, the house is a very important locale providing the setting for much of the interaction of day-to-day life. In turn, much of day-to-day life is routinized; that is, it has an habitual, taken-for-granted character whose familiar styles and forms of conduct both support and are supported by a sense of ontological security, the feeling that things really are as they seem (Giddens 1984:374). Giddens does not deal specifically with the material world in his structuration theory, but as I discussed in Chapter 3, the material world must be incorporated into this theory particularly if archaeologists are to be able to use it. The material world acts as a storage of cultural resources and, according to Barrett (1988:8), "acts as a complex series of *locales* within which meaningful and authoritative forms of discourse can be sustained." Locales, such as the house, will both structure and be structured by practice and,

following Giddens (1984: 118), they provide for much of the 'fixity' underlying institutions.

In Chapters 4 and 5 I demonstrated that while there was more variety in house plans in the Viking and Medieval Periods in Norway than is generally acknowledged, certain trends can be identified and followed in the material from the Northern Isles, particularly Shetland. This continuity in architectural styles and spatial organization along with the continuity in artifact assemblages indicates a continuity in social practices as well. Unfortunately the archaeological evidence was not detailed enough to tackle the problem of regionalization within the locale of the house in much detail, although possible room divisions were discussed. All is not lost, however, because we have more than just the archaeological material. We also have the material included in the medieval Icelandic sagas and the medieval laws and documents.

From these sources it is possible to add to the picture of Norse society and social interactions within it, interactions which were often face-to-face encounters which took place within the locale of the house. Further, according to Giddens (1984:89):

Social relations are certainly involved in the structuring of interaction but are also the main 'building blocks' around which institutions are articulated in system integration. Interaction depends upon the positioning of individuals in time-space contexts of activities. Social relations concern this positioning of individuals within a 'social space' of symbolic categories and ties.

Barrett and Foster (1991:47) have sounded a similar theme but from an archaeological perspective:

It was out of those people's [i.e. the people we are attempting to study] expectations about their world, employed and monitored through their actions upon that world, that the institutions of the social system were maintained. Those expectations were structured by understanding the forms of authority upon which people drew and to which they submitted in their actions, and the range of material resources which were similarly

understood and available for their use. All discourse between people is situated within a 'region' of time-space, and in pre-modern societies that region was one of face-to-face 'co-presence'.

They go on to stress the importance of studying localised strategies of social reproduction, even when dealing with such apparently uniform systems as the Roman Empire.

Social relations within the Northern Isles and between them and the 'outside' will be the focus of this chapter. From the saga accounts of face-to-face encounters we can proceed to evidence for interaction over time and space, for example between the elites of Orkney and Norway over the period of the earldom. Much of this entailed the building and maintenance of alliances, often through marriage. But the spatial extent of the contacts of other levels of society can also be glimpsed and these are not coterminous with those of the elite. All this interaction must be seen in its historical context, however, and at the end of this chapter I will attempt to provide the political background for the interaction networks described in the following pages.

The Sagas

For most people in Viking society the household was the primary focus of what we might think of as increasingly larger concentric circles of social space--the house, the cultivated farm, the farm outside the wall, the district and so on. Individuals participated in a number of fields of discourse of varying spatial and temporal extent, for example food production, food preparation, religious rites, gender relations, etc., which intersected with one another in varying ways. The Icelandic sagas rarely address such issues directly, but they can serve as a kind of ethnography for the researcher. Norse society at the dawn of the Viking Age was a heroic society in which the warrior and poet were both honored. Generosity and gift-giving were very important and the bonds between people were personal ones. Still, Viking society was governed by laws and to

be outside the law was to be outside the society itself. We must remember, however, that the written sources such as the sagas and skaldic poetry represent the world of only a very small portion of this society, the elite.

The Icelandic sagas are not usually interested in reporting the mundane activities of everyday life except insofar as they advanced the action in the sagas. Houses are rarely described, although they are of course mentioned in the many instances of the occupants being incinerated within. Interior layout is also difficult to discern from the brief descriptions included when relating action taking place within the house. Still, there are hints here and there about the general layout of these houses and even about the meaning of certain areas. For example, in Chapter 16 of *Orkneyinga Saga* Thorkel Fosterer gives a feast for Earl Einar at Sandwick (Skail?) as part of a settlement between the two of them.¹ Einar, in turn, is to give a feast for Thorkel. The feast was held in "a great hall with a door at either end" [*þar var mikill skáli ok dyrr á báðum endum*]. Not surprisingly Thorkel suspected treachery when it was time for all to leave for Einar's, so he delayed his departure, saying he had a lot to do, and kept going in and out of the hall.

A fire was burning on the floor. Thorkel came in through one of the doors accompanied by an Icelander called Hallvard from the East Fjords, who closed the door behind them. Thorkel made his way up through the hall [*skálanum*], walking between the fire and the bench where the Earl was sitting.

'Aren't you ready yet?' asked the Earl.

'Yes, I'm ready now,' said Thorkel striking him on the head, and the Earl slumped forward onto the floor.

'I've never seen such a useless lot,' said Hallvard. 'Can't you pull the Earl out of the fire?'

He hooked his curved axe round the back of the Earl's neck and heaved him up onto the wooden platform [*upp at pallinum*], then he and Thorkel ran through the other door where Thorkel's men were waiting, fully armed. (*OS*, 16)

¹English translations from *Orkneyinga Saga* are all taken from the Pálsson and Edwards translation (1978). The Old Norse versions are taken from the version printed in *Íslensk Fornrit*.

Einar's untimely death occurred around the year 1020. This falls into the Viking Period, a date also supported by the apparent organization of the hall with a central hearth and benches on the sides. What is not clear from this passage is whether the hall was a room in a larger structure or a single one-roomed building without internal partitions. The Old Norse used here to describe the room is *skáli*, usually translated as 'hall' (see below).

In Chapter 28 we are told that Rognvald Brusisson and his men managed to block every door of Thorfinn's house--it was night and most of the men were asleep although the Earl was still drinking--and Rognvald had his men (what else?) set fire to the house. Rognvald agreed to let the women and slaves out but thought "that most of Earl Thorfinn's men would be better off dead." Thorfinn then broke out through a wooden partition wall and escaped, carrying his wife Ingibjorg in his arms [*þorfinnr jarl braut undan húsunum skjadþili eitt ok hljóp þar út*]. We have here a reference to a wooden wall dividing the space in the house in some way, though the exact nature of the wall is not clear.

An internal partition is mentioned in Chapter 95 when Svein Asleifarson, a major figure in the twelfth century part of the saga, is again in trouble:

They [Svein and his kinsman Bard] went inside and found themselves alone in a room, separated from the rest of the household by a wicker partition [*vandbálkr einn*]. There was a hidden passageway [*laundyrr*] to the room they were in, blocked with loose stones.

The questionable secret passage was of course used by Svein to escape, but the mention of the wicker partition is the important tidbit here.

Svein's own drinking hall on Gairsay was so big the saga tells us there was nothing in Orkney to compare to it (Chapter 105) [*Hann átti svá mikinn drykkjuskála, at engi var annarr jafnmikill í Orkneyjum*]. (It would have to be since he supposedly entertained some eighty men there over the winter.) But in Chapter 108 we hear that

after Svein's death (c. 1171) on a late viking raid to Dublin, his sons divided the inheritance between them: "The summer after his death they set up partition walls in the great drinking hall he had built on Gairsay" [*gafhlod í drykkjuskála þann inn mikla*]. Apparently with the passing of this last real viking the open space of the drinking hall was no longer necessary. Society had changed and along with it the internal arrangements of the hall.

Chapter 55 includes a very interesting description of the internal arrangement of a house at Earl Harald's estate at Orphir in the early twelfth century. A Christmas feast had been arranged there for the two earls, Harald and Pal (who were brothers or perhaps half-brothers; see below).

Their mother Helga and her sister Frakokk were staying there at the time and happened to be sitting in a small room [*í litlustofu*] getting on with their needlework, when Earl Harald came into the room [*gekk á í stofuna*]. The sisters were sitting on the cross-dais [*sátu á þverpalli*] and a newly made linen garment, white as snow, was lying between them. The Earl picked it up and saw that in many places it was stitched with gold thread.

(Unfortunately for Harald, he put this splendid but cursed garment on despite the warnings of his mother and aunt, who had intended it for Pal, and he quickly took to his bed and died.) More than just an account of two manipulating women and a vain earl, we have mention here of a cross-dais in an early twelfth-century house and a specific room is mentioned. The Old Norse word used for the room this time was *stofa*, not *skáli* as in several of the previous examples. As I mentioned in Chapter 5, the cross-dais has been found in eleventh- and twelfth-century houses in the medieval Norwegian towns. It should also be noted here that this was not just any house, this was an Earl's house. We ought not to be surprised that a relatively recent adoption in Norway is seen in a high-status building such as an Earl's house.

The cross-dais is mentioned again in Chapter 99: Earl Harald Maddadsson (1138-1206) is described as sitting at the cross-dais [*þverpalli*] in a small room [*litilli stofu*] when Svein Asleifarson comes to be reconciled with him. Again, this is a description of the Orkney elite. Unfortunately there is no way to determine yet how widespread this feature was in Orkney, but since we do have two or three examples of cross-daises from non-elite sites in Shetland in approximately the same period (e.g. Sandwick, perhaps Underhoull) we must be careful about drawing conclusions regarding relative status of various arrangements.

In discussing the archaeological evidence I mentioned side benches and end benches or cross-daises several times. In the modern archaeological literature these benches are often referred to as *paller* or, in medieval houses, *moldbenker*. However, in Old Norse there seem to have been two different words for these benches and the benches themselves seem to have been constructed differently. According to Sigurðardóttir (1968: 88) the word *pallr* is used only in the singular in the Icelandic sagas and referred only to the cross-dais at the gable end of a room. The descriptions associated with the word *pallr* imply that the cross-dais was not a narrow bench like those along the long walls, but rather was a low wooden floor. The greater breadth assumed here certainly fits the archaeological evidence of cross-daises in Shetland as well as in Iceland (e.g. at Stöng) and Greenland (e.g. at Sandnes). In the cases of Stöng and Sandnes, loom weights were found at the gable end of the room leading to the conclusion that the loom was placed on the *pallr* at this end of the room. Other saga passages refer to women spinning or sewing while sitting on the *pallr* (e.g. in *Eyrbyggja Saga* and the passage from *Orkneyinga Saga* quoted above). This was apparently where the women of the house worked and sat during feasts, while men apparently sat on the benches. In addition, benches were found in both the *stofa* and *skáli*, while the *pallr*

seems to have been confined to the *stofa*. This is very interesting since the *stofa* was a later introduction (see below).

The Earl's Bu at Orphir appears yet again in Chapter 66. The description here is interesting because not only do we get some impression of spatial organization of the house and estate, we also get some impression of the importance of the position in space of individuals. Once again it is Christmas, but we are now dealing with Earl Pal who had just taken all of the future Rognvald II's ships in Shetland. Svein Asleifarson was present and we hear that his father had just been killed by that tried and true method of being burned in his house.

...The farmstead was a large one, standing on a hillside sloping down behind the farm buildings. Damsay is in the Bay of Firth, which lies on the other side of the hill. On the island there was a stronghold and the man in charge was called Blann, the son of Thorstein of Flydruness. There was a great drinking-hall [*drykkjuskáli mikill*] at Orphir, with a door in the south wall near the eastern gable [*gafhlad*], and in front of the hall [*skálanum*], just a few paces down from it, stood a fine church. On the left as you came into the hall was a large stone slab, with a lot of big ale vats behind it, and opposite the door was the living-room [*stofa*].

When people came back from Vespers they were led to their seats [*skipat í sæti*]. The Earl had Svein Asleifarson placed next to him away from the door [*næsta sér innar frá*], and Svein Breast-Rope sat opposite him [*útar frá jarli*] with his kinsman, Jon. After the tables had been taken down, visitors came with the news that Valthjof [Svein's brother] had been drowned. The Earl thought it a very sad affair and asked people not to do anything to annoy Svein Asleifarson over Christmas as he already had enough on his mind. In the evening after they had finished drinking, the Earl and most of his guests went to their beds, but Svein Breast-Rope spent the night there out in the open, as he often did. Next morning people attended Matins and then, after High Mass, they settled down to a meal.

After the Earl, Eyvind Melbrigdason was the senior man at the feast so he did not sit down, but served the two Sveins from two separate vessels, while the cup-bearers and the boy attendants stood in front of the Earl's table...

Later, after yet another drinking session, Svein Asleifarson killed Svein Breast-Rope by the simple expedient of bashing him on the forehead as he walked out the door; the saga tells us that there had been little love lost between the two since Svein Asleifarson

reached manhood. Svein made his escape through a skylight in the room opposite the entrance [*Eyvindr kom þá at ok leiddi Svein Ásleifarson í stofu þá, er gegnt var útidurum, ok var hann þar dreginn út um skjávinndauga*].

This description implies that the Earl's hall had more than one room and mentions explicitly the skylights which allowed the smoke to escape along with Svein. And although we are not told whether the Earl sat at the center of one of the long walls or at the end of the hall, we can see that one's position relative to the Earl was significant. The implication is that the benches ran along the long walls. An interesting feature is that the place of the highest ranking individual after the Earl was not at the table at all, but serving the Earl and Svein. In Chapter 77 Bishop Jon of Atholl came to visit Earl Rognvald (Pal was out of the picture by this time), again at Christmas, but this time at Rognvald's farm at Knarston. Rognvald gave the bishop his own high seat while he served as cup-bearer himself [*Setti jarl byskup í há sæti sitt, en þjónar sjálfr fyrir borði sem skutilsveinn*].

There has been a great deal of discussion about the position and importance of the high-seat (*há sæti*) in the literature. Scholars have made much of the passage in Olav Kyrre's Saga describing how he moved the high-seat from the middle of the long wall to the gable wall as well as changing the position of the hearth:

Þat var siðr forn í Nóregi, at konungs há sæti var á miðjum langpali. Var ǫl um eld borit. En Óláfr konungr lét fyrst gera sitt há sæti á hápalli um þera stofu. Hann lét ok fyrst gera ofnstofur ok strá gólf um vetr sem um sumar. [Islenzk Fornrit 28: 204]

It was the old custom in Norway that the king's high-seat was in the middle of the long bench, and that they carried the ale around the hearth. But King Olav was the first who had his high-seat on the cross-dais which went across the room. He was also the first who had *stofur* with ovens in them and covered the floors with straw both in winter and in summer. [my translation]

Olav Kyrre ruled Norway from 1066 to 1093, a date which agrees reasonably well with the archaeological evidence for the appearance of the cross-dais, although nothing which can definitely be called a high-seat has actually been found. The ovens referred to in the passage above could have been *røykovner*; these may be identified with the corner hearths which appear at this time, although it is still uncertain whether these hearths were open or were covered ovens.

Although no definite example of a high-seat has been excavated, four post holes found under the modern church at Mære in Trøndelag may be connected with a high-seat since they clearly have no connection with the actual construction of the building (Lidén 1969; Steinsland 1991:77). These post holes lay along the building's long wall in an area measuring one square meter, close to the hearth, and this building also produced 19 *gullgubber* or small gold foil rectangles with the image of a couple on them. These objects have been interpreted as being part of a fertility cult and the site itself is mentioned as a pre-Christian cult site in the medieval sources.

The high-seat, whatever its appearance (probably raised above the other seats and possibly decorated or covered with pillows), demonstrated in a material and concrete way the high social status of the king or, in the case of Orkney, the earl. And this change in the position of the high-seat occurred at a time when other changes were beginning to make themselves felt in Norwegian society: the Christian Church was growing and therefore the Church hierarchy was just beginning to be introduced, the power of the king was increasing and towns were beginning to grow. In short, Norwegian society was becoming more segmented, at least Norwegian urban society; how great an impact these changes had on rural areas can certainly be debated. And with this increasing segmentation came the more marked physical separation of the ruler's position in the hall from the others present.

In the saga literature there are instances where Odin's high-seat is clearly a symbol for authority and leadership. However, according to Steinsland (1991:70), Snorri and others did not need to turn to Christian imagery to find such symbolism: pre-Christian Viking Age society was well acquainted with the institution of the high-seat and the social and juridical ideology which was connected with it, so the presentation of Odin in his high-seat is probably of pre-Christian origin. Further, the high-seat had the function of the married couple's seat in the hall and symbolized and guaranteed the couple's authority and the legal marriage contract (Steinsland 1991:84). It may also have served as the marriage bed and the spot where the marriage vows were given. The poem *Skírnismál* is the only surviving source where the god Freyr sits in Lidskjalf, Odin's high-seat, and this event has grave consequences for the gods.

According to Birkeli (1932) we must be careful not to confuse the *hásæti* with the *ondvegi*. Both terms are usually translated as high-seat (e.g. in Chapter 19 of *Eyrbyggja Saga* where Vemund made room for visitors "on the high-seat" [*Vermundr heilsar þeim ok rymði þegar ondvegitt fyrir þeim þórarni*]). Birkeli argued that *hásæti* was a seat which demonstrated the social rank of its occupant; it was confined to the halls of kings and chieftains and had purely social functions (Birkeli 1932:55), although Holmqvist (1962:292) argued that it was used by the man who was highest ranking within his particular circle--the farmer in his household or the king at his court. The *ondvegi* originally referred to an area in the house, the north or northeast corner, with religious importance associated with ancestor worship. Its social meaning and legal importance was based on its ancient religious character as a cult place which mediated between the living and the dead (Birkeli 1932:48).

Steinsland (1991:76-77) also discusses these two terms. According to her, in later sources the two terms both refer to the special seat of authority in the hall. *Qndvegi*

seems to be the original term for the seat of honor in the peasant farmer's hall (*bondestuens æresete*). Most scholars disagree with Birkeli's theory that it was associated with ancestor worship and instead interpret the word as meaning "the seat in the middle towards or across from" (*setet midt imot*). That is, it was oriented towards the sun and therefore was placed along the house's north long wall so that it faced the sun. *Hásæti*, on the other hand, refers to a later development in the milieu of the chieftains or kings. The word itself indicates that the seat was built up physically with a footrest. Steinsland argues that it is natural to assume that the two forms influenced each other and that the juridical and ritual aspects of the *øndvegi* were transferred to the royal *hásæti*.

Birkeli (1932:29-36) used several saga accounts of the placement of visitors to support his contention that *øndvegi* was in the corner; the *husbonden* or farmer sat near the corner, possibly with family members sitting between him and the gable wall, while less important individuals sat nearer the door (the terms used were *innar* and *utar*). Important guests were seated directly across from the *øndvegi*. An example of the use of *innar* and *utar* relative to the door can be seen in the above example from *Orkneyinga Saga* where Earl Pal seats Svein Asleifarson next to him and Svein Breast-Rope opposite him. According to Birkeli this indicates a corner placement for the *øndvegi* (1932:33). In this case neither a *hásæti* nor an *øndvegi* is mentioned in the text, but it is possible that in this particular case the traditional *øndvegi* took precedence while in other instances involving the Earl it was the *hásæti* which was employed (see above).

According to Birkeli (1932:23 ff) the *øndvegissúler* or pedestals brought to Iceland from Norway were all connected with chieftains who were the ones responsible for pagan religious ceremonies. These pedestals were thrown overboard and the chieftain vowed to settle where the pedestals came ashore. These pedestals are

sometimes described as being carved with the images of gods, indicating their religious importance, and Birkeli claims that they came from temples, not from private houses. However, since the chieftains were also religious leaders their houses may also have served occasionally as temples.

Archaeologically we have no traces of either the *hásæti* or the *øndvegi* (with the possible exception of Mære), only traces of the benches along the long walls and later across the gable wall. But Gerd Stamsø Munch suggests that the chieftain's hall excavated at Borg may confirm the importance of the northern corner of the hall. The find frequency was greatest here and, more significantly, the vast majority of the high-status objects (e.g. the *gullgubbene*, often connected with fertility cults) were found associated with the hall and particularly with the northern corner. In fact, some of the *gullgubber* were found in the northern post hole, possibly placed there as an offering and marking the blessing of this room as the site of sacrifices at Borg (Stamsø Munch 1991a:329) (see also Appendix 1 for more complete discussion of the house itself). One of the hearths was also apparently reserved for ritual use. As Stamsø Munch points out, considering the distribution of finds in this room it seems reasonable to place the chieftain's seat close to the northern corner and, in this case, between the two post holes near the ritual hearth. Here Stamsø Munch (1991a:331) refers back to Birkeli's argument that the "high-seat" was in a corner, usually the northern corner. Steinsland remarks in a footnote (1991:77, n. 28) that Birkeli's theory has won little support. However, it is not clear whether she is referring to his suggestion that the *øndvegi* was associated with ancestor worship or his suggestion that it was placed in the northeast corner of the hall.²

²Whether the seat was in the north or northeast corner of the hall would depend on the orientation of the building. Contrary to what seems to be the popular assumption, not all the houses were oriented east-west. The orientation of the houses was probably influenced by the local terrain and prevailing winds

The chieftain's hall at Borg dated to the Merovingian and Viking Period before any significant Christian influence reached northern Norway. Thus it would not be surprising if some traces of pre-Christian religious practices were found there, especially since this was a chieftain's hall. It seems to me, then, that Birkeli's distinction between an ancient holy or ritually important place (*ondvegi*) in the house connected with a pre-Christian cult, possibly ancestor worship, and the status-displaying high-seat associated with the chieftains and kings of a slightly later period when outside influences were stronger, may have some basis in reality. Whether the earlier *ondvegi* was placed in the northeast or north corner of the hall is still unclear. But features such as the high-seat (whether in its earlier or later form) are aspects of spatial organization which will always be difficult to trace archaeologically. Careful excavation of future sites like Borg might clarify the matter. (Of course, sites like Borg are extremely unlikely to pop up with any frequency!)

Old Norse Terminology

I will now turn to the Old Norse terms used for various buildings or rooms in buildings. I have mentioned several of these terms above and in previous chapters--*skáli*, *stofa*, *eldhus* and *bur*. But what is the significance of these terms and what, exactly, do they refer to?

The oldest of these terms are *skáli* and *eldskáli*. The term *skáli* is used in the Icelandic literature to describe buildings of the tenth and eleventh centuries, buildings which in Iceland had bowed walls, a central hearth, and broad sleeping benches along the longwalls (Eldjárn 1971). According to Eldjárn (1958), *skáli* and *eldhus* actually refer to the same room, at least early on, but the exact usage is confusing. One oft-cited example of this form is the hall at Kvívík (Figure 6.1).

and the internal placement of features such as the high-seat would vary somewhat. It could well be that the position in the corner was more important than the actual cardinal direction.

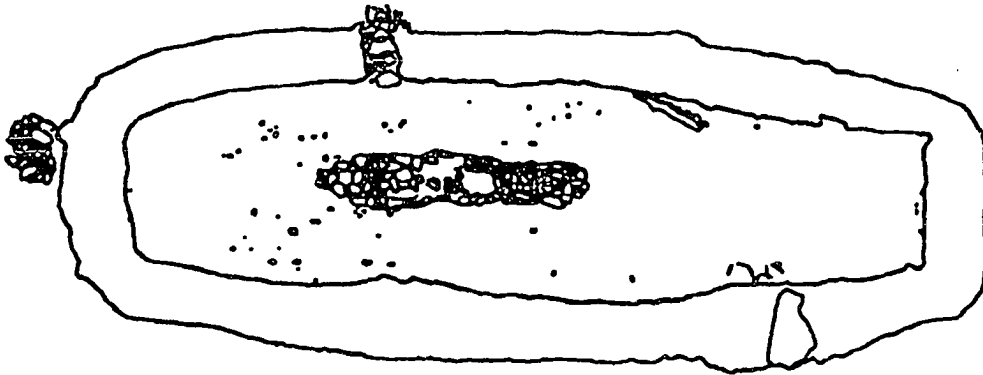


Figure 6.1: Hall at Kvívík, Faroe, redrawn after Dahl (1971:Figure 24). Notice the central long hearth. The walls were built with an inner and outer layer of stones and turf and filled in the middle with earth and small stones. There were benches along the long walls with small post holes marking the inner line of these benches. Some of the post holes from the roof-supporting posts are also visible.

Originally these were the only houses on Icelandic farms so they were the site of all daily activity--inside work, eating, cooking and sleeping. The terms *skáli* and *sal* may refer to the same important hall of prehistoric times (known for example from Ullandhaug and Lyngaland in the Migration Period; see Chapter 4) and in the sagas large halls are often the subject of boasting or are at least seen as worth noting (e.g. Svein Asleifarson's drinking hall). The traditional view is that in the early historic period these houses began to be divided up into rooms with differing functions, although as we have seen the house at Oma seems to have had three rooms or at least three zones. Also, Eldjárn (1958) argued that at night all the people on the farm slept in this room, women at one end and men at the other, probably with a panel wall between them. Whether he had any concrete evidence for this partition is unclear. One of the excerpts from *Orkneyinga Saga* quoted above refers to the later practice of dividing up the *skáli* when Svein Asleifarson's sons built a partition wall across his *drykkjuskáli* after his death. This took place in the twelfth century, but we must remember that Svein was also a rather

anachronistic character, going off a-viking a century after we usually consider the Viking Age at an end.

In Norway the *eldhus* (*skáli*?) seems to have been more important in earlier periods; this was where the bread was baked, clothes were washed, water was warmed in winter for the livestock, ale was brewed, all cooking associated with the slaughter was carried out, and all cooking associated with large feasts (such as for funerals and weddings) took place (Stigum 1958). These are generally the same functions ascribed by Eldjárn to the *skáli*, although described in greater detail and omitting its use as a sleeping room. These functions were eventually taken over by the *stofa* until the modern kitchen was introduced. The *eldhus* is described by Stigum as a one-room building with an entrance in the gable wall, but as I pointed in Chapter 4, the view that the long house was broken up into smaller individual houses late in the Viking Age is clearly flawed. We must also allow for the possibility that the *eldhus* comprised one room in a multiroom structure. The hearth in the *eldhus* was an open one; this form was retained even after corner hearths were adopted in the *stofa*.

In Iceland the *eldhus* seems to have been both a kitchen and a sleeping room for everyone on the farm while the *stofa* became the day-to-day dwelling room where food was carried from the *eldhus* and *bur* if one did not eat in the *eldhus* itself (Eldjárn 1958). In the Early Middle Ages it was apparently the largest and most visible of the structures on the Icelandic farm with one or two outer doors leading to the *stofa*, *bur* and other rooms.

Stoklund (1984:100) suggests that the *skáli* or, as he also refers to it, the fire-house (*eldhus*), may have been as much a mental as a physical structure. He assumes that it did not have partitions but that there were strict invisible divisions or zones which were reserved for specific activities and which governed people's behavior. Myhre

(1980) has shown that houses from the Iron Age were divided functionally if not physically so this suggestion seems quite reasonable. Thus a lack of material divisions does not necessarily imply a lack of internal organization. Stoklund also argues that the *skáli* had symbolic importance which can be seen in the saga accounts of throwing the high-seat pillars or pedestals into the sea when colonizing a new land (see above). With its panel walls and large open fuel-consuming hearth the *skáli* was not terribly well adapted to these northern islands with fuel shortages, especially Iceland and Greenland, and yet the form was retained in the early period in these colonies (and possibly later in Greenland, see Chapter 7). Thus, as Stoklund writes (1984:98), "The very mobile class of peasant-traders who in this period were sailing from one part of the North Atlantic Region to the other could feel at home anywhere and immediately knew how to act and what was the significance of all parts of the dwelling house."

In the eleventh century a new room was introduced, the *stofa*. Archaeologically the *stofa* can apparently be seen in the extensions built onto existing *skáli* in Iceland. When both rooms became common, they were often placed on either side of a *forstue* (Eldjárn 1972) which, as Myhre has observed (1980) looks suspiciously like the passage or *gang* in the Norwegian material and which also occurs in some of the material from the Northern Isles. The *stofa* had narrow benches along the longwalls and a *pallr* across the inner gable wall opposite the entrance. Corner hearths were more common in these rooms than open central hearths. The adoption of corner hearths is also seen in the Shetland material (e.g. Sandwick; see Chapter 5) along with an increase in the number of fire-cracked rocks. Bigelow (1987:34) suggests that rocks were added to the hearth in order to increase the thermal mass of the corner hearth since they now had to throw heat over the entire length and width of the living room. Finally, the sagas often describe the walls as being panelled and/or covered with tapestries.

The thirteenth-century saga writers were apparently aware that the *stofa* did not belong in accounts of earlier times since the word is seldom used in accounts of the tenth and eleventh centuries; its use increases in accounts of events taking place in later periods (Eldjárn 1972). Originally the *stofa* seems to have been a workplace, especially for the women of the farm, while the old *skáli* became a sleeping room and gathering place for all. By the thirteenth century, at least in Iceland, the *stofa* seems to have taken over as the most important house or room on at least higher status farms, while the *skáli* retained its function as a sleeping house. The *stofa* now served as the living room where people ate, received guests and celebrated feasts. In Faroe the *stofa* took over all the functions of the *skáli*. The word is often found in compounds in the later sagas (see excerpts above) indicating (according to Eldjárn 1972) its central position in the farms of the High Middle Ages.

The eleventh-century date coincides with the reforms Olav Kyrre is supposed to have been responsible for (see above) and with the increasing Europeanization of Norway (see below). The *stofa* is a central, eastern and northern European phenomenon which appeared early in the Middle Ages (Stoklund 1984:101ff). There has been considerable debate over what the room originally looked like, but the basic meaning of the word seems to have been "a closed room in log-construction" (Stoklund 1984:101). This supports Stigum's belief that in Scandinavia the introduction of the *stofa* was closely tied to *laft*-construction.

However, this brings us to a problem in discussing the changes in house organization, the prevalent assumption that when *laftet* houses were introduced into Norway late in the Viking Period the populace immediately started to build several small houses with different functions rather than one long house. This theory is based on surviving structures from eastern Norway, not the archaeological evidence available

mostly from western Norway. In the first place, as Myhre has shown (1980; and see Chapter 4 and Appendix 1), the Iron Age houses also seem to have been divided functionally, if not physically. There seems to have been a room which functioned as a *stofa* even though it may not yet have had that name. As I showed in Chapter 4, the most common layout in Viking Period houses is two rooms, one with a hearth and one without (Figure 4.10). This could well be interpreted as an *eldhus* and a *stofa*, as Myhre (1980:384) has pointed out. In the second place, there are several examples of Viking and Medieval houses with several rooms, some of which may have been built using the new building technique despite their length, and there are examples of one-room buildings with entrances in the gable wall which were not built using the new technique (e.g. Ytre Moa). Finally, the Oseberg ship burial of the ninth century contained examples of the *lafte*-technique, so the actual date of its introduction is unclear. However, the fact that the *stofa* might originally have been tied to *lafte*-construction does not preclude the use of divergent building techniques (e.g. *stav*-construction as in Faroe) (Stoklund 1984:104). The stock stove houses brought to Shetland from Norway were also box-like constructions, but like the Faroese structures imported from Norway they seem to have been stave buildings, not log. Furthermore, it is quite possible that one room of the house could be built using one method while the rest of the house was built using quite another method.

In medieval Norwegian and Icelandic law three rooms or houses were named specifically, the *stofa*, *eldhus*, and *bur*. According to Norwegian law three outer doors had to be in order before a *leilending* or freeholder left the farm, the doors to these three rooms. Medieval Icelandic law also indicates that these were the three most important rooms on an Icelandic farm. I have already discussed the first two of these. The final room or house, the *bur*, is first mentioned in the *Edda* where it refers to a room where

women worked, but in later sources it meant a storage room (Stigum 1957). But were these actually separate structures or individual rooms in a house?

Myhre (1980:386ff) has discussed this problem of interpretation. He notes that in Denmark and Iceland these rooms were discussed as separate entities even though they were built in a line under one roof (or possibly with the *bur* as an annex). Therefore the reference in the law to *hus* does not necessarily imply that by this time in Norway the long house had been broken up into separate buildings. The archaeological material certainly indicates that this was not the case, although the byre was not usually part of the house at this stage either in Norway or in Iceland (or in Shetland, for that matter). Nor do the two-room structures appear to have included storage rooms. And whether these rooms were separate structures or not, it is significant that the same terms were used for them throughout the Norse world.

In Chapter 4 and Appendix 1 I mentioned several attempts to assign these terms to rooms in excavated Norwegian houses. The most successful attempts come, not surprisingly, from recently excavated sites. For example, Stamsø Munch (1991a) suggests that the large room in the house at Borg was a *gildhall* or *gildiskáli* used on ceremonial occasions as well as day-to-day activities. The distribution of finds and apparently ritual features supports this interpretation. Myhre (1980:394) also identified possible feast halls in material from the Migration Period, e.g. at Ullandhaug, Sostelid and Lurekalven.

Kjersti Randers (1981:85-86) also tried to identify the function of individual rooms in the two medieval structures at Høybøen (Figure 4.15). There seem to have been three dwelling rooms here with 1b marking itself out as a possible *eldhus*. Baking clearly took place in this room and it was next to the byre, a useful location if water was to be warmed for the livestock. Randers suggests that 2b may have been the *stofa* or

stue where sleeping and some cooking took place. This leaves room 2a as the *bur*, an identification which may be supported by the finds of spindle whorls and loom weights here. Randers also notes that if one takes the medieval Norwegian law seriously, the presence of only three dwelling rooms in these two houses indicates that this farm was occupied by one family. Otherwise there should have been two of each of these rooms. However, even on a site excavated to modern standards it is extremely difficult to match up room function with medieval terminology.

Kaland (1987) has also tried to identify the functions of the rooms at her site at Lurekalven. For House 2 she suggests that the room with the corner hearth was the *stofa* and the room with a large central hearth was the *eldhus*. The hearths are certainly suggestive, but it would also be interesting to know the artifacts distribution in these rooms in order to evaluate the activities carried on in them. House 1 had only one large room and no entrances could be identified. There was a large hearth with an unlined cooking recess next to it and the artifacts from this structure included baking plates, iron knives, fish hooks, loom weights and spindle whorls (Kaland 1987:178). These certainly suggest that cooking was done in this room, but it also suggests that it was used for other purposes, for example spinning and weaving. Without knowing the frequency of the various artifact types it is difficult to come to any final conclusions about the function of these rooms.

Lack of information on artifact distribution is also a problem when trying to determine room function in the Viking Period houses in Norway, not to mention the lack of structural details. Attempts to assign the terms discussed above to specific rooms in excavated house structures have been most successful in Iceland, for example at Stöng (Figure 6.2) where the addition of the *stofa* to the *skáli* seems very clear and at Gröf (Figure 6.3) where the *forstue* or passage is clearly evident. The *stofa* may also be seen

in the Shetland material from later periods at Jarlshof and from Sandwick where the cross-dais and corner hearth are present. It is mentioned specifically in a document relating to Papa Stour (see Chapter 5, Appendix 2). So far no sites in Orkney are complete enough to attempt a similar identification (at least no sites have been published well enough for the purpose). The Icelandic material also reveals the presence of annexes interpreted as storage rooms built onto a long wall of the house, a feature also recognized in the Shetland material (see Chapter 5).

In the material from Norway it is clearly possible to distinguish different functional areas within the Iron Age and Viking Age houses. As I mentioned in passing above, the two rooms most common in the Viking material could well have functioned as *eldhus* and *stofa* even if they did not yet have that name. These two types of rooms are also present in the Migration Period houses, although those also include a byre. Therefore there seems to have been a high degree of continuity in function through time and space. In the later Viking and Medieval periods we can see increasing segmentation and differentiation in house plans, but there are still strong similarities throughout the Norse world from western Norway to Iceland and even Greenland. The changes dating to the Medieval period may indicate an increased desire or need for privacy since the rooms at this stage are clearly separated from each other by walls. But the nature of heroic Viking society with its emphasis on feasts, generosity, and personal bonds was giving way to the more segmented and centralized medieval society. Certainly the more open plans of the Late Iron Age and Viking Age are more suited to big communal feasts which were important in that society. It is only when the North Atlantic colonies begin to be cut off from Norway in the Late Middle Ages that separate traditions really develop strongly (e.g. passage houses in Iceland) and the need for large halls disappeared (e.g. Svein's drinking hall).

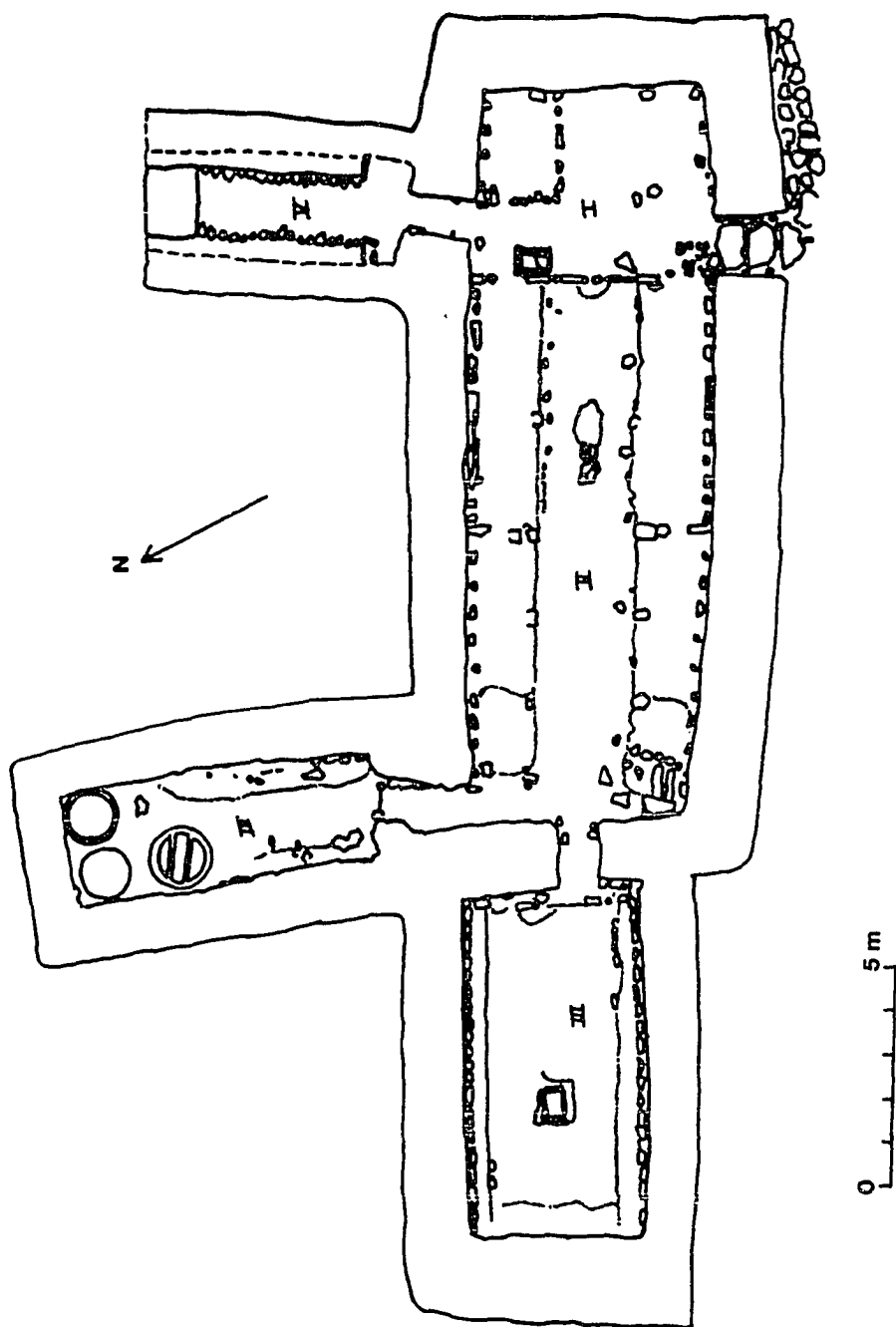


Figure 6.2: Stöng, Iceland, redrawn after Stenberger (1943:Figure 37).

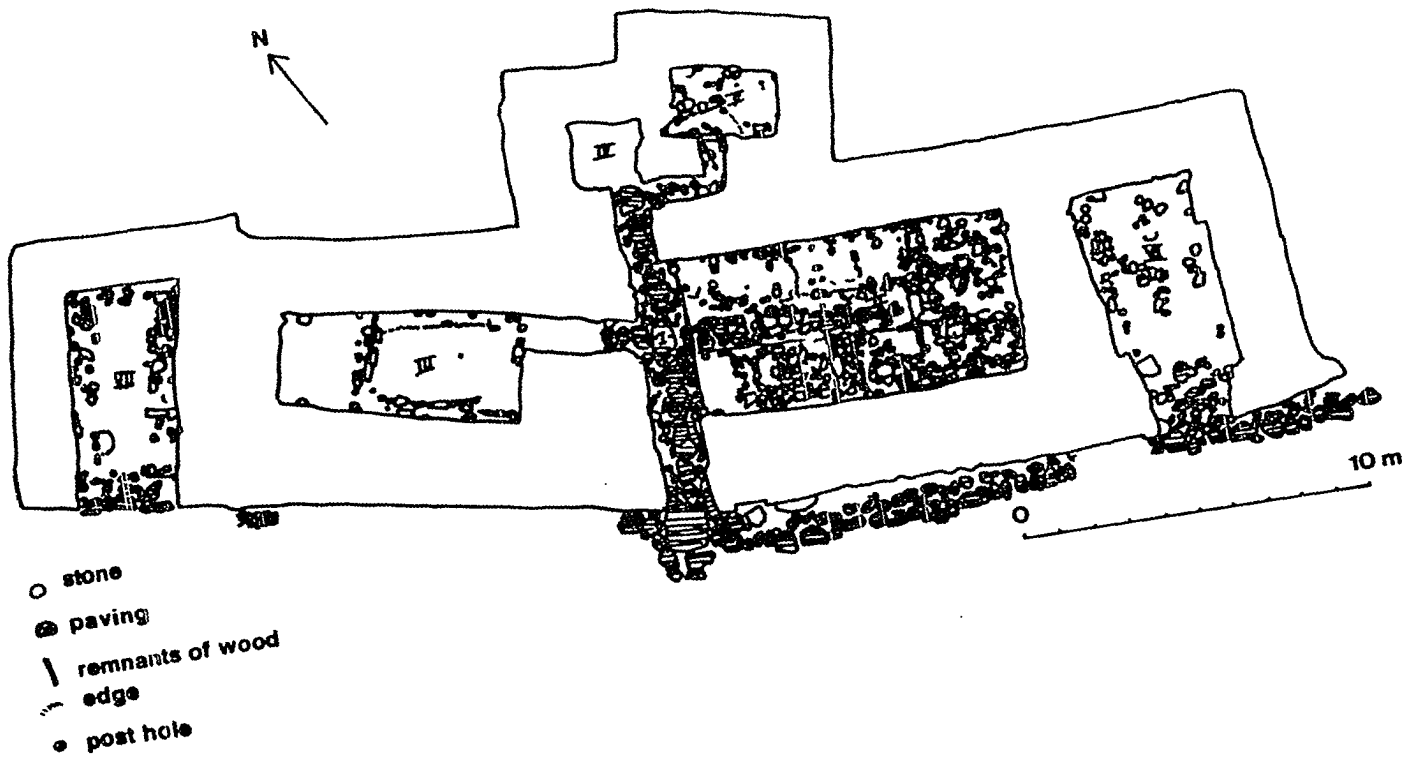


Figure 6.3: Gröf, Iceland, redrawn after Myhre (1980:Figure 205).

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Family Connections

The sagas can also be used to investigate family and personal connections over space and time. The sagas as a whole are interested in genealogy and kinship relationships and while some of the genealogies presented in various sagas may have been constructed or manipulated in later centuries the fact remains that kinship was an important structuring relation in Viking society.³ The exact nature of the kinship system has been hotly debated, but it clearly exhibited both lineal and lateral descent systems (or vertical and horizontal systems) (see Hastrup 1990a; Rich 1989). Figure 6.4 illustrates the two Old Icelandic conceptions of kinship which are probably also relevant for at least the early settlement in Orkney and Shetland. Kinship ties, especially in a society like this, are flexible and can be negotiated by individuals to their own advantage. The ties do not exist in a vacuum but must be maintained by conscious social action.

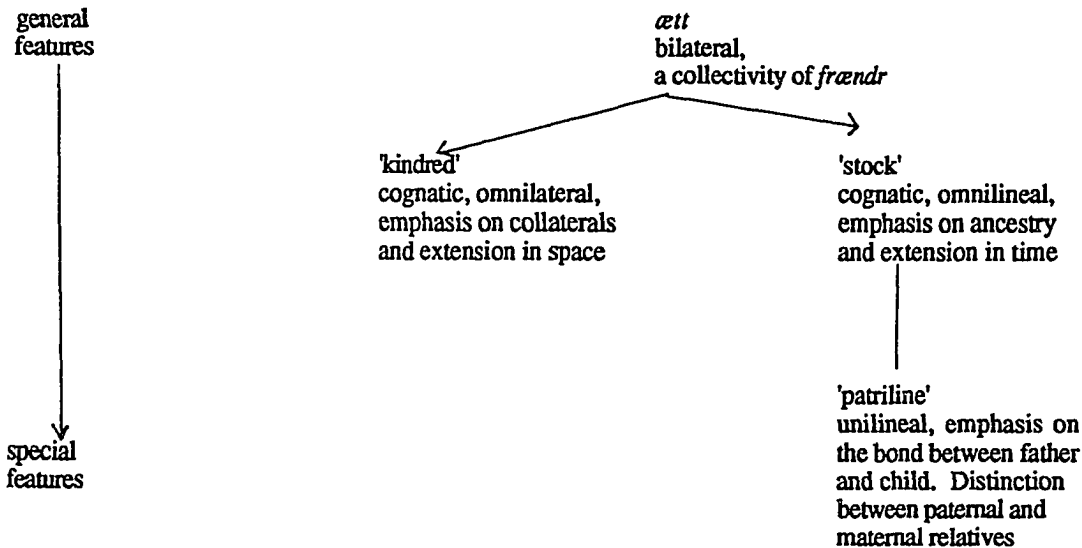


Figure 6.4: Old Icelandic conceptions of kinship, from Hastrup 1990a:56.

³Friendship was also a major structuring relation in this society and is sometimes overlooked (Sigurðsson 1992). Here most of the important examples are examples of kinship ties, however.

Orkneyinga Saga paints a sometimes vivid picture for us of the comings and goings of the earls of Orkney and their allies and opponents over a three hundred year period. Furthermore, the more detailed portions of the saga, e.g., concerning the exploits

of Rognvald in the twelfth century, took place in a time not far removed from the actual recording of the saga so the problems of interpretation and reliability associated with the family sagas are not as severe. Unlike many of the Icelandic sagas, *Orkneyinga Saga* is not concerned with legal disputes and maneuverings, but rather with the dynastic history of the earldom. The saga is a treasure trove, providing us with the genealogies and marriages of a number of important figures and thus the political history of the earldom; this, in turn, can shed light on the larger of the concentric circles of social space I mentioned above and the conscious maintenance of social ties over time-space. The saga illustrates graphically the complicated family relationships and conflicting loyalties which could arise. For the later periods there are other documentary sources as well. The term 'concentric' is rather misleading, however. As a discussion of the saga will reveal, these might more accurately be thought of as overlapping 'circles' of varying size which changed through time.

It is important to realize that the earldom could be shared, usually with one earl acting as the senior partner, or it could be divided into halves or even thirds. Having the proper parentage merely allowed one into the game, so to speak; one then needed to obtain a sufficient following to force the other earl(s) to share or give up power. The kingship in Norway was also shared quite often throughout the period included in *Orkneyinga Saga* (see Appendix 3 for a list of Norwegian kings). The saga makes it quite clear how the earls of Orkney and the kings of Norway and Scotland all tried to manipulate the situation to their own advantage, the kings by backing various candidates

for earl in an attempt to prevent any one individual from amassing too much power and the earls by playing one lord off against the other and, when things got too hot, by ducking out of reach. Relations were often strained, particularly with the kings of Norway. For example, King Magnus the Good was displeased with the behavior of Earl Thorfinn the Mighty and commented at one point, "this isn't the first time you think you killed too few of my retainers: nor the first time you failed to pay compensation" (*OS*, 30). Thorfinn quickly left Norway for the safety of Orkney.

The genealogical information in the saga shows that the earls of Orkney quickly began forming marriage ties with the important families in Scotland, a practice which continued, but they also had close ties to the Norwegian aristocracy. These relationships can become rather complicated but I will attempt to present them here in chronological order as presented in the saga. They are also illustrated in the genealogical tables in the following pages (Figures 6.5-6.9). According to *Orkneyinga Saga*, the earldom was awarded to Earl Rognvald of Møre by King Harald Hårfagre (Finehair) as compensation for the death of his son Ivar on a viking campaign to the west.⁴ Rognvald gave the islands (Orkney and Shetland) to his brother Sigurd who was the forecandleman on King Harald's ship. Sigurd was soon killed after a battle with the Scots and his son died childless a year later, so Rognvald sent his son Torf-Einar to take over the earldom.

Einar's son Thorfinn Skullsplitter ruled after him and was married to Greloð. She was the daughter of Duncan or Dungad, Earl of Caithness and apparently a member of the pre-Norse ruling family, and descended from Thorstein the Red, Ketil Flatnose, Auð the Deep-minded and Olaf the White on her mother's side (Thomson 1987:35).

⁴See Crawford (1987:53ff) for a discussion of the origins of the earldom. Clearly the chronology of the saga is incorrect since Harald Hårfagre was not yet powerful enough to be able to award the earldom to Rognvald. On the other hand, it is unlikely that Rognvald would have taken the initiative without Harald's blessing and Harald would certainly have tried to establish his control over the colony as soon as possible.

Figure 6.5: Early Earls of Orkney, after Thomson (1987:14, figure 1)

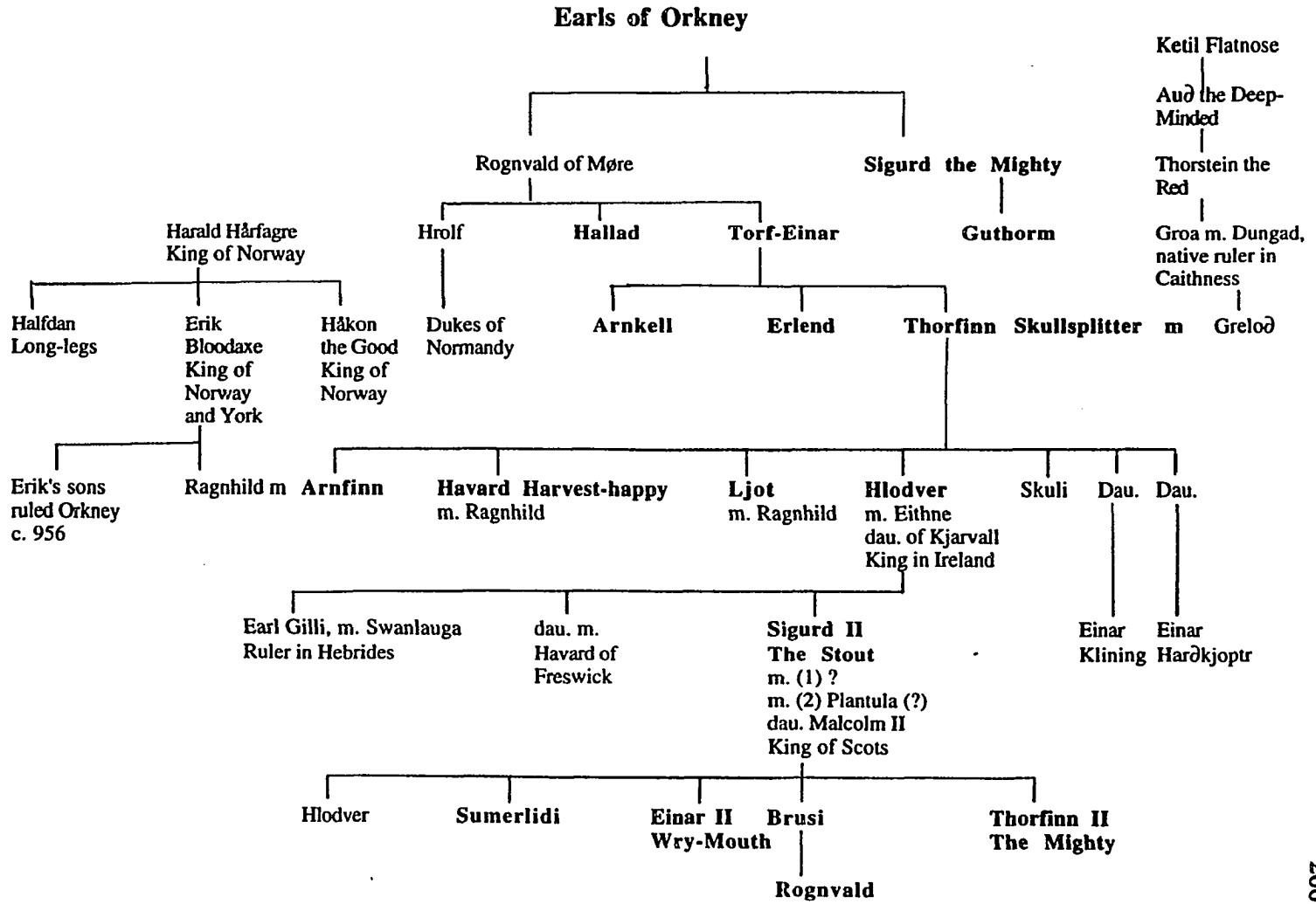
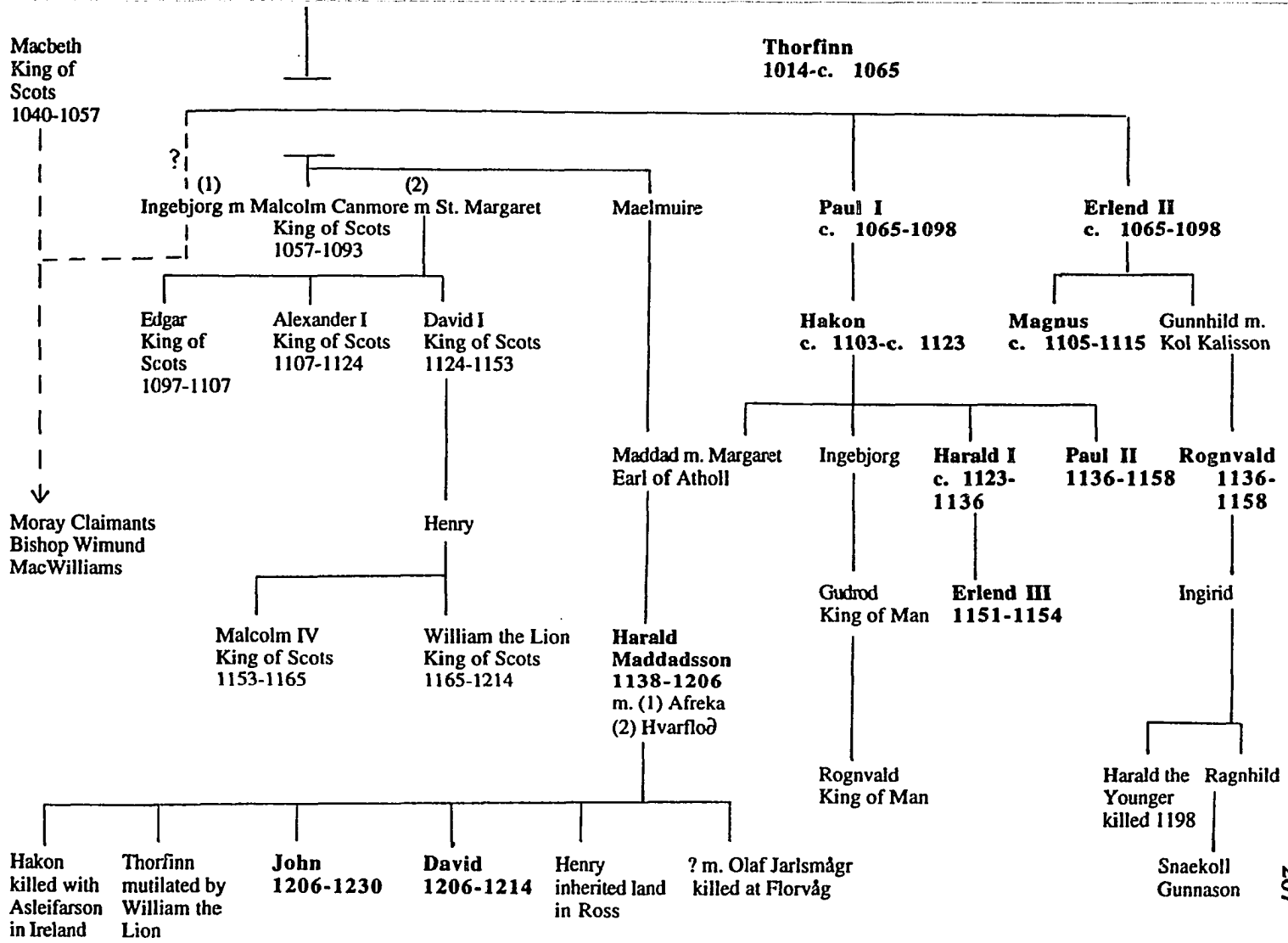


Figure 6.6: Earls of Orkney, c. 1065-1230, after Thomson (1987:56, figure 7)



Family of the Dales in Caithness and their connections

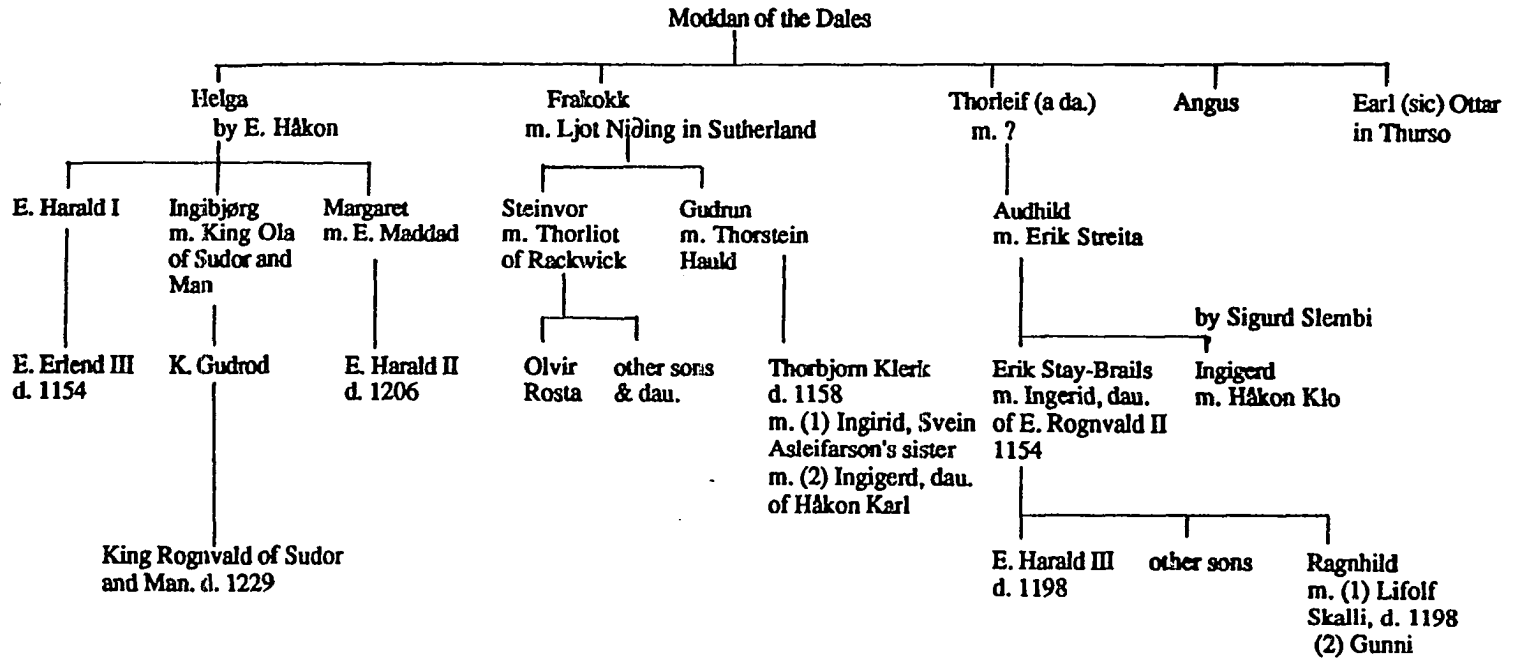


Figure 6.7: Family of the Dales in Caithness, after Clouston (1932:388)

Gairsay and Freswick Families

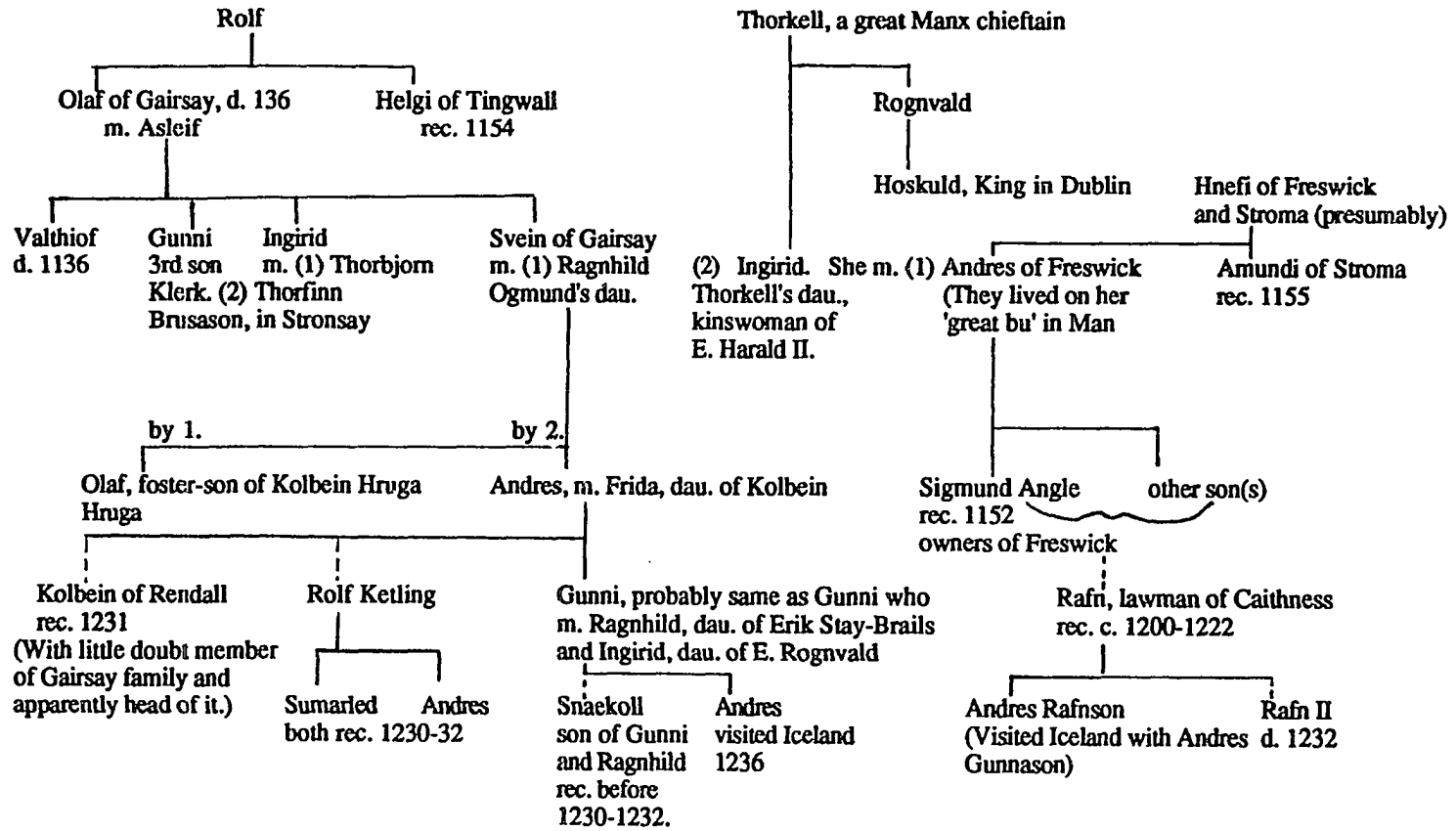


Figure 6.8: Gairsay and Freswick Families, after Clouston (1932:387)

Families of Orkney and Caithness Chieftains Connected with the Earls' House

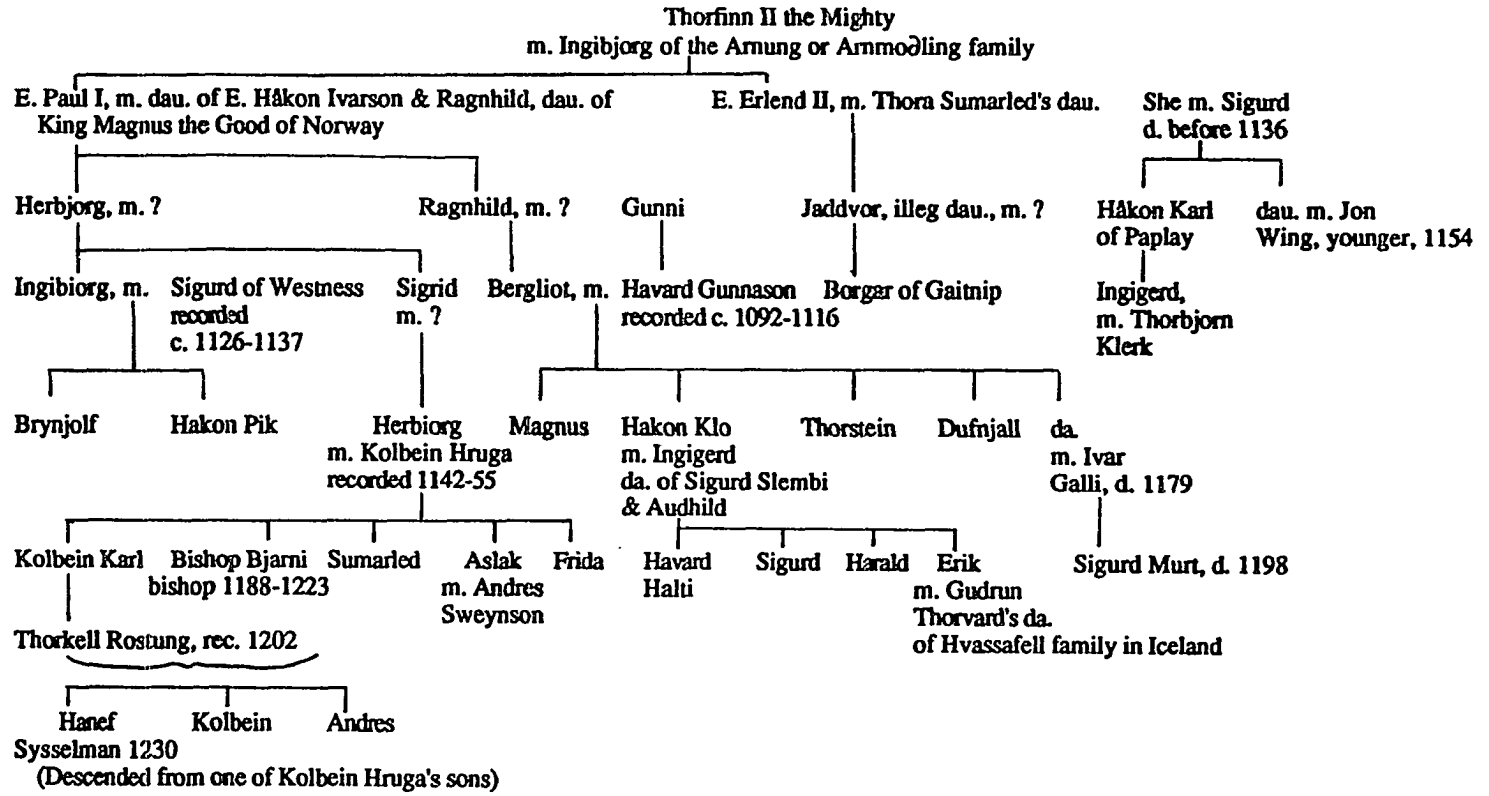


Figure 6.9: Families of Orkney and Caithness connected with the Earls' House, after Clouston (1932:386)

Historically there were no 'Scots' in Caithness at this time and the indigenous population was probably Pictish, but Picts are not mentioned anywhere in the saga literature (Cowan 1982:43). In any case, it is possible that this marriage brought the Norse earls within the *derbfine*, the Celtic kinship network within which legitimate contenders for power were recognized, so that later earls may not have been considered outsiders in their quest for power in Caithness (Cowan 1982:29-31; Thomson 1987:35).

Marriage ties to the Norwegian royal family were formed apparently by the marriage of Thorfinn's son Arnfinn (and subsequently *his* brothers Havard and Ljot) to the rather bloodthirsty Ragnhild (who arranged the murders of several husbands), daughter of Eirik Bloodaxe and Gunnhild. Eirik Bloodaxe used Orkney repeatedly as a base in his attempts to gain and regain control of York in the mid-tenth century. Then Skuli, Ljot's brother, was granted the title of earl by the 'King of the Scots' and fought his brother Ljot in Caithness, but was killed.

After Ljot's eventual death his brother Hlodvir took over. He was married to Eithne, daughter of King Kjarval of Ireland.⁵ Their son was Sigurd the Stout who died in 1014 in Ireland at the Battle of Clontarf. Sigurd was married to the daughter of Malcolm II, King of Scots, and their son Thorfinn the Mighty was fostered by his grandfather Malcolm. Thorfinn was also granted Caithness and Sutherland and the title of earl by his grandfather. Thorkell Fosterer also advised and counseled him (since he was having a bit of trouble with the current earl) and in addition spent time at the court of Olav Haraldson (later St. Olav) in Norway. Thorfinn was married to Ingebjorg, daughter of Finn Arnesson of Giske, probably at Olav's instigation. The Giske family (with the exception of Kalv) were strong supporters of Olav and used by him to counter

⁵It should also be noted that in the ninth and tenth centuries the kings of Dál Riada were making marriage alliances with the leaders of the Irish-Norse and Scandinavian names began appearing in the Scottish royal family (Crawford 1987:62).

the power of the Ladejarls (Crawford 1987:77). Throughout his reign Thorfinn had to negotiate carefully around the demands made on him by his two lords, the King of Norway and the King of the Scots.

Thorfinn also ruled jointly for a time with the son of his half-brother, Rognvald Brusisson. Rognvald was fostered by Olav Haraldsson (later St. Olav) and fought with him at the Battle of Stiklestad in Norway in 1030. There he rescued Olav's brother Harald Sigurdarson (Hardråde) and traveled with him to Novgorod. He returned to Norway with Magnus Olavsson, son of the late king, and Kalv Arnesson, slayer of the late king and Finn Arnesson's brother, but at the time reconciled with his enemies. Magnus rewarded Rognvald with the title of earl, three ships and one-third of Orkney in fee. During this time Thorfinn was raiding in England with Hardicanute, but eventually Thorfinn and Rognvald came to loggerheads when Kalv Arnesson, Thorfinn's 'uncle-in-law', turned to him for help after once again getting into difficulties with the Norwegian king. This is a clear example of the problems caused by conflicting loyalties, this time to a lord and a family connection. Eventually Rognvald was killed and Thorfinn ruled alone.

Thorfinn then went to Norway to meet the new king there, Harald Hardråde, and continued on to Denmark and King Svein at Aalborg. He went on to Saxony and met with Emperor Henry III and then went on a pilgrimage to Rome and met the Pope. It is on this trip that he probably arranged for Orkney to receive a bishop at Birsay. When he returned to Orkney he settled down permanently in Birsay and built Christ Church there (whether this was on the mainland or on the Brough is still a matter of considerable debate). The saga reports that when he died (c. 1065) Thorfinn held nine Scottish earldoms, the Hebrides and much of Ireland, but this is probably an exaggeration and the situation certainly did not survive his death. After Thorfinn's death, either his wife

or his daughter Ingibjorg married Malcolm III (Canmore), probably in an attempt to build an alliance against MacBeth's Moray dynasty (Thomson 1987:52).

But relations with Norway were still close enough so that after Thorfinn's death Harald Hardråde left his wife and daughters in Orkney while he invaded England in 1066. Olav Haraldsson's mother Thora and the earls' (Pal and Erlend) mother Ingibjorg were cousins. Around the same time Thorfinn's son Pal (incidentally a Christian name), now joint earl along with his brother Erlend, married the daughter of Earl Håkon Ivarsson in Norway. Their daughter Herbjorg was the mother of the Ingibjorg who married Sigurd of Westness, another important figure in the saga from the twelfth century.

In about 1098 King Magnus Haraldsson (Barfot) took the two earls to Norway after his campaign in the west and they died there that winter. The earldom was now split among their three sons who, needless to say, did not get along. King Magnus gave Erlend's daughter Gunnhild in marriage to Kol Kalisson as compensation for the death of his father in the Hebrides. Her dowry included some land in Orkney, but Kol Kalisson was one of the king's landholders in Norway, and he and Gunnhild settled on an estate in Agder. Their son Rognvald eventually became earl in Orkney, not to mention becoming a saint, and was an accomplished poet. Later in his life he traveled to the Holy Land, but his travels started as a young man when he came to Grimsby and met Harald Gilli along with men from the Hebrides, Orkney and Scotland; Harald Gilli later became king of Norway (1130-1136) and supported Rognvald's claims in Orkney. Rognvald in fact made considerable use of support from Norway and from Shetland, the latter connected to the cult of his martyred uncle Magnus (brother to Earl Erling and cousin to Earl Håkon), in winning power in Orkney. He promised to build a cathedral

to St. Magnus in Kirkwall and his father Kol actually oversaw the construction (see discussion of cathedral below).

Before Rognvald won the earldom, however, Håkon Palsson and Magnus Erlendsson fought out their differences after ruling jointly for about ten years. Magnus was married from about 1105 to a woman the saga claims came from the most noble family in Scotland, possibly Scottish royalty. Magnus also seems to have had close connections with Wales, although the details are impossible to unravel. Magnus was beheaded on the beach on Egilsay, probably episcopal property, around 1115 as a result of treachery by Håkon. Håkon then ruled alone and made a pilgrimage to Rome and Jerusalem. He probably built the Round Church at Orphir, modelled on the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, after he returned.

Håkon's mistress was Helga Moddan's-daughter of Caithness and he had children by her. Their daughter Margaret married Maddad, Earl of Atholl, who was descended from the Scottish royal family. Helga's sister Frakokk caused considerable trouble for subsequent earls until she was burned in her house by the last real viking in the saga, Svein Asleifarson. Håkon's son Harald held Caithness from David I, King of Scots, but died around 1123, supposedly from putting on a cursed shirt made by his mother and aunt and meant for his half-brother Pal.

Håkon's grandson Harald Maddadsson ruled from 1138 to 1206, however, and was constantly plagued by demands from the increasingly powerful kings of Norway and Scotland. He was first married to Afreka, daughter of the Earl of Fife, and later to Hvaeð, daughter of the Earl of Moray. During his lifetime another important figure in Orkney was Kolbein Hruga, who built a stone keep on Wyre now known as Cubbie Roo's Castle. He was married to Herbjorg, daughter of Sigrid, niece of Ingibjorg (married to Sigurd of Westness) and granddaughter of Earl Pal I. Their children

included Bjarni, who was bishop in Orkney from 1188 to 1223. Svein Asleifarson's son Andres married Bjarni's sister Frida. Again we see the tremendously complicated network built up through marriage alliances.

Earl Rognvald's daughter Ingirid married Eirik Stay-Brails, who was distantly related to Earl Harald II (his great-aunts were Helga and Frakokk, who were grandmother and great-aunt to Harald). Their son Harald the Young was given half of Caithness by William the Lion, King of Scots, but Harald was killed in 1198.

The final chapter of *Orkneyinga Saga* describes very briefly the important events of 1192-94, when Earl Harald Maddadsson's brothers-in-law Olaf and Jon Hallkelsson raised an army in Shetland and Orkney to attempt to put Sigurd Magnusson on the Norwegian throne instead of King Sverre (who, incidentally, had been raised in Faroe from the age of five). This army was known as the 'island beardies' or *øyskeggene* and initially won control over large parts of southern Norway. In the end, however, King Sverre's forces beat them thoroughly at Florvåg. Harald soon heard the news that Sverre was planning a trip to the isles to punish them and, since all he could do was submit, Harald sailed immediately for Bergen to hear the worst. The result of the entire escapade was that the heirs of those killed were given three years to buy back their land or it would become property of the crown. More importantly, Shetland was detached from Orkney and now fell under the direct control of the Norwegian king on the same basis as Faroe. A *sysseleman* (royal official) was appointed to collect revenue, administer the royal estates and look after the interests of the crown. The earls of Orkney were also kept under tight reign for the next century.

Although not included in the saga, Harald Maddadsson apparently had equally serious problems with William the Lion of Scotland two years later. Like the kings of Norway, the kings of Scotland were becoming increasingly powerful throughout the

Middle Ages, causing increasing difficulties for the independently-minded earls of Orkney. The details of these conflicts are unimportant here; the point is that Harald, even more than his predecessors, managed to avoid the role which his two lords were trying to force on him, that of obedient vassal.

This summary of the kinship networks built up over the period of the saga may be somewhat confusing, but it does illustrate that there was significant and continuing interaction between the elite families in Orkney and Norway and Orkney and Scotland (though I have not dealt with that issue as much here), not to mention within the circle of Orkney elite itself. Furthermore, it is clear that many of the elite were widely traveled, that the surrounding ocean was not a barrier to interaction, to news-gathering, or to long-distance meddling for that matter, but was rather an important line of communication. The interaction did not stop with the doomed adventure of the *øyskeggene*, however. Unfortunately we no longer have the more detailed descriptions of the saga, but the ties that bound Orkney to Norway may actually have been strongest in the thirteenth century after Norway had put the brakes on the pretensions of the Orkney earls. At the same time William the Lion made it clear that Caithness was an integral part of Scotland (Thomson 1987:79). The thirteenth-century ties must be teased out of surviving charters, treaties and legal transactions and so lose much of the color and spirit of the saga account.

Earl John (died 1230) apparently had more frequent contacts with the Norwegian court than any previous earl. He was at court in 1210, 1218, 1223, and 1224. He exchanged lavish gifts with King Håkon in 1228 and in the year of his death he provided almost half the ships for a Norwegian expedition to the Hebrides although he himself did not take part. John, like his father Harald Maddadsson before him, had to submit to both the Norwegian and Scottish kings. John also had to face competition from the

Erlend line of the family, with his enemies striking first in Caithness after a bout of heavy drinking when "they were all so drunk that they thought what they intended to do was a good plan" (Thomson 1987:81). They killed John in a Thurso cellar, but a settlement with John's kinsmen proved impossible, so all parties agreed to allow the Norwegian king to settle the dispute. Then, when the earl's kinsmen were returning by ship in 1232, they all drowned in the North Sea. The earldom now passed into the hands of the Angus earls starting with Magnus II, whose relationship to John is unknown.

According to Thomson (1987:82), the question was now not what the racial origins of the earls were but whether the Scottish crown could settle the succession in Orkney-Caithness by due process of law. Scottish influence now dominated Norwegian in succession questions. However, the thirteenth-century earls following Magnus II are something of a mystery.

The thirteenth century in Norway is known as their *Storhetstid* (period of greatness) while in Scotland the reigns of Alexander II and III are remembered as Scotland's 'Golden Age'. Håkon Håkonsson ruled Norway from 1217 to 1263 and succeeded in forcing both Greenland and Iceland to submit to him and to pay taxes to Norway. Håkon actually died in Orkney at the age of 60 on his way from the disappointing Battle of Largs which he had hoped would settle the question of the status of the Hebrides. Also a member of the expedition was Bishop Gilbert of Hamar, who had previously served as Archdeacon in Shetland, then as King Håkon's personal chaplain, and finally had been elevated to bishop. He may have been a relative of the Angus earls (Thomson 1987:86) and provides yet another example of personal links between Orkney-Shetland and Norway. He may have been included in the hope that he could assist in any bilingual negotiations which might take place (but did not). The

Treaty of Perth was concluded in 1266 and in it Norway resigned the Isle of Man and the Hebrides but retained Orkney and Shetland. In return Scotland was to pay a lump sum in four yearly instalments and then make an annual payment, the 'Annual of Norway', in perpetuity (which did not, in fact, last very long).

But even the loss of the Hebrides did not weaken Norway's links with Orkney. As Thomson notes (1987:89), the period 1267-1330 is probably the point at which the population of Orkney reached its medieval maximum before the Black Death and agricultural depression. The Norwegian government was growing stronger and in the late thirteenth century Magnus Lagabøte undertook legal reforms which also influenced Orkney. Earl Magnus IV (1273-1284) was installed as earl in a ceremony in Tønsberg and a contemporary source now described the Orkney earldom as the only remaining hereditary earldom left in the Norwegian realm, a fact which gave it a unique position. This high status seems only to have applied on ceremonial occasions, however, or when it was useful to demonstrate improved relations between Norway and Scotland, since the earls still had dual allegiances.

This was particularly true when Alexander III died in 1286 leaving as his only heir his three year old granddaughter Princess Margaret, daughter of King Eric of Norway. Four years later the 'Maid of Norway' was taken to Orkney where she was to be handed over to the Scots, but she died in September 1290. With this Scotland fell into the Wars of Independence with Orkney eventually pro-Bruce, and in 1292 King Eric remarried, this time to Isabella, sister of Robert the Bruce.

The Church

The Church in Orkney provided an avenue for foreign influences from the beginning. Besides the foreign influence of the Church itself, the construction of St. Magnus cathedral resulted in the importation of foreign ideas and individuals. The

earliest parts of the cathedral, begun in 1136/37, "bear a marked resemblance to the nave of Dunfermline Abbey, itself constructed by masons from Durham" (Cant 1988:127). But by the late twelfth century similarities can be seen between St. Magnus and Nidaros (Trondheim) cathedral. The Norwegian influences were particularly strong during the time Bjarni was bishop in Orkney. Cant summarizes the similarities as follows:

As has been said, the analogies between the Transitional and early Gothic design of St. Magnus' and Nidaros Cathedral are so numerous as to suggest the possibility of a direct link. Although the evidence of masons' marks can be as fallible as stylistic similarities it is, once again, remarkable how many to be found throughout these phases at Kirkwall are identical with those of the corresponding phases at Nidaros.

(Cant 1988:133)

As I have already mentioned, Bjarni was the son of Kolbein Hruga, who built the stone castle on Wyre and who was also an important landowner in western Norway. Bjarni managed to steer his way unscathed through the debacle of the *øyskeggene's* revolt against King Sverre. The work undertaken on the cathedral in Kirkwall after his time shows fewer Norwegian features, a fact which is hardly surprising when one considers the fact that Bishop Henry was in charge of these phases. Bishop Henry's background was Orcadian rather than Norwegian (Cant 1988:135).

The organization of the Church in Orkney and a comparison with developments in Norway is far too large a topic to be covered here (but see Sawyer 1988 and Sveaas Andersen 1988 for brief discussions). However, certain specific examples of contact and interaction will demonstrate the importance of this connection and the fact that impulses did not flow in only one direction. For example, when Olav Kyrre returned to Norway after his father Harald Hardråde was killed at Stamford Bridge in 1066, he spent the winter in Orkney. When he returned to Norway he began to build Christ Church cathedrals in Nidaros (Trondheim) and Bergen and established the first

permanent episcopal seats of Norway there. According to Helle (1988:47) we can guess that Olav Kyrre was influenced by Thorfinn the Mighty's Christ Church in Birsay built around 1050. Then again, Earl Rognvald II and his father may have been influenced by the Norwegian trend to the establishment of urban episcopal sees with more definite boundaries when they initiated the building of St. Magnus Cathedral in Kirkwall (Helle 1988:53).

Up into the twelfth century it seems that there may not just have been multiple earls but also multiple bishops. Both York and Hamburg-Bremen appointed bishops to Orkney and Bishop William (who was persuaded to proclaim Magnus's sainthood in return for a cathedral), though not a Norwegian, was a Scandinavian consecration (Thomson 1987:59). With Rognvald's promise to build a cathedral and endow extensive lands to the bishopric, the position of the bishop in Orkney was elevated above mere chaplain to the earls to a relatively high status. Ties between the churches in Norway and Orkney were strengthened in 1152/53 when Trondheim was elevated to a metropolitan see with authority over the six dioceses in the Norse North Atlantic. From this time bishops in Orkney were consecrated in Norway and frequently attended ecclesiastical and political meetings there. I have already discussed the flow of architectural impulses in the construction of the cathedral in Kirkwall. In addition, the papal tax Peter's Pence was introduced in Norway in the twelfth century and also in Orkney, but the Scottish church including the bishops in Caithness resisted payment of this tax (Thomson 1987:75).

We can see continued contact in the thirteenth century with the elevation of Gilbert from Archdeacon in Shetland to King Håkon IV Håkonsson's personal chaplain to Bishop of Hamar, already mentioned. During the fourteenth-century schism in the Catholic church, the Orkney church followed Norway in adhering to the pope in Rome

while the Scots looked to Avignon. This is somewhat surprising given the fact that the clergy in Orkney had long been predominantly Scots. From this point on the bishops were loyal to Norway, though they were not Scandinavian by birth, and they were used increasingly as agents of the crown (Thomson 1987:98). For example, Bishop John Pak was the only Norwegian bishop present at Kalmar when Eric of Pomerania was crowned king of Denmark, Sweden and Norway in 1397. But by the fifteenth century the clergy in Orkney seem to have been predominantly Scots, perhaps a result of the shortage of priests in Norway after the Black Death (Thomson 1987:107). Thus Scottish influence was increasing in Orkney even before the loss of the Northern Isles to Scotland in 1468/69.

In the fifteenth century Orkney and Shetland were finally lost to the Danish-Norwegian crown. With the union between Denmark and Norway the power center shifted south and east to Copenhagen and Norway became peripheral to the union. The position of Norway's possessions in the west--the Northern Isles, Iceland, Faroe and Greenland--became increasingly tenuous. A further complication was that Norway was particularly hard hit by the Black Death and subsequent epidemics, losing one-third to one-half its population. The aristocracy was decimated. Trade in Norway came to be dominated by the Hansa with their kontor in Bergen. All these developments weakened the links between the Northern Isles and Norway, links which were officially broken in 1469 when Orkney and Shetland were pawned to Scotland as part of Margaret of Denmark's dowry in her marriage to James III. The islands were never redeemed, although Denmark made half-hearted attempts over the following centuries. In 1470 the church in Orkney was shifted to the see of St. Andrews. This did not bring a complete stop to the connections between the Northern Isles and Norway, but it certainly curtailed them somewhat and incoming Scottish families became more important.

So far I have concentrated almost exclusively on individuals in Orkney. This is partly because Shetland is only mentioned a handful of times in *Orkneyinga Saga* and most of those references are of little use. We are told that Earl Rognvald went fishing *incognito* with the common folk, that many of St. Magnus's miracles happened to people from Shetland and that Margaret Håkons-daughter took refuge with her lover in Mousa Broch. The most important piece of information is that many of the men among the *øyskeggene* came from Shetland. But since the earls did not reside regularly in Shetland and the saga is really the story of the earls, we know very little about Shetland from the saga itself. For the Norse period there is also the fact that Shetland was no longer part of the earldom after the Battle of Florvåg, but was held directly by the King of Norway as Faroe was. This might indicate that after the twelfth century conditions in Shetland were more similar to those in Faroe rather than Orkney. There are some interesting documents from the Norse period, however, which Crawford (1984, 1985) and Smith (1990) have both discussed.

I have already mentioned some of Crawford's work on the estate on Papa Stour. According to Crawford (1984:47), there is no evidence to suggest who the first Norse settler on Papa Stour was, but the land there was fertile and the farm was divided. This indicates that the original owners were not the earls since earldom estates do not seem to have been subject to this kind of division. At any rate we do know that all of Shetland was forfeited to the Norwegian crown in 1195 and that the families had three years to redeem their land. The unredeemed estates formed the core of the Norwegian crown estates in Orkney and Shetland and it is quite possible that the estate on Papa Stour was one of these estates since there is documentary evidence from a century later that it was in the hands of the crown.

This evidence consists of a document from 1299 made by the lawthingman in Shetland which reports an accusation of fraud by one Ragnhild Simunsdatter against Thorvald Thoresson, the acting sysselman of then-Duke Håkon of Norway (soon to be king). Ragnhild actually made the accusation twice, once in the *stofa* and once 'ut i tuninu' of the ducal farm (Crawford 1984:49). Thorvald was apparently a native Shetlander with the first mention of him coming in 1289 when he was sent to England as an ambassador of King Erik of Norway. Before 1299 he seems to have acted for both King Erik and his brother Håkon since he acted as a royal ambassador in 1289 and 1295. However, it does not appear that Håkon used him in an official capacity after he ascended to the throne in 1299.

Thorvald apparently made two good marriages, the first to Fru Sigrid Olavsdatter, who owned land in Kvinesdal in south Norway. His second wife was Randlid, daughter of Jon Ivarsson Raud, and her brother married an illegitimate daughter of King Håkon V in 1302 (Crawford 1984:51). They had two known children, Thorvald and Herdis. Thorvald (the son) married Aesa Håkonsdatter, a daughter of Håkon Thoresson from another important Norwegian family which also owned land in Orkney. By this time Thorvald (the father) had apparently settled on the royal estate he had previously administered. After 1309 Thorvald does not appear in Norwegian documents although he was still alive in 1330 when he must have been at least 70.

The estate on Papa Stour is mentioned several more times in the documents. Thorvald's daughter Herdis became his heiress and therefore very wealthy. She was first married to Svein Sigursson, Royal Treasurer in Bergen. Her second husband was Bjarne Erlingsson the Younger. Herdis was rather aggressive about purchasing land in Shetland, probably land abandoned after the Black Death (Smith 1990:27), but seems to

have lived at least some of the time on Papa Stour. The documents record that she 'lived on a grand scale' (Crawford 1984:52). Herdis had no children so on her death the estate was split between her cousins John and Sigurd Havthorsson of the Giske family (their mother was the illegitimate daughter of Håkon V). In the fourteenth century this family, the Giske family, was one of the most powerful families in Norway. In Norway the Giske estate was located very close to Borgund, an early town. John Havthorsson's son Håkon was the Norwegian royal official in Orkney and Shetland at some point.

The last male heir in this family died in 1465 and when the inheritance was finally sorted out in 1490 the estate was split between the descendants of the last owner's (Hans Sigursson) oldest sister. This division included his estates in Norway as well. The Shetland estates were divided into three with Papa Stour now passing to the Rømer family. Their family seat was at Austraat in North Trøndelag. Thus Papa Stour eventually passed into the hands of the famous Fru Ingerd of Austraat. Her heirs granted portions of their estate on Papa Stour to their Scottish tenants in return for annual payment of rents and duties. Scottish families eventually replaced the Norwegian landowners, the most successful of them being the Mowats who eventually had a powerful branch of the family in the Hardanger area of Norway. Papa Stour lost its advantageous position with the growth of Lerwick and the commercial fishing industry on the east side of Shetland.

Papa Stour is particularly interesting here because of Crawford's excavation, but there are other records as well. Smith (1990) showed that Norwegians had an impact on fourteenth-century Shetland both as royal officials and as landowners. Besides Herdis we know that Munkalif cloister in Bergen was a landowner in Shetland. Many of its holdings were acquired as late as the fifteenth century and consisted of parts of farms,

not whole townships. As Smith points out (1990: 28), these foreign owners were fitting into the landholding system in Shetland, not changing it or dominating it.

In fact, according to both Thomson and Smith, newcomers in both Orkney and Shetland were forced to adapt to the existing system (Thomson refers to this as 'orknification' [1987:108]). They were not able to impose their will directly on these islands which long after the impignoration still followed their traditional laws, not those of Scotland. But Shetland and Orkney differed from each other in that Shetland was a much more plebeian culture than Orkney.

Before leaving the subject of land ownership I will turn briefly to a difficult problem in studying this area--the lack of a firm idea of demographics. For example, so few settlement sites from the Pictish period are known that it would be foolhardy to try to estimate the population of the Northern Isles when the Vikings arrived. It is also difficult to get a good idea of extent of the original Viking/Norse settlement. However, the medieval records of farms show that there were about 700 farms in Shetland at the beginning of the fourteenth century compared with approximately 35,000 in Norway. Smith estimates the population at about 10,000 (i.e. approximately 14 individuals per household) (1990:26). Thomson (1987:116ff) has discussed the rentals from Orkney; the earliest of these which survive date to 1492 and 1500, but are based on earlier rentals. There was a total of about 3,670 pennylands with one pennyland being approximately equivalent to a small household unit. If one estimates that a household consisted of 6 to 10 individuals, the population lay between 22,020 and 36,700. Using an estimate of 14 individuals per household, the number apparently used by Smith in his estimate of the population of Shetland, the population comes out to approximately 50,000.⁶ This seems to be rather high. In contrast, at the height of the nineteenth

⁶Estimates in the literature of average household size have varied from 6 to 10 to 15 (Johansen 1982; Keller 1989:160).

century Orkney had 3,373 agricultural holdings and a population of 32,225 (Thomson 1987:116, 222). This indicates an average household size of 10 individuals. The modern population of Orkney lies somewhere around 20,000 (Thomson 1987:253). The estimates based on 6 to 10 individuals per household seem more in keeping with similar estimates in Norway and with the later known population of Orkney. Clearly the islands could support a much larger population than they currently enjoy.

Language

All these examples of interaction between the Northern Isles and Norway suggest a very important problem: what language were all these people speaking? How did they communicate? There are several cases where bishops or other clergy are brought along on expeditions because of their bilingual skills, but these cases involve pilgrimages to the Holy Land or expeditions to the Hebrides or Ireland where one would run into Gaelic. Bishop Narve of Bergen was meant to accompany Margaret, the Maid of Norway, to her new home in Scotland in 1290 (Thomson 1987: 90), possibly because of his language skills. And in the marriage agreement of 1468 between Christian I of Denmark, on behalf of his daughter Margaret, and James III of Scotland, Christian I asked that the bilingual Bishop William Tulloch of Orkney remain with his daughter until she had learned the language of her new country (Thomson 1987:113). But again we are dealing with interaction between the Norse world and the 'outside' world where a non-Nordic language was the mother tongue. The last official document in Norwegian from Orkney appeared in 1443, several years before the islands were transferred to Scotland (Thomson 1987:108). On the other hand, Norn (a dialect based on Old Norse) was still being spoken in the Northern Isles at the end of the eighteenth century. But more important for this study is what language the inhabitants were

speaking in the Viking and Late Norse periods and how well they could understand other Scandinavians.

According to Haugen (1982:9), it is possible to detect a split in the language of West and East Scandinavia by the time of the Viking Period. Icelandic was the most typically West Scandinavian, but West Scandinavian was also used in present-day Norway and the Swedish provinces of Jämtland, Herjedalen and Bohuslän, the Northern Isles, Faroe, the Hebrides, the Isle of Man, coastal areas of Scotland and Ireland as well as the Norse colony in Greenland. Most of the written production of Old West Scandinavian was in Old Icelandic (e.g. the laws and sagas) starting in the middle of the eleventh century, although the *King's Mirror* and other texts from the court of King Hákon were written in Old Norwegian (c. 1250). This introduction of writing was very important and, according to Hastrup (1990b:76) led in Iceland to the development of an ethnic category of 'Icelanders', a self-declared people.

Although ethnic categories were not included in the Icelandic laws, the men of Iceland might be contrasted with the 'men of other countries'. The language was referred to as the 'Danish tongue' and to be a member of any court a person had to be a native speaker of 'Danish' (Hastrup 1990b:76). This indicates a certain feeling of unity within the Norse cultural area at the time of the first written laws (c. 1117-1118) rather than any definite ethnic splits. But with the writing of *Íslendingabók* in about 1120 we see a shared history defining a specifically Icelandic ethnicity. This work was soon followed by a grammatical treatise whose writer indirectly claimed that Icelandic was a specific branch of Danish which needed its own written language (Hastrup 1990b:77). And it is just at this time, partly as a result of the advent of writing, that the Scandinavian languages started to diverge from each other, although they were still mutually intelligible. In *Heimskringla* Snorri Sturluson seems to show less objectivity in dealing

with the external enemies of the Norwegian kings than internal ones and "thus seems to have some idea of a national community uniting the contending groups and individuals" (Bagge 1991:109) even though he was an Icelander. Apparently Snorri "has an idea of Norwegian national unity as opposed to other countries" (Bagge 1991:122). It is quite possible that other parts of the Norse world were beginning to identify themselves as separate groups in the twelfth century.

This may also be true of Orkney. We know that the ability to manipulate language was very important in the Norse world and Earl Rognvald II (later saint) was accomplished in the art of skaldic poetry; his mastery can be seen in *Háttalykill* and several of his verses are included in the saga. These have been discussed by Paul Bibere (1988). Bibere points out that skaldic poetry was primarily a West Norse literary tradition though it may have been understood in other parts of the Viking world.⁷ It first appeared in about the mid-ninth century and most of the surviving poetry from the pagan period is ascribed to professional poets working for named Norwegian patrons--kings and noblemen. According to Bibere (1988:212), some skaldic poetry may have had a religious or magical function beyond just simple praise of a military leader. This kind of poetry required the use of complicated meter and kennings, so it was probably not an easy art form to master. We should be careful about overemphasizing its difficulty, however; it may be very complicated to us, but it cannot have been incomprehensible to large numbers of people in the Norse world or it would not have been so important or popular. Skaldic poetry was also the medium for *níð*, a kind of slander (with sexual allusions) which also carried the connotation of cursing. I mention this only to illustrate how important language and skill at manipulating language could be in this society

⁷"Literary" is perhaps the wrong word, since skaldic poetry began as an oral tradition.

which valued its warriors so highly. This can be seen in one of Rognvald's verses where he lists his accomplishments:

At nine skills I challenge-
 a champion at chess:
 runes I rarely spoil,
 I read books and write:
 I'm skilled at skiing
 and shooting and sculling
 and more! - I've mastered
 music and verse.
 (OS, Chapter 58)

Traditionally it has been assumed that skaldic poetry died out in Norway in the first half of the eleventh century, although the sagas attribute a few texts to kings (Harald Hardråde, Magnus Barfot) after this time.⁸ What does seem clear is that professional poets were no longer employed; instead, the kings and nobles attempted to compose skaldic poetry themselves in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. This is the tradition which Earl Rognvald came out of. Rognvald was not himself an Orcadian: he grew up in Norway and there is nothing to suggest he visited Orkney before he became an adult. His own grandfather (Kali Sæbjarnarson) is described as being a good poet. Therefore Rognvald's interest in poetry seems to grow out of a purely Norwegian tradition, not an Orcadian one. But Bibere notes (1988:217) that "the glory of the earl's court does not only involve his own poetic skills, but those of the poets whom he employs and with whom he can compete as their equal at their own craft." Three of the Rognvald's skalds mentioned in the saga are Icelanders, one is possibly from the area around the Irish Sea and the other is a mystery, but all apparently were imported because of a lack of native tradition in Orkney. Of course, we must remember that the saga was written by an Icelander and is therefore biased: there may have been native Orcadian skalds and there must have been an audience which was familiar enough with the form to appreciate it.

⁸We must remember that the records we have were written by Icelanders, not Norwegians.

Still, the presence of Icelanders in important positions at the earl's court yet again illustrates the far-reaching contacts of the earldom.

But Earl Rognvald did leave a tradition of skaldic poetry after him in Orkney. Bishop Bjarni Kolbeinsson (bishop 1185-1223) was also an accomplished poet and is thought to have composed *Jómsvíkingadrápa*. Bishop Bjarni had close personal connections with Iceland; he is also the bishop who translated Earl Rognvald's relics and thus recognized his sanctity in 1192. Bjarni may also have composed the poem *Málsháttakvæði*, a poem which is apparently Orcadian judging by its language and vocabulary (Bibere 1988:223). *Krákumál* has also been identified as Orcadian, again because of its language and content. A last glimpse of Orcadian poetry appears in *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* where we find a verse by Snækollr Gunnason, Earl Rognvald's great-grandson, in 1239 (Bibere 1988:224).

All this seems to indicate that although skaldic poetry may not have been native in Orkney before Earl Rognvald, once it was introduced it was adopted and developed into a clearly Orcadian tradition with an identifiably Orcadian language and vocabulary. Bibere identifies one word, *gæðingr*, as a specifically Orcadian term for "nobleman of high rank beneath the earl" (1988:238). The earldom itself was unique among the Norse North Atlantic colonies, and it is hardly surprising that a dialect should develop there which while distinctively Orcadian could still be understood throughout the Norse world. There were also linguistic links between Orkney and southwest Norway, especially the dialects of Agder and Jæren, links that are paralleled in Shetland diplomatic language as recorded in the documents (Thomson 1987:24-25). But the twelfth-century development glimpsed in the language of the skaldic poems may signal the rise of a specifically Orkney identity, a development which would parallel Hastrup's interpretation of developments in Iceland.

There were many changes in language in the period 1350-1500. These accompanied political changes which I have already mentioned in passing--the union of Norway and Sweden with a power shift to Denmark, a strengthening of royal power (especially after the Reformation), the growth of towns. Also very important was the growing volume of written documents; only in Iceland was there a continuous writing tradition among the common people. From this time on Icelandic and Faroese were the most "authentically" Nordic languages, escaping the other influences (e.g. borrowing from German) which affected the mainland languages. These continued to diverge (Haugen 1982:15). So in the initial period of interest in this project, the North constituted a common linguistic area, but in the Late Norse period a linguistic splintering began which, in Iceland at any rate and possibly Orkney, seems to have contributed to a growing sense of ethnic identity; the Nordic languages were still mutually intelligible, however.

Developments in Norway

I have touched on political developments in Norway in passing several times in this chapter, but at this point it is useful to fill in some of the details in order to provide a background and perspective for the events discussed so far.⁹ Appendix 3 contains a summary of the kings of Norway and major events from approximately AD 900 to 1559. Obviously this is not the place to attempt an in-depth review of Norwegian history from the Viking Period to the Late Middle Ages, but there are some consistent trends and specific events which shaped developments in Norway itself and thereby affected the North Atlantic colonies. Developments in Orkney and Shetland must be seen against this background.

⁹For more detailed discussions see Helle 1964, Holmsen 1977.

At the dawn of the Viking Age Norway was not a single political unit but had already been organized into a series of small chiefdoms. This development began far back in the Iron Age and resulted eventually in the battle at Hafrsfjord where Harald Hårfagre defeated his opposition (Myhre nd:113). The subsequent process of unification or *rikssamling* was slow, beginning in the late ninth century with Harald Hårfagre and continuing into the eleventh or even twelfth century. Harald Hårfagre succeeded in winning power over large parts of Norway extending from his base in Viken along the coastal reaches of southern Norway north towards Trøndelag. He did not actually win over Trøndelag, which was then controlled by the earls of Lade with whom he was allied, nor did he control the inland parts of the country. Harald also began to make onerous demands on the populace. This, according to the sagas, was one reason why many high-ranking individuals trundled off to Iceland in the late ninth and early tenth centuries (although the settlement of Iceland began *before* Harald consolidated his power). Neither Harald nor his immediate successors managed to build up a significant state bureaucracy, although a system for defense (the *leidang*) was organized under Håkon the Good, Harald's son, in the tenth century. Still, none of Harald Hårfagre's sons was able to control Norway to the same degree that their father had.

Norwegian society at this time was dominated by the *bønder* or peasant farmers. The kings had to be recognized and accepted at the regional *tings* (assemblies) and were still unable to impose new laws from above (or new religions, for that matter, as a Christian Håkon the Good soon discovered). Instead they had to negotiate with the peasants just as the earls of Orkney did when trying to impose new taxes. From the mid-eleventh century into the first half of the twelfth century, however, there was a real effort to build up a political organization. This ambition was undoubtedly a result of

exposure to western European ideas and the Church during the Viking Age; certainly the early Norse kingdom in York did not have any domestic experience to build on. But with Håkon the Good Norway had a king who had been fostered by Æthelstan of England.

As was the case for the earls in Orkney, having the proper parentage was necessary in order to press one's case as legitimate heir to the throne, but one still had to be accepted by the tings, a process similar to an election. During this period the king traveled constantly, demanding *veitsle* or food and lodging, but not taxes. During the eleventh and twelfth century there were often two or three kings at one time, often accepted by different tings. For example, after the death of Magnus Barfot in 1103 his three sons, Sigurd, Øystein and Olav, were taken as joint kings. This soon led to civil wars lasting from about 1130 to 1217, and even before this few kings died peacefully in their beds (not unlike the experience in Orkney).

The mid-twelfth century was an important turning point, not just because of the wars over succession, but also because of the change in the position of the Church. In 1152/53 the Norwegian church was laid under a new archbishopric in Nidaros (Trondheim) and therefore came directly under the authority of Rome rather than Lund. The Church had its own reasons for wanting to separate the Norwegian church from outside influence, but the elevation of Nidaros was also a recognition that Norway was a kingdom of West European type and part of West European culture. From this point on the Church consistently tried to free itself from royal control while the kings, especially Sverre, fought in vain to maintain their tight hold on the Church. Then, in 1163, the first law of succession was imposed. This law was an attempt to establish a new constitutional basis for the monarchy by requiring that the heir be legitimate and the eldest son, two requirements clearly heavily influenced by the Church. The intention of

the law was to take the power of king-making away from the local tings and put it in the hands of a central representative *riksmøte*. The monarchy in Norway eventually became hereditary, in contrast to Sweden and Denmark where it was elective. Magnus Erlingsson agreed to the new law because he stood in a weak position as son of a king's daughter, not a king, but its provisions were not followed strictly. He turned the Norwegian realm over to God and St. Olav for eternity and then accepted it back with the help of the Church which crowned him in 1163/64 in Bergen. This was the first time a Norwegian king had been crowned. It did not do him much good in the end, however, since Sverre, who claimed to be the illegitimate son of Sigurd Munn and who had been fostered in Faroe, returned to Norway to claim his inheritance in 1177. He was taken as king by the Øyrating in that year and finally defeated Magnus at the battle of Fimreite in 1184.

As I mentioned above, the thirteenth century was Norway's Golden Age with a territory stretching across the North Atlantic. Håkon Håkonsson reigned for 46 years and was followed by his son Magnus Lagabøte, who was responsible for codifying Norway's laws in the *Landslov* and *Bylov*. In Håkon's reign a new law of succession was passed which made the Norwegian crown hereditary, with the oldest legitimate son of the previous king first in line to the throne. Since 1150 political power had been increasingly centralized with a transfer of political power from the peasant farmers to the new elite, the nobility and the clerics. The old law-making function of the local tings was gradually taken over by royal power so that by Magnus Lagabøte's time the new law of the realm was accepted by the *lagting*, the major regional assemblies, with what amounted to a rubber stamp, and by the time of Håkon V (1299-1319) it was possible to simply issue the law. Royal power also crept into law enforcement and judgments, and with Magnus Erlingsson the first royal punishments were introduced. There was also an

increase in government positions which, under Sverre at least, were often filled by men who were not from the highest level of society and who were therefore dependent on the king for their position. The personal bonds of the Viking Age were breaking down and a centralized bureaucracy grew up along with a representative national body, the *riksmøte*, which met relatively frequently. Sverre was the first king to begin to spend most of his time in one place (Nidaros) rather than constantly traveling, and his successors made Bergen the first real capital of Norway.

There was a clear tendency towards increasing segmentation in Norwegian society both socially and politically. The late Viking Age also saw the founding of several towns which grew under royal and sometimes Church initiative. These towns served as entry points for foreign influences. Furthermore, the development of towns also meant that there was now a small but significant portion of the population which was not directly involved in food production. Towns did not develop in Iceland until much later, but there was a town at Kirkwall from the late eleventh/early twelfth century (McGavin 1982). It was in the late thirteenth century that the Hansa began to make its power felt and it eventually exercised control over Norway's foreign trade since it provided the necessary grain imports. The huge fishing industry developed in this period, especially in Lofoten but also in Shetland, which also needed to import grain.¹⁰

With Håkon V Norway's foreign policy underwent a shift in focus which greatly affected her possessions in the North Atlantic. Håkon V now looked south and east towards Sweden and the Baltic instead of west towards England and the Atlantic islands, and his capital was Oslo, not west-looking Bergen. His daughter Ingebjorg was married to the brother of the Swedish king and her son Magnus Eriksson became the heir to both the Norwegian and Swedish thrones. This began a series of unions, first with Sweden,

¹⁰In fact, a Shetlander was elected as one of the key spokesmen for the business community in Bergen (Bigelow 1985:117).

for a time with both Sweden and Denmark (the Kalmar Union of 1397) and then for several centuries with Denmark. This shift in power to the south and east contributed to the diminishing control over and contact with Norway's North Atlantic possessions.

But the fourteenth century also saw catastrophic events in Norway which contributed to the power shift. The agricultural depression which began elsewhere in Europe around 1320 hit Norway with a bang in about 1350, along with the Black Death and subsequent plagues. In 1300 there were an estimated 400-450,000 people in Norway and in 1520 only 120-150,000 people. The deserted farms (*ødegård*) I have mentioned previously date from this period: with the huge drop in population it was no longer necessary to farm marginal areas since plenty of better land was now available. The aristocracy was decimated along with the rest of the population and large estates fell into foreign hands.

This rather superficial overview of medieval Norwegian history should make several things clear. First, both Norway and Orkney suffered at various times from problems over the succession and joint rule. Through time the Church grew and became increasingly independent. Various pretenders to the throne or earldom were forced to make deals with the clergy (e.g., Magnus Erlingsson and Earl Rognvald). Government was increasingly centralized and bureaucratic, and taxes, both Church and state, were introduced. The Church received gifts of land from the crown and the earls despite their disagreements and the income received from these estates played no small part in their increasing independence. This independence led, among other things, to the end of the proprietary church system. Priests now came under the authority of the bishops, not the landowners who had built the local churches. In addition, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries we see the construction of cathedrals first in Orkney (St. Magnus Cathedral) and then in Norway (Nidaros Cathedral). Norway had an active foreign policy in the

west until the fourteenth century when, as I have already shown, Scottish influence in the Northern Isles increased significantly.

Ethnographic Evidence

So far I have discussed the background for events in Norway and the Northern Isles as well as evidence for interaction and links between the Northern Isles and the Norwegian homeland using archaeological and written sources. These links existed in political, ecclesiastical, familial and artistic connections between Orkney and Shetland on the one hand and Norway on the other. But there are also some indications that by the twelfth century a nascent Orcadian identity was taking shape, an identity which expressed itself in language, in the Church now that Orkney had its very own saint (St. Magnus) just like Norway (St. Olav), and in its legal and political organization, which resisted drastic changes from rulers who originated in either Norway or Scotland (Smith 1990). The societies in both Orkney and Shetland forced newcomers to adapt to *their* system, not the other way around. And yet society in Orkney and Shetland was not the same. Orkney seems to have been more hierarchical and Shetland more plebeian, probably in part because of the greater agricultural potential in Orkney and therefore greater potential for wealth accumulation. In Shetland large blocks of land were usually not owned by a single individual; rather, individuals could own parts of several different farms. There is also the fact that the Sandwich-type house seen in several instances in Shetland has not been found in Orkney and certain artifact types common in Shetland and Norway are rare in Orkney, e.g., baking plates. Once again we can begin to discern the presence of a number of circles of interaction of varying spatial and temporal extent.

Alexander Fenton (1984) has studied the interrelationships between the islands of the North Atlantic and Norway and among the islands themselves. He has identified three general groups of items, those with a local distribution but which appear to have

been introduced from distant places, those which are directly attributable to movement to and from Norway, and those which link the Scottish islands, Faroe and Iceland but exclude Norway. It is the latter two groups which are of most interest here.

According to Fenton (1984:134), Faroe maintained trading contact with Norway through Bergen until approximately 1619 when trade shifted to Copenhagen, and trade between the Northern Isles and Norway via Bergen and Stavanger lasted into the eighteenth century. I have already discussed the fact that timber was imported to Shetland from Norway, sometimes already prepared for use in house construction, and Orkney too imported timber in exchange for grain. Faroe and Iceland were also included in this trade for construction timber. King Sverre made a speech in 1186 welcoming traders from Orkney, Shetland, Faroe and Iceland specifically and the fjord leading to Bergen from the north received the name *Hjelteffjorden* (Shetland Fjord). We also know that timber was imported to Iceland in the reign of Harald Hårfagre and it is likely that Shetland also took part in this early trade. In Faroe excavations at the church in Sand on Sandoy have revealed a series of five wooden churches, the later ones built in stave construction with ground sills which required even more timber from Norway (Fenton 1984:135-36). *Lafte* construction also made its way to Faroe, first in higher social levels and then spreading to the rest of Faroese society. And as I noted in Chapter 5, Brian Smith has uncovered documentary evidence for a similar practice of importing stockstove houses to Shetland, houses which were used by the wealthier native farmers. This tradition seems to have disappeared in the seventeenth century (Smith 1980:25).

Timber boats and actual small boats were also imported from Norway, at least in the early sixteenth century and probably before (Fenton 1978:552). The small boats were imported in pieces and reassembled in Shetland just as the stockstove houses were.

But there is also evidence of interaction or diffusion amongst the "ordinary masses of humanity" in the North Atlantic (Fenton 1984:137).

Place names are known from Orkney and Faroe which contain the Gaelic element *airigh* (shieling) (Thomson 1987:31; Mahler 1991). In fact, Ditlev Mahler has found several sites in Faroe similar to the Norwegian shielings now known from western Norway (see Chapter 4). In Faroe they are known as *ærgirs* and were built of turf, sand clay and gravel, the only buildings so far found in Faroe with this type of construction (Mahler 1991:62-63). The houses measured 7-8 m long by 3-5 m wide. The entrances were often in the short gable wall as in Norway and the dwelling houses typically had two rows of roof-bearing posts. And as in Norway, the artifacts in these buildings do not suggest a lower social status. Mahler interprets these sites as summer shielings which were located close to their parent farms. Further, he suggests that this decentralized farming system "was as much part and parcel of the luggage brought by the Norse to their new homes, as their distinctive material and building traditions" (Mahler 1989:11). In Faroe this system was adapted to the local conditions but then was abandoned in favor of the infield-outfield system with extensive sheep grazing in the outfield. Shielings have also been identified in Greenland (Keller 1989). No such sites have been found yet in the Northern Isles, but the fact that such place names occur is certainly suggestive. This type of site was not recognized in Norway until fairly recently. It is interesting, though, that the Gaelic name element was adopted rather than the Norse, but this may be because the words *airge* and *sæter* were used to describe slightly different kinds of sites (Mahler 1991:68).

There is more linguistic evidence for interaction and the influence of Scots Gaelic on Faroese and even Icelandic. In Faroese there was a term *cadldamor* meaning left hand or left-handed. The word is a compound of two Gaelic words (*lamh*, hand, and

cearr, left) and there is no Norwegian parallel. Faroese *blak*, Orkney *blatho*, Shetland *bleddik*, all meaning buttermilk, are cognate with the Gaelic *blathach* (Fenton 1984: 137-38). Faroese has the term *drunnar* meaning the tail-piece of an animal. In Shetland and Gaelic the term is *dronn* and in Icelandic *drundur*.

The linguistic evidence points to the use of similar techniques for certain tasks. For example, in Faroe tormentil roots were used in the tanning of leather. They were called *børka*, cognate with the Northern Isles *bark*, with the compounds *eari(h)-bark* and *hill-bark* in Shetland and Faroese *heimabark* and *hagabark*. The name is not found in Norwegian and tormentil was apparently not used in tanning in either Norway or Iceland, but was known in Ireland and Scotland (Fenton 1984:138). The practice of eating seaweed (although not the names used for it) was also shared among Scotland, Ireland, Faroe and Iceland, but apparently not with Norway. Seaweed was also used for feeding livestock.

Some of the common practices can be dated more precisely to more recent times, for example the adoption of whelks as bait in nineteenth-century Faroe as a result of contact with Shetland. There is also the example of the circular drying kilns known from Orkney and Shetland in at least the fourteenth century (Jarlshof) if not earlier (Beachview), and in fourteenth-century Iceland at Gröf í Öræfum (Fenton 1984:142; Morris 1983). The terminology shows the same geographical spread. Even these few examples indicate connections between the Northern Isles, Faroe and even Iceland which were not shared by Norway. They also indicate:

a strong degree of cultural identity in the Atlantic provinces at the most basic social levels. It is to be presumed that their spread is coeval with the earliest settlements, and continuous thereafter as long as speakers of Norse and to a lesser extent of Celtic languages were moving freely back and fore over sea, that most flexible of all means of communication.

(Fenton 1984:139)

Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to cover a massive amount of information. I discussed the few descriptions of houses in *Orkneyinga Saga* and attempted to set these descriptions up against the archaeological evidence. I also discussed the terminology used for specific rooms or structures in the Middle Ages and again tried to interpret the archaeological evidence in the light of the documentary sources. The archaeological evidence from Norway seems to indicate that traditional house layouts had a much earlier origin than can be deduced on the basis of the written sources, although the specific terminology may have been introduced later. Also, the written sources alone give a false picture of vernacular architecture in the medieval period by suggesting that the long house was broken up into separate structures. I also discussed *Orkneyinga Saga* with an eye towards the intensive interaction it reveals between the elites in Orkney and Norway. Other sagas show similar family connections between Icelandic and Norwegian families. Shetland, however, does not seem to have been as involved in this elite interaction.

An overview of political developments in the Northern Isles shows many similarities with developments in Norway in the High Middle Ages, but we must also remember that it was at this time (1195) that Shetland was taken away from the earldom permanently. From this point on Shetland probably had closer ties to Faroe, with whom it shared royal officials, and with Norway, which now ruled it directly, than with Orkney. There is a clear difference between Shetland and Orkney society with Orkney being more aristocratic and therefore more similar to Norway and Shetland more plebeian. Finally, I showed that there is evidence of inter-island interaction which did not include Norway. This interaction seems to have taken place on basic social levels, not just among the elite.

Taken together all this information reveals a number of spheres of interaction extending through time and space and involving different fields of discourse, e.g., religion and political/kinship ties. The field of discourse involving kinship relations was clearly extensive in space and time, involving members of the elite of Orkney and Norway (and even Shetland to some degree) over centuries. This can be seen in the use of marriage alliances, alliances which structured the responses of the individuals involved to later events (e.g., Kalv Arnesson's flight to Thorfinn for refuge). These kinship ties often brought people into conflict because of the resulting conflicting loyalties, but the basic pattern of forming these kinds of alliances was maintained over a long period of time.

Obviously kinship relations intersected quite substantially with political discourse. The written sources indicate substantial interest in political developments on both sides of the sea. The practice of poking one's nose into the other's business (e.g., in succession disputes) was often partially structured by kinship alliances, although this became less true as the Middle Ages progressed and power was centralized and became less reliant on personal bonds.

Religious discourse was also extensive in time and space (although it did not coincide exactly with the field of political discourse) as my discussion of St. Magnus Cathedral and the Church in Orkney demonstrated (but the pre-Christian religion and its importance in the internal arrangement of the house should also not be forgotten). We have then at least three overlapping and geographically and temporally extensive fields of discourse involving the elites of Orkney and Norway (and no doubt the rest of the Norse North Atlantic). These were the fields which were particularly important in articulating power relations in Norse society. In the twelfth century we begin to see signs of the development of separate identities in the different regions of the Norse world. And yet

one way these new identities were expressed (or at least one set of evidence which indicates such a development) was through a Norse tradition of skaldic poetry and vernacular literature.

It would be very useful to have a well-excavated elite structure from Orkney since this might help to show how (or whether) the developing Orcadian identity was expressed through vernacular architecture as well. At Papa Stour in Shetland there are distinct indications that the house there followed very closely the developments in Norwegian urban architecture at sites like Oslo and Borgund, but Papa Stour is most definitely not an urban location. The Giske family, which at one point owned Papa Stour, had its family seat near Borgund and was probably very involved in the trading activity that went on there. Perhaps the use of this design in Shetland, a design which made significant use of wood in a treeless environment, was a status symbol. Such a house might signal 'Norway' and the political developments taking place there, as well as wealth. And perhaps these two ideas--'Norway' and wealth--were closely connected. From the written records and the excavation we know that Papa Stour was a high status site and based on the political situation we should not be surprised to find close ties between Shetland and Norway (or Shetland and Faroe for that matter, but that is another dissertation!).

Sandwick, on the other hand, was a more modest farm. The house there shows definite similarities with contemporary rural architecture in Norway (and Iceland as well), but it is not a carbon copy. As Bigelow (1987) has pointed out, the sites at Sandwick, Underhoull and Jarlshof in the later period suggest that there may have been a distinct image of what a Shetland house "should" look like in this period, perhaps an image tied up in a developing Shetland identity.

Further study may also elucidate the importance of food production as a field of discourse in structuring Norse society. The linguistic evidence for inter-island contacts is dominated by terms for various aspects of food production and preparation. Furthermore, the fact that baking plates are common in Norway and Shetland (which needed to import grain at various periods in their history) but not in Orkney (which had a greater agricultural potential) is very interesting (see Chapter 5). Interaction in the field of basic food production indicates contact at the level of every household, not just among the elite, and for the most part the evidence suggests that this field of discourse did not always extend geographically as far as Norway. These basic social levels of society would have been involved only peripherally in the fields of discourse discussed above in relation to the elite, but were heavily involved in food production which, in turn, would have been structured in part by the houses (in Shetland true longhouses).

As I discussed in Chapters 2 and 5, recent archaeological work in Orkney indicates continuing interaction between the Picts and the Norse and also, possibly, Pictish influence on the location of Norse settlements. While there were undoubtedly hostile encounters there is no evidence for unremitting hostility between Norse and Pict. In fact, Pictish artifacts have been found in Norse layers and Pictish land divisions may have influenced the later Norse ones. In addition, Pictish and Norse society really were not that different--both had numerous chieftains or petty kings, but both were beginning the process of state formation. Both had rather modest architecture but used personal adornment to signal one's position and both had a form of writing. From the beginning the earldom apparently formed marriage ties to the Scottish and perhaps the Pictish elite, ties which embroiled them in Scottish politics as well as Norwegian. It seems quite possible that the Norse fought some Picts and Scots while forming (shifting) alliances with others. They certainly behaved that way amongst themselves with great regularity.

But the marriage alliances with political importance probably involved only the elites, although Norse farmers may have taken Pictish wives as well. They took native wives in Ireland and the Hebrides where there seems to have been more violence. The coming of the Norse need not have affected the average Pict on a single farm very much, at least at first. Certainly the political developments in Norway and even the loss of the islands to Scotland did not immediately affect the average Shetlander and Orcadian and Scandinavian influence continued to some extent.

I suggest that until well into the medieval period ethnic identity was not a dominant structuring relation. Instead, the Norse elites seem to have been more interested in identifying with each other and establishing ties amongst themselves and with the native ruling 'class'. Personal ornament among both the Picts and the Norse may have indicated status rather than ethnic group since there does not seem to have been a narrow ethnic consciousness among the Norse, at least.

In this context Schortman's (1989) discussion of salient identities is interesting. He defines these as "an affiliation or set of affiliations which are used more commonly than others and whose members, as a result, share a strong feeling of common purpose and support" (Schortman 1989:54). He also notes that ethnicity and class are two significant structuring relations historically and ethnographically. The evidence from the Northern Isles points to the second of these, class, as being more important. Schortman provides an example of this not far removed from Norse society in time or space, i.e. the spread of a single aristocratic identity over much of medieval western Europe which "reflected the acculturation of diverse peoples into the same identity system based on common class interests" (Schortman 1989:54). This example is better known and involved a more extensive geographical area (if one leaves out the expanses of ocean in the Norse world), but I believe it is still relevant. The wide-ranging political, family and

religious ties of Norse society in the Northern Isles were based on the hierarchical structure within Norse, Scottish and Pictish society, which in turn was based on differential access to resources, including power. The elites within Norse society in the North Atlantic had similar interests to those in Norway and Scotland, although these similar interests often brought them into conflict. The non-elite segments of the population seem to have been involved in a more restricted network of interaction with other non-elite groups within the islands of the North Atlantic.

The new settlements were not simple clones of the home society, but there was clearly social and system integration over time-space. The elite, although plugged into their own island societies and networks, were also deeply concerned with events over a wider area. The retention or importation of styles from Norway could have been important for prestige purposes for this group rather than as ethnic diacritica, but this still encouraged the maintenance of these networks of interaction. Groups not part of the elite may have been less concerned with using Norwegian symbols to display their affiliations and more concerned with local and regional networks of interaction.

In the next chapter I will examine two other examples of Norse colonization from the medieval period in order to see if these areas show the same strategies of colonization and interaction. The first of these examples is the Norse settlement in Greenland which was originally devoid of human inhabitants but where the Norse eventually had to face a native population, the Inuit. This settlement or colony was ultimately a failure. The second example is the Norwegian colonization of northern Norway and hence the interaction between the Norwegians and the Saami. In this case both populations still exist as separate ethnic groups. In Chapter 8 I will attempt to evaluate these strategies and place them more explicitly in the theoretical framework I laid out in Chapter 3.

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**Viking Colonialism:
Contact and Interaction Between Viking/Medieval Norway and the Northern Isles**

Volume II

**A THESIS
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Barbara Gail Scott

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Chapter 7

The Norse Settlements in Greenland and Northern Norway

In the previous chapter I began to move from the archaeological evidence of continued social and system interaction in the Norse world as shown in the houses and attendant artifacts to the evidence included in the written sources, including the Icelandic sagas and the medieval laws and documents. These sources provided specific examples of the strategies employed by members of the elite in Norway and the Northern Isles in achieving their ends, mostly their personal political ambitions. For example, alliances founded on marriage ties seem to have been very important (remember that Kalv Arnesson broke with the rest of his family over supporting King Olav and fled to his niece's husband, the earl of Orkney, for refuge). There is also evidence for marriage ties to the Scottish royal family and perhaps the native ruling family of Caithness from the early period of the earldom, as well as growing archaeological evidence for some level of interaction between the native Picts and the settlers. In addition, Fenton's work indicates interaction on basic social levels amongst the islands of the North Atlantic but excluding Norway. Based on this evidence for the nature of the Norse settlement in the Northern Isles, I suggested that ethnicity was not a dominant structuring relation in this particular case of colonization; separate ethnic identities seem to be a later development, beginning in the twelfth century. Instead I suggested that Schortman's discussion of salient identities and particularly his example of class identity in medieval western Europe are relevant for the case presented here. Norse society was hierarchical with the Norse elite having greater access to resources, including power. Their interaction with other elite groups was particularly pronounced in the fields of politics and religion. One can then ask whether this was the same in other examples of Norse colonization in this

period, that is, whether class was more important than ethnicity other Norse colonies of the Viking Age and whether the Norse elites in these colonies formed alliances with the native elites.

The Norse encountered native populations in both Greenland and in northern Norway as well as in the Northern Isles. In this chapter I will examine briefly the nature of the contact with the native populations in these areas, especially the Inuit and the Saami, and will attempt to compare the strategies employed by the colonizers in their interaction with these native populations and with their homeland to the situation in Orkney and Shetland. Specifically, I will attempt to determine whether the same fields of discourse were dominant in structuring these societies.

Greenland and the Inuit

Unlike the other Norse settlements in the North Atlantic, the Norse colony in Greenland did not survive down to modern times. A survey of its known development is a useful place to begin the discussion of the Norse strategy in this colony. It was founded around AD 1000 by Eirik the Red and had disappeared by 1500. There were two settlements, the Eastern and Western Settlements (See Fig. 1.1), and the last reliable written source refers to a wedding at Hvalsey Church in 1408. The settlement periods may be defined as follows:

Landnám (Land-taking) Phase	c. 980-1050
Early Settlement Period	c. 1050-1125
Middle Settlement Period	c. 1125-1350
Late Settlement Period	c. 1350-end of settlement (Keller 1989:316)

The maximum population of the settlements is estimated at 4-6000, with the Eastern Settlement being the longer lasting of the two. The Western Settlement appears to have been abandoned by 1350. Norse Greenland society had tings, churches and a cathedral, and eventually a bishop. There was marked social stratification which is

visible in farm and building sizes. Church architecture seems to have followed developments in contemporary Scandinavia, and Greenland also took part in the transition of certain artifact types, e.g., to double sided combs (McGovern 1985:282).

Much of the research on this Norse colony has been an attempt to explain why the settlement failed. As Jette Arneborg (1988) notes, these explanations range from starvation, degeneration and extinction as a result of isolation from Europe, epidemics, massacre by Eskimos or English pirates, to emigration to America or back to Iceland. These studies provide several useful ideas about how the Norse settlement was organized, but as will become evident in the following discussion, most of the analysis has been based on the interaction (or lack of it) with Europe. Very little has been said about the Norse interaction with the native populations of Greenland and North America.

Recently Thomas McGovern (1985) tried to put the failure of the Greenland colony into a wider European perspective using Wallerstein's World Systems Theory. In this analysis, the Norse colony in Greenland is seen as a High Medieval society lying on the periphery of the European market. The organization of the Church in Greenland is interpreted as being the same as that in medieval Europe; that is, churches had become independent of secular lords and were able to enforce the demands of the Roman Church in a variety of spheres, particularly in taxation and the payment of Peter's Pence.

McGovern notes that even after the onset of the Little Ice Age, the Norse Greenlanders continued to engage in what we might deem unoptimal behavior: they continued the communal Nordrsetur hunts which produced the ivory needed for export, but which were dangerous and labor intensive, and they continued to build an inordinate number of churches with imported stained glass and bells. The archaeological evidence

(e.g., size of structures in the ruin groups¹) gives clear indications of a hierarchical society and McGovern interprets certain medieval sources as showing that in the mid-fourteenth century the Church in Greenland controlled two-thirds of the best grazing land (1985:280).

The Norse in Greenland depended on animal husbandry (imported cattle and sheep) as well as hunting terrestrial and marine species. The Nordrsetur hunt was specifically geared to obtaining the luxuries in demand in Europe. McGovern credits the elite with the job of organizing the hunt and collecting the catch for export or payment of taxes in Europe. In return, Norse Greenland could obtain both "technomic and ideotechnic" needs such as iron tools, stained glass, ship timbers and church bells (McGovern 1985:316). There is some material evidence for trading contact between Iceland and possibly Greenland and Nidaros from the mid-twelfth to late thirteenth centuries in the rune-inscribed wooden ownership tags found in Trondheim (Hagland 1986).

Christian Keller's (1991) recent critique of McGovern's work challenges the notion that Norse Greenland was a part of High Medieval European society. He notes that the emigration across the Atlantic was a conservative movement by the elite of an old social order in response to the growth of kingship in Norway. This social order sought to maintain its position in a new land and, according to Keller, the costly stone churches were actually a sign of wealthy chieftains, not of a powerful Church hierarchy.

Keller assumes that Norse Greenland society must have been greatly influenced by Icelandic society and that the social organization of the two areas had common

¹In Greenland the Norse settlements are preserved in standing groups of ruins which provide a fossilized picture of the extent of settlement. In many cases the standing ruins have been mapped, but without excavation it is not possible to identify the function of the various structures with certainty. However, the size of the different groups--probably farmsteads--can be measured and compared as well as the distance from the largest centers.

features (1989:41-42). During the 'free-state' or commonwealth period Iceland was not a true state, but rather a federation of chiefdoms. Keller suggests that Greenland also remained a Viking/Early Medieval type of society relying on subsistence production, a society which retained a chiefdom organization, perhaps with a common ting. This society may have resented its submission to the Norwegian Crown in 1260 and attempts to impose the Gregorian Reforms on the Church, a resentment which may have led to further isolation from Europe (Keller 1991:128-29).

Keller (1989:172-175) has discussed the development of vernacular architecture in Scandinavia and in Norse Greenland. He points out that the houses found in the court sites (mentioned in Chapter 4, especially note 3) in Norway had outer protective walls of stone or turf (although he seems to gloss over the presence of this feature in a number of houses not part of court sites) and suggests that more attention should be paid to these court sites as a source of comparative material for the buildings in Greenland. As I have noted before, the court sites lasted into the Viking Period in northern Norway and there was usually a short wall facing the courtyard which did not have a protective outer wall. This is similar to one group of churches in Greenland which Krogh suggests were an adaptation to the lack of wood in Greenland (Keller 1989:202). For Keller it is not surprising that the same techniques should be used for the construction of court sites and churches since it is evident that the court sites had religious or socio-political standing (1989:202). Another possible link with northern Norway which has not been investigated yet are these turf churches: there are ruins of at least 50 turf churches in northern Norway, but this material has not been examined (Keller 1989:177; Bertelsen 1991). Still, it suggests a possible contact with northern Norway, where it appears Iron Age/Viking social organization was longer lived than in the south (e.g., at Borg).

Others have discussed the development of vernacular architecture in Greenland and its connection with social organization. The accepted farm typology and chronology, based on Roussell's work, has been the long house, the passage house and the centralized house with the last being the most recent type.² I will not go into an extensive discussion of these types and the nuances that Roussell's typology glosses over. However, in an interesting article from 1981 Claus Andreasen challenged the notion that the long house with a long hall was a form that belonged exclusively to the early settlement period. Instead, he noted the connection between the long houses with halls and the churches and suggested that the long house evolved from the dwelling of the many to the dwelling of the few, the upper class farmers who controlled the churches (Andreasen 1981:183). Separate structures were built for various economic activities since these large coastal farms often had room to spread out over good pasture land, while the other farms had less room at their disposal and therefore had to develop a centralized farm in order to concentrate the buildings as much as possible.

Joel Berglund has also written on the same subject (1982). He also argues that the long hall, which originated in the Viking Period long house, continued as an upper class tradition. These halls were used for receiving guests and holding feasts, among other things, and the higher one's status the larger one's hall and the greater the number of guests one could entertain. He points out that long halls have been found at four major farms--Herjolfsnes, Hvalsey, Gardar and Brattahlid (Berglund 1982:275). According to Berglund, these farms were clerical administration centers representing the administrative cornerstones of the Eastern Settlement, but Keller believes they may actually have been secular administration centers (Keller 1989:309). In any case, this

²According to Albrethsen (1982:269), the long house had one or more rooms arranged in a line, possibly with annexes along one long wall, the passage house had rooms in row around one or more passages, and the centralized house or farm had the dwelling and outbuildings built together in a block.

supports Andreasen's claim that the long halls were employed as status markers even late in the settlement period and also indicates another conservative aspect of Norse Greenland society. Keller (1989:170) suggests that this social differentiation in house types may indicate three things: that a number of farmers were not independent, that settlement expansion and clearing of new land was not entirely a matter of free choice, and that some of the ruin groups may have been crofts or tenant farms. Keller (1989:176) also notes Albrethsen's suggestion (1982) that Greenland may have been the innovation center for house types which then spread to Iceland.

These suggestions about the meaning of house types lead to a great problem for the archaeologist, however. They mean that house types can no longer be used to date sites, since one cannot use a house type in one instance to show the longevity of an archaic feature and then turn around and use the same type as evidence for early settlement. Clearly modern excavation is needed to clear up some of these points.

Keller follows Arneborg (1991) in questioning the dominant position of the Church in Norse Greenland. According to Arneborg (1991:148), rather than believing the account in *The Story of Einar Sökkason* that the Greenlandic farmers themselves wanted a bishop, it is more reasonable to see the establishment of the the bishopric in Greenland as part of the organization of the Norwegian church provinces in the early twelfth century. Keller and Arneborg both argue that the proprietary church system lived on in Iceland and Greenland long after it had been abandoned in Norway. Consequently, it was strongly influenced by secular forces and the Gregorian Church reform did not win an easy victory in Norse Greenland. As Arneborg points out (1991:148), "In a society where ownership by families was accepted, it seems nearly impossible that the chieftains would have handed over Gardar to the institution 'the Roman Church' at the very first, and it is also hard to believe that they would have

handed over one of the best farms in the settlement to a foreigner like Arnald [the first bishop]." She suggests that although the bishops probably did live at Gardar, they may have been under some sort of secular control--possibly an explanation for the bishops' apparent dislike of staying in Greenland.

Keller also argues that the Church did not actually "own" such a large proportion of the productive land by the mid-fourteenth century as others (e.g., McGovern) have claimed. Rather, the Church was entitled to a certain portion of the land rents from these farms. The notion of "juridical person" which would make it possible for a thing, e.g., the Church, to own something was not introduced until Canon Law and the Gregorian Church reforms actually became effective (1991:136).

Keller also finds hints that the Celtic Church had some influence on Christianity in Norse Greenland and in Iceland, e.g., in the circular churchyards which Keller suggests "are evidence of a Celtic Christian mission, being a forerunner for, or coterminous with, the mission from the Roman Catholic Church which seems to have favored a rectangular layout" (1991:134). The formal connection of the Church in Greenland with the Roman Catholic Church did not come until 1123 with the appointment of a bishop to Greenland (Keller 1989:190) and even then this may only have been the official arrangement. The construction of costly churches in the fourteenth century may indicate a demonstration of religious and economic power by the richest clans rather than the strength of episcopal power (Keller 1989:288).

Two possible explanations for this conservatism are suggested; first, that Celtic Christianity originally fit into the existing social structure since it was the product of a society similar in many respects to that in Norse Greenland with chieftains, an aristocracy and strong kinship organization. The second, historical, explanation arises from the fact that the proprietary church system continued in Iceland and probably in

Greenland after it was officially abandoned in Norway, thus delaying the arrival of Church reforms in these areas (Keller 1991:134-35). In other words, the reforms were introduced later than in Norway, and they probably met with greater resistance because they did not fit so well into the existing social structure.

Arneborg (1991:149) argues that in the middle of the fourteenth century a deadlock seems to have been reached between Greenland and the Roman Church, perhaps because the Church increased its demands on the Greenlandic church owners. The Icelanders were forced into a compromise in 1297, but there is no proof that the Greenlanders also submitted. On the contrary, the fact that the last bishop resided in Greenland from AD 1368-1378 indicates that the Greenlanders did not cooperate. Keller suggests that medieval accounts of a reversion to paganism in Norse Greenland may actually be a sign of the Greenlanders' resistance to Church reforms and to paying taxes. Further, the fact that Icelanders present at the wedding in Hvalsey Church in 1408 later had to attest that it was carried out following the practice of the Roman Church suggests that even the Icelanders "did not have much trust in the will of the Greenlanders to live by the laws of the Roman Church" (Arneborg 1991:149). Some of these accounts also imply that the Norse emigrated to America or that the Skraelings threatened the Norse settlements and their religious beliefs, but these reports may simply be attempts at explanation by later scholars. Though he does not claim that these sources are impeccable, Keller believes that "their apparent agreement on this issue may indicate that there was fire beneath the smoke" (1991:136).

Arneborg (1988) has discussed these medieval sources in detail and has raised serious questions about their trustworthiness. She also concludes that there is no reason to believe, on the basis of these medieval reports from Greenland and Iceland, that the Western Settlement was attacked and wiped out by Eskimos, although she does not

doubt that there were altercations between the two groups (1988:310). There may have been small conflicts, but perhaps the reason for the 1379 report in the *Icelandic Annals* of a Skraeling attack on the Western Settlement was that this episode was so serious that either the Norse Greenlanders or travelers found it worth reporting (1988:310).

What Arneborg finds amazing about these sources is that none of them discusses problems or conflicts between the Norse and the native population. The *Historia Norvegiae* mentions the Skraelings and says that "They have no iron whatsoever and use walrus teeth for spears and sharp stones for knives" (Hansen 1991:15). It goes on to say that "When they are struck with weapons, their wounds are white, with no flow of blood while they are still alive, but when they die, the bleeding is almost endless..." (Hansen 1991:17). But this does not really give us much insight into the Norse-native relationship.

Arneborg does not find the evidence of the Inuit legends which contain stories of the Norse being killed by Inuit or pirates, first recorded in the nineteenth century, terribly helpful or convincing in attempting to get at the problem of interaction between the two groups. But if the written sources fail us, how much can we actually say on the basis of the archaeological material?

In fact, it appears that although the sources mention only "skraelings", there were three distinct native groups who encountered the Norse: the Point Revenge Indians in Markland and Vinland, or what was probably southern Labrador (perhaps ancestors of the Beothuck Indians of Newfoundland), the Dorset Paleoeskimos in northern Labrador, and the Thule Inuit who arrived in northern Greenland by the early twelfth century and who had expanded south to the Disko Bay area (the area of the Nordrsetur hunt) by the thirteenth century (McGhee 1984:8-9). They may also have occupied parts of eastern Arctic Canada.

McGhee (1982, 1984) has reviewed the archaeological evidence for contact between the Norse and the various native groups in North America as well as Greenland. There is very little material on which to base any hypotheses. There is only one Norse site in North America, that at L'Anse aux Meadows in Newfoundland, but there does not appear to have been any prolonged contact there. There are also two isolated finds. The Maine penny, found on a prehistoric Indian site near the mouth of Penobscot Bay, dates between 1065 and 1080 (McGhee 1984:13). The site itself has been dated to the twelfth or thirteenth century, and associated finds of stone artifacts, Ramah chert from northern Labrador and chalcedonies from the Bay of Fundy region, indicate indirect trade with regions to the north. McGhee concludes that the coin may have originated with the Dorset Paleoeskimos or it may indicate contact between the Norse and the Point Revenge Indians of central and southern Labrador.

The second isolated find is a small chert point found on the beach below the eroding Norse graveyard at Sandnes in Greenland (McGhee 1984:13). The style is consistent with that used by the Indians of southern Labrador and Newfoundland between AD 1000 and 1500.

There are two copper finds associated with the Dorset Paleoeskimo sites (McGhee 1984:14). One is a copper amulet, found on the east coast of Hudson Bay; analysis suggests that it is smelted copper similar to copper known from Norse sites in Greenland. The second piece of copper was found in Ungava Bay in a Dorset longhouse. In addition, a Dorset soapstone lamp was found at L'Anse aux Meadows. The Dorset occupation here predated the Norse, but the lamp was found above one of the sod-walled structures so it must have been brought to the site later, perhaps by the Norse. All these examples point to contact between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries.

Most of the Norse finds in Arctic Canada have been made in association with Thule Inuit sites. Objects such as fragments of smelted iron and pieces of smelted sheet copper have been found in contexts dating to the twelfth /thirteenth centuries. Several finds have been made on Ellesmere Island including fragments of chain mail, pieces of Norse woolen cloth with a weave common to the Viking settlement in Greenland, iron boat rivets, pieces of oak wood, and knife blades (Schledermann 1981). The associated Thule artifacts suggest an earlier date, but the range could be from the twelfth to fifteenth centuries (McGhee 1984:15-16). A second Ellesmere Island site has produced a portion of a bronze balance similar to examples known from other Norse sites (McGhee 1984:17).

From Devon Island come more fragments of smelted iron and part of a cast bronze bowl. And in a thirteenth-century Thule winter house on Baffin Island excavators discovered a small wooden figurine, carved "in the typical Thule 'silhouette' style with stumpy arms and a flat featureless face" (McGhee 1984:17). The figurine differs from other Thule figurines in that the costume seems to be a European style, a long robe with a cross incised on the front.³ It was apparently carved locally, since the Greenlandic Inuit depicted the Norse in a very conventional carving style (McGhee 1984:21).

McGhee concludes that, aside from the small amount of metal found on native sites, contact with the Norse did not bring any archaeologically visible changes to any of these groups. He points out that this was not a situation where the native groups were faced with an overwhelmingly superior technology: the Norse economy in Greenland with its dependence on hunting, fishing and limited farming could never have been

³Gulløv (1982) discusses seventeen carved figurines of humans and concludes that they indicate interaction between the Norse and Inuit. Two figurines were found on the northwest coast of Greenland and, according to Gulløv, are examples of Inuit portraits of the Norse. The Norse left a small runestone behind them in this area as well.

much more efficient than the Inuit economy, and certainly did not remain so when the climate began to deteriorate. One might then wonder if any aspects of native culture found their way into the Norse culture.

In 1976/77 the Inuit-Norse Project attempted to investigate the relationship between the Inuit and the Norse through new excavations in the Western Settlement (Andreasen 1978). An important part of this research was excavation of the Norse middens which would show what resources the Norse inhabitants exploited and how dependent they were on livestock and hunting. This information might then indicate where and when conflicts of interest with the Inuit took place. The researchers did not come upon any Inuit sites in the inner fjord area, so work was concentrated on the Norse middens at Niaquussat and Nipaitsoq along with the farm complex at Nipaitsoq (Andreasen 1978:72-73). This was the first time that an entire farm complex with midden was excavated systematically.

Radiocarbon dates from the midden indicate that Niaquussat began in the early eleventh century and that its latest layers date to the fourteenth century when the Western Settlement was abandoned (Andreasen 1980:136). It was a smaller farm and lay only a few kilometers from Sandnes, the main farm in the Western Settlement.

The farm at Nipaitsoq appears on the map to be isolated but could actually have been in communication with Sandnes year round. The midden here was thin and lacked the clear stratigraphy of the midden at Niaquussat, but the farm itself was almost completely excavated. This excavation revealed that the farm was of the centralized type with the dwelling and byre, at least eight rooms all together, built together in a block, not in a long house. This type is thought to be a late phenomenon in Greenland and the radiocarbon date from the youngest layer of the midden was AD 1450 +/- 50 (Andreasen 1980:136-137).

One unusual find from the excavation at Nipaitsoq was an unfinished miniature silver shield which was produced on the site. Heraldry experts have identified the design as clan Campbell in Scotland and date the piece to the first half of the fourteenth century (Andreasen 1980:139). This supports the dating of this type of farm complex to a late period of occupation. As Andreasen points out (1978:73) and as I demonstrated in Chapter 6, there were close contacts between Scotland and Norway in the Middle Ages so it is not impossible that a Scot had come to Greenland on a Norwegian ship. We should remember the possible evidence for trade between Nidaros and Greenland mentioned above. There might also have been direct contact between the Western Settlement and Scotland, but how extensive this contact was or which groups it may have involved is impossible to determine yet.

The evidence showed that whatever the reason for abandonment of the site, it could not have been hunger. There were remains of ptarmigan, reindeer, fish, seals, cows, sheep, goats and more (Andreasen 1978:73). In addition, there were signs of peaceful contact with the Inuit, e.g., an axe of Inuit type but with added non-Inuit characteristics which Andreasen suggests were copied from an Inuit prototype (1978:73). Many bones were split and worked with a burin, a technique which was unknown to the Vikings in Scandinavia and which Andreasen concludes was probably borrowed from the Inuit.

Otherwise there has been no evidence to date that the Norse learned any techniques from the native people. No harpoons have ever been found on a Norse site in Greenland and there seems to have been some sort of social barrier which prevented the Norse from adopting any of the Inuit hunting techniques (McGovern 1985:313). Norse clothing discovered in burials at Herjolfsnes preserved by permafrost reveal individuals in European clothing: "the last ceremonies at the cemetery were most

probably attended by men in tall impractical caps and women in narrow-waisted gowns with low necklines, providing little warmth" (Hansen 1991:22). No remains of skin clothing have been found associated with the Norse. McGhee (1984:22) suggests that the relations between the Norse and the natives with whom they had the closest contacts would have been based either on mutual respect or contempt, rather than submission of one group to another, and since neither adopted any traits from the other, contempt probably ruled the day. This explanation is not terribly enlightening about actual process, however. Andreasen (1978:73) suggests that contacts may have been peaceful, at least until the Inuit began moving south along the coast as the climate deteriorated, and at the same time the Norse seem to have become more and more dependent on hunting. He concludes that this would have led to competition for hunting resources along the coast and outer fjord area where the Inuit were settling. This competition may have led to violent conflict between the two groups. Gulløv suggests on the basis of radiocarbon dates from the Western Settlement that the Inuit and Norse may have coexisted here for at least two generations, each exploiting their own economic resources (1982:233-34). But, as Andreasen suggests, a deteriorating climate may have intensified the competition between the two groups.

McGovern (1985:312-314) has attempted to model the possible types of interaction which could have occurred. They are as follows:

1. unremitting hostility with blood feuds and raiding; friendly contact and exchange impossible
2. limited barter of expendable Norse artifacts for walrus and polar bear products from the Inuit; mixture of friendly exchange, mutual pilferage, and sometimes piracy as opportunity and perceived advantage dictated
3. significant regularized trade involving a large volume of goods; from hunting at Nordrsetur the Norse take on a middleman role supplying European goods to Greenlandic and perhaps Canadian Inuit in exchange for ivory, hides and furs

4. complete integration of Inuit and Norse subsistence economies and overseas trade
5. gradual absorption of the Norse both biologically and culturally by the Inuit

Although in earlier work McGovern deemphasized the possibility of barter and regular trade in the Norse-Inuit contact situation, he feels (1985:313) that the growing number of Norse artifacts found on Inuit sites dating to the period of Norse occupation in Greenland indicate exchange as well as plunder. He adds that, "The speed of the Inuit migration down the west coast of Greenland also suggests that the first option of unremitting hostility is improbable." Skeletal studies lend no credence to the fifth option⁴, and the fourth also does not seem to have occurred. This leaves the second and third, limited barter and regularized trade, with the second being more likely.

Thus we are left with a picture of a very conservative Norse society in Greenland which clung to certain aspects of its European identity (e.g., clothing and subsistence) in the face of extreme hardship. They may have been resisting reform efforts on the part of the Norwegian/Danish Crown and the Church, instead maintaining their Viking/Early Medieval social organization. The retention of large halls at four important farms is just one aspect of this conservatism. While it is clear that the Norse had contact with probably three different native groups, none of these had any visible archaeological effect on the Norse settlements, even after the climate began to deteriorate (see Chapter 1) and existence became even more difficult. For some reason, the Norse were not able to adapt their social organization to the harsh conditions of the Arctic and their colony perished. This is in stark contrast to the situation in the Northern Isles where the Viking and Norse history of the area is still remembered and the Scandinavian heritage still

⁴A recent study compared the teeth from individuals in Norse Greenland to populations in medieval Iceland and Norway. There was no evidence in the Greenland population of admixture between the Inuit and the Norse Greenlanders (Scott et al. 1991).

visible. Certainly many factors contributed to the demise of Norse Greenland--climate deterioration, distance from Europe, resistance to Inuit technology. But apart from climate deterioration these are also some of the factors which allowed the colony to maintain its traditional social organization and the chieftains to retain their power and position relative to the Church. All in all, the social barriers to change posited by McGovern (1985:313) were very effective. But we should not forget that the Norse colony in Greenland did survive for approximately 500 years.

Northern Norway and the Saami

At the same time the Vikings were sailing west over the North Atlantic, they also began to colonize more intensively the land to the north--northern Norway. This situation provides an interesting contrast to the Norse settlements in the Northern Isles and Greenland, because it is only here where both groups involved in the initial contact have survived as separate entities down to the present day.

There has been much debate since the nineteenth century over the question of when the Saami first appeared as a separate ethnic group. In the early twentieth century Anton Brøgger claimed that the Saami could not be the descendants of the Arctic Stone Age, but rather that they must represent an immigrant group (Storli 1986:43). Several other archaeologists followed this general theory, although the specific place of origin differed (eastern influence, middle or southern Swedish influence).

It was Povl Simonsen who changed the entire premise of the debate. He argued that the Saami first appeared 2000 years ago through a local development process which had started in the Stone Age, not as the result of immigration (Storli 1986:45). Today, Norwegian archaeologists are agreed on the theory of indigenous development. There is still much debate on why and how this development happened and was maintained, however.

Knut Odner (1983, 1985) has made important and stimulating contributions to this debate. According to him, Saami ethnicity originated as a result of interaction between hunters in northern Fenno-Scandia and farmers in southern Finland during the Early Roman Period (AD 0 -AD 300) (Odner 1985:8). Previously, according to Odner, there existed a heterogeneous population of hunters. The growth of separate ethnic identities allowed the Saami to trade with the farmers/trade intermediaries in southern Finland and thus to obtain iron and iron tools, trading furs in return. This is, then, a collaboration model of ethnicity, not a stress or competition model.

In the Viking period and Early Middle Ages the products of the Saami--furs, walrus tusks, rope of walrus hide--were important as gifts in the larger sphere of Central or Western Europe since gifts were important for the maintenance of the chieftain's power base. The Scandinavians are described in the Old Norse literature as being primarily agriculturalists in contrast to the Saami, who were hunters. Odner (1985:5) observes that "By contrasting the forms of production they defined a relationship between the Saami and the Scandinavians." This clear division was not a reality, however; large scale fishing was carried out by the Scandinavians and written sources also mention that the Saami had domestic animals and that they were competent boat builders. What is true is that the Saami needed iron and other metals for social reproduction, items which they did not produce themselves. They also relied on institutions outside their own society for the maintenance of their form of production: the authorities protected the rights of the Saami since a decline in Saami production would adversely affect their own position. So the two groups filled different ecological niches and the Saami attached themselves to the Scandinavian chieftains as hunting specialists. If they had not wanted to deal with the Scandinavians, they could easily have

disappeared into the wilderness (Odner 1985:6). This implies that relations between the two groups were fairly peaceful during this period.

According to Odner's argument, "Pan-Saami solidarity" as exhibited in a common burial rite, drums and bear burials did not emerge until the sixteenth or seventeenth century, then in response to the attempts of the Scandinavian nation-states to impose taxes and their religion. Throughout his argument, Odner stresses the importance of interaction in the development and maintenance of ethnicity.

Bjørnar Olsen has raised several objections in response to Odner's hypothesis. He questions the view that economic utility is the only reason for ethnic categorization (Olsen 1985:13). Olsen also questions Odner's emphasis on the importance of the Saami language in maintaining ethnic identity (1985:14). However, the biggest difference is his timetable for the emergence of a Saami ethnic identity. Olsen argues that the economic differentiation Odner dates to the Early Roman Period actually occurred as early as the Bronze Age and into the Pre-Roman Iron Age (1985:15). During these periods there seems to have been an abundance of bronze, and later of iron, in Fenno-Scandia while from the Roman Period to the beginning of the Viking Age there is a drastic reduction in metal in this area. Olsen also points out that the archaeological material does not suggest marked contacts with the area around the Gulf of Finland until the end of the Viking period.

Olsen suggests instead that the archaeological material indicates contacts between the metal-producing farming societies in Northern Fenno-Scandia already in the Early Bronze Age (1985:16). At the same time as eastern metals appear in the area, there is also a fairly homogeneous ceramic tradition (the asbestos ceramics). This incorporated some stylistic traits from the East European metal producing groups, for example in the use of textile impressions, but also partly developed its own design. Olsen concludes

(1985:17) that this "is an indication of an interactional context which has initiated ethnic processes similar to those Odner ascribes to the relationship between the Finns and the hunting population, and that the ceramics in this interactional context soon developed to be an ethnic idiom categorizing the hunter-gatherer societies." Thus the similarity in styles in the ceramics might be viewed as symbolic communication of solidarity with the metal-producing groups in the east. New dating of the textile ceramics puts their high point at 1500-900 BC, indicating that the intensification of contacts between Fenno-Scandia and the expanding metal-producers in the east occurred at this early date (Hansen 1990:235).

Our first written account of the relationship between the two groups comes to us from Alfred the Great's addition to his translation of Orosius' *History of the World* dating to about AD 890. This passage tells about Ottar, a north Norwegian chieftain, and his dealings with the Saami who, according to Ottar, were hunters and fishers who paid tribute, the so-called *finneskatt*, to the Norwegian chieftains. This tribute consisted of furs, walrus hide and feathers, and the account has been the basis of the belief that the *finneskatt* was the political and economic basis of the power of the chiefs. According to Storli (1986:50), there is a widely accepted belief that the strong position held by the north Norwegian chieftains during the Norwegian state formation process in the Viking period, a position we know from the Icelandic Saga literature, was due to their control of the fur trade which itself was based on the *finneskatt*. Some archaeologists, however, have emphasized the active role the Saami played in the fur trade, and Storli (1986:50) has suggested that the position of the chieftain was actually a prior condition for this trade.

Lars Ivar Hansen recently wrote a book providing an in-depth regional study of the interaction between the Norwegians and the Saami in southern Troms from AD 500

to 1600. In this study several types of source material are drawn together to provide a clearer picture of events. Some of Hansen's findings support Odner's thesis, although there are differences between the two. A summary of Hansen's work shows the importance of an interdisciplinary approach in research of this kind.

Hansen studied the Astafjord region of southern Troms. In analyzing the environmental conditions in the area he found that the apparent boundary between the hunting Saami and the agricultural Norwegians was not an ecological one. This is the same conclusion Audhild Schanche came to in her work, that is, that any clear and sudden settlement boundary does not seem to have any meaning judging from natural and geographical conditions (Hansen 1985:204). She concludes that it must therefore be interpreted as a symbolic border with cognitive roots, not functional ones. I will return to this idea in a moment.

Hansen also studied the farm names and tax records for the region under study. The medieval records give indications of land ownership patterns from about AD 1400 on. Hansen has traced which farms were in private hands, which belonged to the powerful Bjarkøy chiefdom and which were ultimately confiscated by the Norwegian king or donated to the Church. These records show a gradual expansion of Norwegian settlement from the outer regions of the fjord into the inner fjord region.

Bertelsen (1991:25) cautions against assuming that the 'farm' (and therefore the basic unit of social activity) in northern Norway was the same as the farm or *gård* known in southwestern Norway. In Old Norse this term meant fence, so the traditional medieval farm was 'the fenced area'. But there is no evidence that the term was used in northern Norway before the Late Medieval Period and it may not have had any meaning in the north before it was adopted as a technical term. The coastal farms in the Arctic

were structured differently from the other farms in Norway in that they were based on a division between terrestrial agricultural production and maritime hunting and fishing.

Still, the farm names as recorded in medieval documents can indicate the age of the occupation when one compares the Norwegian and Saami forms of the name. For example, certain name forms must have been adopted by the Saami before the form of the Old Norse plural changed (Hansen 1990:96). This could have occurred even before the Viking Age and, in any case, indicates interaction between the two groups during the period of Old Norse. Saami has preserved memories of the Old Norse farm name types for some farms which lay centrally located in the Norwegian settlement area (Hansen 1990:99). Saami names are more prevalent in the inner fjord area than in the outer fjords. Also, names which are clearly primarily of Saami origin are most prevalent farther north in the region. (Hansen 1990:108).

A study of loan words can also give some hint of the interaction between these two groups. There were several loans of words from Urnordic to Saami which are tied to the subsistence and adaptation forms which were the basis of the cultural diacritica for the Norwegians in the north in the Iron Age--agriculture and domestic animals (Hansen 1990:120). In addition, words connected with weaving, boatbuilding and the management of reindeer were also borrowed. Traveling in the opposite direction at an early date we have the word *rev*, or fox. Hansen interprets this borrowing as attempts on both sides to establish common symbols, in this last case in the sphere of fur trading. The adoption of the word for fox at an early date also indicates the existence of well established fur trading networks early on. In the case of loan words into Saami, Hansen suggests that this was part of a strategy to show solidarity with the other group (1990:126-128). This is the interaction strategy suggested by Olsen. The Saami could have found this expression of solidarity with the Norwegians very useful and they need

not have adopted the actual activities. Schanche observes that the Norwegians often looked to the Saami (or "Finns") because of their supposed abilities in witchcraft (in Hansen 1990:205). She suggests that this was a way for the Norwegians to communicate symbolic solidarity with the Saami.

I should also note that Storli (1986:56) has pointed out other developments at this time which support the thesis that a common Saami symbolic language arose during the Viking period rather than the later date suggested by Odner. The so-called "scree" type burials appear at least by AD 1000, the Saami seem to have had a unique way of carrying ring-shaped brooches, and the similarity between the Assebakte burials in Finnmark, the *gammetufter* or house sites in the mountains between Norway and Sweden and the hearths in Härjedalen all indicate such a common symbolic language around AD 1000. As she notes (1986:56), "the spatial organization of dwellings is a recognized way of communicating ethnic and symbolic community."

Written sources such as the *Historia Norvegiae* give some indications of the cognitive framework of the Norwegians. These sources refer to the land of the Saami as a general area, Finnmark, which is unpopulated, a wilderness. The Norwegians are mentioned as individual farmers, however. But the land of the Saami is seen as an area that the Norwegians do not control. In the sagas the Saami are most often mentioned in connection with the Norwegian elite. Hansen takes this as an expression of an ideology of the elite in Norway and Iceland, an elite which found this ideology in its interests in legitimating its own political position over all of Norway.

There are indications of how the inner fjord region was used and by whom. Medieval sources tell us that the king's or bishop's men had to travel into the fjord to find the Saami. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the inner fjord was known as the traditional core area for the coastal Saami. The base layer of a farm mound at

Innergård was radiocarbon dated to AD 570-660--before the beginning of the Viking period. This farm is known from the middle of the sixteenth century to have been one of the largest and most stable settlements in the area and the place in the region under investigation where the traditional coastal Saami settlement lasted the longest (Hansen 1990:119).

In the mountains there are three groups of remains which are important: the pit traps for reindeer, the house remains or *gammetufter*, and the deposits of metal objects including large numbers of Norwegian coins. According to Hansen (1990), these sites all seem to be part of the same specialized adaptation focused on reindeer in the Viking and Early Medieval periods. I will return to the interpretation of these sites below.

Through his analysis of all these types of data Hansen traces the development of interaction between the Norwegians and the Saami from before the Viking period until more modern times. In the Early Iron Age before AD 570, the Norwegian settlement was concentrated in the outer region of Vågsfjord with only a few points of support within Astafjord. In the Late Iron Age, after the Norwegian expansion over most of the islands of Rolla and Andørja in the outer fjord, the Bjarkøy/Trondenes chiefdom established itself as a power factor in Astafjord. Radiocarbon dating of the house remains at Bjarkøy falls into the Late Roman Iron Age (c. AD 300). Now the chiefdom assured itself of control over the centers of Norwegian population. This may have involved a series of independent farmers becoming tied to a redistributive economic system centered on the chiefdom. The chiefdom also assured itself control over important sailing routes into and out of the central parts of the fjords and the communication routes leading into the Saami hunting grounds in the inner fjord.

In the Viking Age the power of the chiefdom was strengthened and institutionalized in regard to exploiting the resources of the mountains. This involved

incorporating the Saami into the redistributive system controlled by the chiefdom. At the same time, and possibly the background for this development in the north, the Norwegian economy became more integrated into a system of bigger markets, and the Norwegian elite needed increased access to furs in order to maintain their position outside. The result of this in Astafjord was the founding of permanent transshipment sites in each of the four inner fjords, the Laberg-sites Hansen discusses. As I mentioned above, it is also at this time that we see the appearance of the pit-fall system, the *gammetufter* and the rich metal deposits with Norwegian coins in the mountains. According to Hansen (1990), this reveals to some extent the highly specialized adaptation the Saami were led to adopt in this period.⁵

Hansen suggests that the organized contact between the Saami and the chieftain's representatives occurred in the winter when the Saami stayed at the innermost part of the fjord. Military power may have been used on the part of the chiefdom to incorporate the Saami into this system, but it also had something to offer the Saami such as regular deliveries of items they needed and did not produce themselves. With all this organization on the part of the chiefdom, tension may have increased between the two groups of people and also stressed internal Saami society to the point where there was an added need to display one's "Saami-ness" both within Saami society and in relation to the outside.

⁵In her review of Hansen's book, Inger Zachrisson (1992) points out that at this stage we do not have dates for the trapping pits in the vicinity of the *gammetufter* so there is no way to know for sure that they are associated. She also disagrees with Hansen's interpretation of the *gammetufter* as Saami summer dwellings associated only with the specialized hunting of wild reindeer, suggesting instead that they may have been the site of *both* hunting and breeding of reindeer and therefore of a transition economy. She points out that elk were also an important resource. But on the whole her evaluation of Hansen's argument is favorable. Storli (1991) claims that the *gammetufter* should not be associated with Saami from the Norwegian coast, but rather from the Swedish side of the mountains, but Zachrisson (1992) does not accept this argument.

With the unification of Norway in the late Viking period and Middle Ages, the crown partially took over from the chiefdom and claimed the right to the *finneskatt*. Church institutions were built up in the area and were often given goods confiscated from the chiefdom. Thus the local redistributive system was replaced by two much superior systems--the Church and the Crown--which operated with a redistributive system on a national scale. In addition, the Church relied on agricultural production and, increasingly, on stockfish for its income. With the growth of importance of stockfish as a source of income, the crown lost interest in Saami products and the last time the *finneskatt* was collected was in 1310-1311.

Bertelsen (1991) has argued for the same profound changes beginning in the eleventh century and the great effect they had on the Arctic coastal settlements of Norway--the incorporation of Hålogaland into the formative Norwegian state and subsequent breakdown of the traditional local and regional institutions, the spread of Christianity and Church organization, and the integration of Norway into the European trade network. According to Bertelsen (1991:26):

Within a few hundred years...North Norway was transformed from an independent and distinctive region of the Norse area to a peripheral province related to urbanized Southern Norway. It is unlikely that this transformation of the society took place without any correlated consequences in the settlement pattern and the structure of the local societies. These consequences would have been reflected in the focus taken by farms and urban settlements.

One such change seems to have been the increased accumulation of farm mounds (accumulations of houses, middens, manure and other materials, usually 1-2 m but up to 5 m high) and a denser settlement pattern. Another was the increasing visibility of the differences between the Norwegians and the Saami along with Norwegian expansion into Saami areas.

On the Saami side we see a decrease in the number of Norwegian coins in the metal deposits after 1200, and they completely disappear after 1250. With the removal of the economic and institutional barrier to Norwegian settlement in the inner fjord and with the farmers now left to themselves to produce a surplus for taxes, we see an agrarian expansion into Saami areas after 1250. There was a further expansion into the inner fjords at the end of the High Middle Ages. This can be seen in the bequests of parts of farms to the Church. The new farms are again in private hands to begin with. This expansion corresponds with the complete absence of Norwegian coins in the metal deposits after 1250.

In the Late Middle Ages after 1350 there seems to have been a basic structural change among the Saami in subsistence and settlement patterns (Hansen 1990). On the coast a new pattern appears which is based on the resources of the coast and which depended on selling to and acquiring necessities from the growing Bergen trade. In comparison to the earlier pattern, settlement was decentralized over the fjord and coast area. Another group of Saami adapted instead to the supply and demand system which the Birkarler in Sweden were building from their base in Swedish and Finnish agricultural settlements along the Bothnian coast. In their need for fur, the Birkarler were a more direct heir to the Bjarkøy chieftains. This group of Saami was now oriented toward the East, not the West. The result of this split was a combined settlement pattern known from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

In his analysis of these developments Hansen makes the important point that we only have a record of what the Norwegian perspective was on the relations between the two groups. We see only the Norwegians' construction of social space in the farm names and the tax records. The Saami may have seen the landscape and the ethnic boundaries in a very different light.

One example of the Saami perspective may perhaps be seen in a bear grave recently discovered in the inner fjord. It has been dated to AD 1400-1640. Bear graves are clearly tied to a Saami cultural tradition, the myth in which a woman marries a bear. In the end, the bear is killed or allows itself to be killed. Hansen sees this as a symbolic expression that the Saami have conquered the opposition nature-culture and have found a way of life which is adapted to its foundation in nature. They therefore control the world by submitting to it. With the bear grave they put their mark on the landscape. Thus, such graves may codify the inner/outer fjord area from the Saami perspective.

Hansen, then, sees ethnic differentiation in the area from at least the Pre-Roman Iron Age. In time an economic differentiation developed which correlated with the ethnic differentiation and in the Viking period a common symbolic repertoire was developed. When the local institutions were displaced by the Crown and the Church and the economic system was altered, the previous construction of social space was no longer relevant. This opened opportunities for people to take advantage and redefine the ethnic boundaries and these new interactions formed the basis for the establishment and maintenance of new ethnic boundaries. Because of the break in the economic system in the Middle Ages there was a change in how ethnicity was defined. This partially explains the difficulty in finding Saami remains older than the Middle Ages. In this context I will mention two early medieval house sites from northern Norway listed in Appendix 1, Eiterjord and Vestvatn. Both were originally identified as Norwegian with a strong Saami influence, but the excavator now considers them to be Saami with Norwegian influence (Stamsø Munch pers. comm. 1993), so even in the Viking Age/Middle Ages there were apparently Saami whose houses, at any rate, were not radically different from Norwegian ones. The occupants of these houses seem to have depended on agriculture, so we should be careful about assigning too rigid a set of

cultural practices to the Saami of any period since such definitions may make the Saami (or any other group) more difficult to 'see' archaeologically.

Bjørnar Olsen (1987) has investigated developments among the Saami in the Varanger area of Norway from AD 1300 to 1700 (see Fig. 1.2). He utilizes Giddens's concept of time-space edges to explain why the loss of egalitarianism and growth of reindeer pastoralism and specialized fishing did not occur among the Skolt Saami in the border area between Norway, Finland and Russia. The term time-space edge refers to forms of contact, possibly of interdependence, between different structural types of society. Giddens claims that these are edges where social transformation may occur, that they are unstable intersections between different modes of social organization. Such a time-space edge must also have existed between the Norse Greenlanders and the Inuit, and clearly between the earlier Saami and the Norwegian farmers in the north.⁶

After AD 1300 there were permanent settlements of other non-Saami ethnic groups in the Varanger area. For example, in 1307 the Norwegian town of Vardø was founded and a church built there. The Norwegian provincial governor was based there. At the same time, the Russians were expanding from the east towards the Varanger area.

Olsen argues that there was a basic contradiction within traditional Saami society between prestige and egalitarianism (1987:71-72): "The fact that the principle of equal access to resources, as manifested in the rule of sharing, is connected to an opposite principle of prestige, is a contradiction because the two principles at the same time negate and presuppose one another simultaneously [sic]." But there were other contradictions which developed along the time-space edge, for example, the one

⁶Pollen analysis has shown that farming began in Arctic Norway as early as 2000 BC, although whether the introduction of farming was the result of immigration of groups of people or simply the adoption of ideas from southern Scandinavia is still unclear (Johansen 1982). During the Viking and Medieval Periods, however, there was an influx of Norwegian settlers, who were farmers, from southern Norway.

between the Saami religion and the Norwegian Lutheran mission. The Norwegians also introduced the concept of land ownership. Thus the whole social environment was changed and questioned by the contact with the Norwegians. The Saami in the Varanger sii'da (hunting bands) became reindeer pastoralists and their society was transformed.

But the same did not happen to the sii'da on the southeast side of Varanger fjord. Here the role of the elders in the reproduction of the sii'da was maintained. Olsen suggests that this was due in part to their contact with the Russian church. Both the traditional Russian village organization and the Greek Orthodox religious system privilege elders in the community. This was also a characteristic of the Russian church organization. Therefore, when this system was applied to the Skolt Saami no conflicts were produced; rather, the new system "was easily transformed into the structure of the Skolt Saami society and contributed to a reinforcement and formalization of the elders' power position" (Olsen 1987:77). The ritual and symbolic repertoire of the Greek Orthodox church was also adopted without apparent conflicts. The Lutheran system which was forced on the Western Saami had a limited symbolic and ritual repertoire, however, so the abolition of the Saami system was not replaced with anything new here.

Olsen thus makes use of Giddens's concept of time-space edges, arguing that they provide a favorable habitus for the development of antagonisms and therefore for social change, as we see in the case of the Western Saami sii'das. But the Skolt Saami were able to continue to reproduce their traditional society. The difference seems to be in each group's response to the Lutheran or Russian church. Since the Russian church emphasized the same values--age, rituals and tradition--the social power of the elders was reinforced, not weakened, and they were able to neutralize other conflicts which accumulated along the time-space edges.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have described the colonization experience of the Norse in Greenland and in northern Norway. As I pointed out at the beginning of the chapter, the colonization of northern Norway is the only example involving the Norse in the North Atlantic where both contact groups still exist side by side in the modern world. In both cases discussed in this chapter we have examples of time-space edges where, according to Giddens, we may expect to find social transformations because of the unstable intersection of different modes of social organization. And in both cases the colonized population survived, even if in a transformed state. It was the Norse colonizers in Greenland who were unable to transform their society to meet the demands of their new home. It is still impossible to determine how extensive the contact was between the Norse and the Inuit and other natives in North America, but perhaps in Greenland there were really two time-space edges, the one between the Norse settlers and the Inuit and, if Keller is right in asserting the Viking character of Norse Greenland society as opposed to the High Medieval society of Norway, the one between the settlers and the homeland. In this case the settlers would have been in a highly unstable situation even before one begins to consider the problems of climate and distance. And the situation could only become more tense as Norway tried to impose Church reforms on Norse Greenland society at the same time that it was coming into closer contact with the Inuit. Unlike the case of the Northern Isles, there is no evidence that the Norse elite recognized common interests with an Inuit elite, that is, that there a common class identity that reached across ethnic boundaries. Finally, unlike the situation in northern Norway with the Saami, the Norse and Inuit were not dependent on each other for anything and there do not seem to be any examples of attempts to build a common symbolic repertoire as Hansen has described for the Norwegian-Saami interaction.

But in northern Norway the two groups succeeded in differentiating themselves economically in the Viking period while still depending on each other, and both groups maintained their identity. As Odner (1983, 1985) noted, some of the differences between the groups claimed in the medieval literature were not real differences in fact (e.g., the Saami were also boatbuilders). The adoption of ethnic markers seems to have facilitated contact between the two groups rather than hindered it. The trade between the two groups was facilitated by the Norse elite, if not also the Saami elite. And the experience of the Skolt Saami shows that they could incorporate some foreign influences (e.g., Greek Orthodox Christianity) if these did not conflict with traditional structures in Saami society. In Keller's notion of Norse Greenland society the Celtic church could have been incorporated without radical disruption of the society for the same reasons--it did not conflict with the chieftdom organization of Viking society and indeed further enhanced the position of the chieftains, while the Roman church organization did conflict and was consequently resisted. When the system which developed in the Viking Age fell apart in the Middle Ages, the Saami were still able to change and take on a new niche rather than be obliterated by the encroaching Norse society, something the Norse settlers of Greenland seem to have been incapable of doing.

Before leaving the subject of the Norse settlements in the north and in Greenland, I would like to turn once more to Bertelsen's (1991) discussion of the northeast Atlantic periphery, a discussion which raises some interesting possibilities. He includes Greenland, Iceland, Faroe and northern Norway in this area, seeing the Scottish Isles (presumably the Northern and Western Isles) and the west coast of Norway south of Trondheim as contact zones with the urbanized parts of Scandinavia and Britain. Bertelsen has noticed several common features of the Norse settlements in this area. For example, even though the mixed maritime/terrestrial economy does not

seem to have been dominant in Iceland, there are features in Iceland very similar to the farm mounds of northern Norway. Such features have also been found on the islands of Sanday and North Ronaldsay in Orkney (see also Davidson et al. 1983, 1986). In addition, a boat grave dating to the ninth century was recently found on Sanday and contained a man, woman and child along with numerous artifacts including a bone comb, 25 gaming pieces, a sword and scabbard and a whalebone plaque (Brundle pers comm). This plaque may have been used for ironing linen and such plaques are also known from northern Norway. The technique of building with turf walls is common to northern Norway and Iceland (Bertelsen 1991: 27). Finally, the turf-walled churches of the Atlantic islands are also part of the material culture of northern Norway.

As I noted in Chapter 4, the material culture of northern Norway displays an unbroken tradition from the Iron Age through the Middle Ages. The site at Borg indicates the continued strength of the chieftain organization of society into the Viking period, at least in the north. It would be a mistake to view northern Norwegian society as a marginal one and it may also be time to reevaluate the long-accepted view that most of the Norse settlers in the North Atlantic came from southwestern Norway. Certainly many of them did come from the southwest, but it is possible that an important portion of the emigrants came from the north. The evidence cited above should certainly inspire more inquiry on this point. As Bertelsen observes (1991: 28), "...it is a fact that some of the settlers came from [northern Norway], and their influence on later cultural developments may have been of some weight because they possessed cultural tools (especially in technology) that were relevant to the new environment." We can also suggest that their practical knowledge of social structure in their chiefdom-based society was useful in the socially conservative environment in the west.

In Chapter 8 I will attempt to tie these examples to the primary example in this project, that of the Norse colonization of the Northern Isles. I will compare the apparent strategies of the groups involved and attempt to find common threads and important differences in the three examples presented. These strategies will be viewed from the perspective of Giddens's structuration theory and Barrett's explicitly archaeological formulation of the concepts of fields of discourse, perspectives I have already begun to introduce into my discussion.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

Summary of Preceding Discussion

In the preceding chapters I attempted to do several things. First I addressed the question of the Pictish-Norse interface in the Northern Isles. This seems to have been considerably more complicated than previously thought, and statements that the native population was either killed off or immediately enslaved can no longer be accepted automatically. In fact, excavations in the Northern Isles in the last twenty years have provided clear evidence for interaction between the Pictish natives and Norse settlers, but no clear signs of violence. Furthermore, Birthe Weber's work with the combs from the Northern Isles suggests contact between Norway and the Northern Isles even before the actual known settlement began in the ninth century.

The Houses

I then discussed the importance of vernacular architecture in general and provided a justification for why rectilinear architecture should be seen as evidence for Viking/Norse settlement in the Northern Isles. This is an assumption which is often stated baldly with no further comment deemed necessary. In the case of the Northern Isles this assumption does appear to be valid, but very few Pictish houses are currently known, so the situation may change in the future.

In Chapters 4 and 5 I presented the bulk of the archaeological evidence currently available for house sites in Norway dating from the Viking Period (c. AD 800-1050) and Medieval Period up to the Black Death (c. AD 1050-1350) and in the Northern Isles dating from the Viking Period (c. AD 800-1100) and Late Norse Period (c. AD 1100-1500). Many of the Norwegian sites were excavated before modern excavation

techniques were developed so, the reports are not as detailed as one would wish. For example, in many cases the houses were merely emptied out during excavation; the stones which had fallen into the building were not removed so possible timber wall lines could not be discovered. Several houses exhibited more than one phase of occupation (e.g., Migration Period and Medieval), but the excavators did not distinguish between the cultural levels carefully enough to be able to determine whether occupation was continuous or not. The artifact distributions within the houses are also rarely available, making it difficult to suggest internal divisions in the house, although Myhre (1980) makes a good case for his interpretations; his analysis was followed here. Myhre's work makes it clear that there was a variety of possible house layouts known to the Norse settlers in the West and the additional material included in Appendix 1 supports this conclusion. One cannot simply point to one Norwegian example as the source for 'the' Norse building style in the islands of the North Atlantic without providing a convincing argument for why this plan apparently had a greater meaning for the emigrants than any other. It may be that long houses with bowed walls and a central hearth were important symbolically or that they were typical for the wealthier levels of society which led the move west, but much more work needs to be done on this question before any conclusions can be drawn. Furthermore, the presence of bowed walls in Norse houses in Shetland and Orkney is distinctly underwhelming. It would also be interesting, then, to compare the Norse structures in the Northern Isles with those in Faroe and Iceland where these features seem to be more widespread. Unfortunately, one runs into the same problem here of dated excavations and lack of published (or at least readily available) reports.

Finally, few Norwegian sites have been excavated with the detail which would allow reconstructions to be suggested, although Komber's work on Iron Age houses is

very useful in providing a three dimensional picture of how these structures looked. The situation is little better in the Northern Isles, although here it seems to be due partly to poor preservation and to the lack of funding to carry out large excavations which would uncover entire structures. Perhaps Komber's work will encourage future excavators to take more time to record details, e.g., the shape, angle and packing of post holes, so that more accurate reconstructions can be arrived at.

Some of the problems with the Norwegian material are also evident in the material from the Northern Isles, but currently the most frustrating problem is the lack of complete publication for several of the sites. Although most of the Viking and Norse house sites in the Northern Isles have been excavated since the mid-1960s (with the exception of Jarlishof), the published reports on several of them are inadequate for a study of the internal arrangement of the house. Several of the more recently excavated sites are currently in the post-excavation stage and the reports can be expected soon (e.g., Morris's work on the Brough of Birsay, Hunter's report on Pool, Crawford's report on Da Biggins, and Bigelow's report on Sandwick).

Besides providing more information on the structures themselves, these reports will also (one hopes) make available the artifact inventories from these sites. This is information which is still lacking from several of the excavated sites from the Northern Isles. In spite of the sketchiness of the published data, however, it is still possible to see continuities in the artifactual material between Norway and the Northern Isles in the approximately 600 years included in this study, although there are variations over time and space. For example, the baking plates which were introduced in Norway around AD 1100 also appear on Norse sites in Shetland, but they are very rare in the material from Orkney. Whether this is connected to differing food preparation practices or to differing needs for imported grain or to some as yet unknown reason is not clear. Other

artifact groups also show continuing contact and interaction with Norway--bone and antler combs, square soapstone lamps and gaming pieces to name a few.

In Chapter 6 I turned to the written sources including the Icelandic sagas, particularly *Orkneyinga Saga*. These demonstrated that distinctions were made between different rooms or regions in the house even though internal divisions are often difficult to find archaeologically. This reinforces Myhre's conclusion that such divisions existed even back into the Early Iron Age, since the form of the buildings is so constant over the entire Iron Age. There is a change over time evident in saga accounts of the Viking and Middle Ages: in the earlier period the sagas refer to the hall or *skáli* while later on there are references to the *stofa*, an innovation which had a European origin and which eventually took over much of the importance of the *skáli*.

Changes in Society

As I noted in Chapter 6, the hall seems to have lost its meaning as personal political bonds lost their importance. It was no longer necessary to be able to entertain large numbers of people--men?--in one's drinking hall. Instead, the growing bureaucratization of society led to more formal bonds between the king and the vast majority of his subjects. Those who still had personal ties to the king owed him their allegiance along with their often newly-elevated social position in the royal bureaucracy; the flexibility of Viking Period society disappeared. But in Greenland there is some evidence that the hall did retain its importance, although it was confined to only the most important farms in the Eastern Settlement. This supports Keller's contention that Norse society in Greenland retained a Viking/Early Medieval structure rather than becoming part of High Medieval society in Europe. If this is the case, the hall would still be important for the chieftains as they provided the necessary feasts which supported the

personal ties in such a society and which helped them maintain their prestige and position.

The few descriptions of feasts included in Chapter 6 also illustrate the importance of one's position in space relative to others present. In addition, in the earlier period it seems that the north or northeast corner of the hall may have had special religious or ritual significance, perhaps related to ancestor worship. The chieftain's hall at Borg in Lofoten, where three of the *gullgubber*, often associated with fertility cult practices, were found in the north post hole of the hall, is a concrete example of this. Not only that, they were found under a stone at the bottom of the hole indicating they had been placed there on purpose. Room III of the Migration Period house at Ullandhaug 3 produced similar evidence of ritual activity. Here there were two pits on either side of one of the hearths, one with a flint dagger from the Bronze Age and one with a smooth beach pebble (35 x 25 cm) of quartzite (Myhre 1980:253-56). Myhre suggests that the dagger was for protecting the house, just as stone axes and other stone implements were built into the walls of houses in historic times for protection. He connects the smooth pebble with the phallus-shaped 'holy white stones' of the Migration Period, also associated with fertility cults.

The saga accounts of chieftains tossing the pedestals of the high seat overboard and then settling where they came ashore in Iceland may be another indication of their religious significance. Some of the descriptions of seating arrangements in the sagas also indicate that the earlier high-status seat, the *ondvegi*, was near the end of one of the long walls. Important guests would be seated next to and across from the host.

According to *Heimskringla*, Olav Kyrre moved the high seat (*hásæti*) from the middle of the long wall to the gable wall as well as changing the position of the hearth. This high seat may not have had the same symbolic connotations as the *ondvegi* in the

corner; it seems to have been more political without the religious connections of the earlier high-status seat, but it still made use of the prestige associated with the *ondvegi*. This change occurred at a time when the kings in Norway were attempting to extend their political authority and make it legitimate. Therefore, it would not be at all surprising if they manipulated a well-known symbol of authority and modified it for their own purposes. Moving the prestige seat to the end of the hall mirrored the political developments of the Middle Ages in which the king and ruling elite became increasingly separated from and less dependent on the peasants.

Food Preparation and the Position of Women

The hearth also no longer formed a focal point around which interaction within the house was focused. It was removed from its more central position to a corner of the room. This change in position, along with the introduction of baking plates, suggests that food preparation practices also changed at this time in Norway. Baking plates are associated with flatbread, a staple food in Norway from the Middle Ages to modern times. The interesting question remains whether flatbread was introduced at the same time as the baking plates or whether the utensils for preparing it changed at this time. It seems that there was a gradual change in the location of food preparation from the early Viking Period and on into the Middle Ages: in the earlier period food preparation took place in the *eldhus* or *skáli*, along with other activities, and these rooms had open fuel-consuming hearths. The open central hearths and feasting itself contributed to the communal aspects of Viking society where generosity was highly valued. The corner hearth of the *stofa*, however, was not suited to preparing food for large feasts or as a focal point around which people could gather and eat (or drink). Furthermore, its peripheral position in the room may indicate that food preparation itself was no longer recognized as an important and central element in social reproduction. As I have already

noted, feasting lost its importance at this time as Norwegian society became more hierarchical with the growth of a single monarchy and the Church.

The decreasing importance of the communal feasts may also indicate a change in the position of women in medieval Norwegian society; i.e., they were marginalized and their labor as food preparers may have lost its symbolic importance in social reproduction as feasting lost its role in society. This marginalization may also have occurred in textile production as the new horizontal loom replaced the vertical loom and men took over commercial weaving. Since slavery declined in Norway in the late twelfth to thirteenth century (Karras 1988:136), slaves could not have taken over the labor of food preparation. The importance of servants in the household is more difficult to judge. Much more data must be collected from a variety of sources before the claim that women were increasingly marginalized through the Middle Ages could be sustained, however.

Interaction Between Norway and the Northern Isles

From a consideration of various aspects of architecture and its importance in structuring and being structured by day-to-day life, I moved on to other areas where interaction between Norway and the Northern Isles can be identified. The encounters between individuals are important because they are the building blocks of the social integration which articulates the institutions of social systems. The social position of the individuals involved is also important. The sagas make it clear that marriage alliances were very important in establishing ties between members of the elite, although these alliances could sometimes lead to the problem of conflicting loyalties. There were kinship networks within the Northern Isles and between Norway and particularly Orkney, not to mention alliances with native families in Scotland from an early date.

Much of the political discourse in the society of the Northern Isles was played out through these alliances.

The field of political discourse also intersected with the field of religious discourse. It is generally accepted that in Iron Age Norway the local chieftain performed important religious functions in addition to political and economic ones, and the hall may have been the site of sacrifices (e.g., at Borg and Ullandhaug) as well as feasts. Thus the local chieftain was the focal point for several spheres of activity and it is difficult to separate his religious from his political and economic functions. When Christianity was first introduced it could be incorporated into the prevailing social system through the use of proprietary churches which allowed the local chieftain to retain his authority within the religious sphere. The religious was still not separated from the political or the economic, since taxes were collected by the owner of the church for its support. Proprietary churches lasted longer in Iceland and Greenland than they did in Norway and the Northern Isles, just as the power and authority of the chieftains lasted longer in these more distant colonies. The kings of Norway and the earls of Orkney made use of the Church and its hierarchical ideology as they attempted to extend their authority at the expense of their rivals, and assisted the Church in imposing its reforms and taxes on the population. So while the nature of religious discourse changed over time, religion was still used politically and imbued with political meaning.

I also included a discussion of language, showing that the dialects of the different areas of Scandinavia began to diverge in the Middle Ages and that this seems to have been contemporary with (and perhaps even contributed to) a growing ethnic consciousness and identity in these areas. Diminishing contacts with Norway because of climate change (e.g., in the case of Greenland, where drift ice obstructed the sailing routes by the early thirteenth century) or political events also encouraged the growing

ethnic consciousness. But a study of language also shows that there was regular interaction between the Northern Isles and other areas of the North Atlantic, e.g., Faroe and Iceland. This interaction was on an entirely different level from the political and religious interaction described in the sagas and discussed above, apparently involving individual households in trade in necessities such as seed, along with the dissemination of methods of food production and preparation. These different networks of interaction illustrate quite clearly the problems involved in defining the boundaries of a 'society', even when the society involved supposedly has a well-defined geographical extent such as an island or island group. In fact, the 'society' of the elite and the Church was quite different from that of the peasants, but all groups seem to have had important contacts with 'societies' beyond the shores of the Northern Isles themselves.

The existing data from the Northern Isles led me to conclude that political discourse and a common class identity among the elite was a dominant structuring element in Norse society in Orkney and Shetland. The elites of Norse, Scottish and perhaps Pictish society recognized their common interests, often political ones, and identified with each other rather than (or as well as) with others in their own ethnic group. This political discourse extended far beyond the islands to both Scotland and Norway. There is no clear evidence that ethnic identity was relevant in the initial interaction between the Norse and the Pictish natives. The recent archaeological evidence indicates an extended period of interface between the Norse settlers and the Pictish natives, but does not indicate that the interaction was violent, although hostile encounters no doubt occurred.

The Changing Nature of Norwegian Society

I will return for a moment to the historical background against which all these events took place. I have referred several times to changes in the nature of Norwegian

society from the Viking Age to the end of the Medieval Period. Sverre Bagge (1989) recently addressed these changes. He discussed the fact, already noted several times, that the ties between individuals in the Viking and Early Middle Ages were personal and often temporary. The inner core of a 'party' (e.g., in the Norwegian civil wars) was held together by more permanent bonds--kinship, marriage, etc.--while a larger outer group was more loosely tied to the party by motives of personal interest (Bagge 1989:238). As I have already noted for the relationships in *Orkneyinga Saga*, ties of in-laws formed by the 'exchange' of women were often the basis for political alliances and were often more important than actual kinship ties. Still, these parties were based primarily on personal ties. Thus Norwegian society in the Viking Age was basically a society with loose tribal alliances leading to intermittent conflict between groups of unstable composition.

Bagge goes on to conclude that a separate political sphere did not exist, nor did specifically political institutions. This should also be clear from my discussion above and in Chapter 6. Aside from the Church, in the Early Middle Ages only the monarchy could be called a political institution, but it was closely tied to the person of the king himself. Collective organs which could be used to articulate group interests were an even later development. 'Politics' in such a system was not qualitatively different from personal disputes: for example, a conflict between two peasants over a piece of land was not political because it did not concern persons with great power and resources, but a similar conflict between two nobles did and was therefore political (Bagge 1989: 240).

In fact, Bagge argues, there was no difference between the private and the political sphere in the Early Middle Ages. A consequence of this was that personal feelings--love or infatuation, friendship--could impinge on what we think of as the public arena. But a friend could also be forsaken if it were in one's own interests.

Thus the medieval individual was both more rational in his private life and less rational in his political behavior than the modern observer would expect (Bagge 1989:242). The bureaucratization which began in the Middle Ages erected boundaries between the different spheres of daily life and broke down the personal bonds of loyalty on which society had been based, replacing them with impersonal ties to the growing state and Church. By the end of the Middle Ages the monarchy consisted of not just the king himself, but was a political apparatus in its own right. The growth of towns is a particularly important aspect of the increasing segmentation and bureaucratization of society.

If my interpretation of the changes in vernacular architecture is correct, this increasing segmentation of society can also be seen in the changes in house layout and organization in Norway and the Northern Isles from the Viking Age to the High Middle Ages. This is certainly what we would expect from Giddens's structuration theory, since the routines and face-to-face encounters of day-to-day life were played out within the locale of the house, which structured and was structured by these activities. If the institutions of a society change, one should also expect that the locales in which various activities and encounters take place will also change. The evidence presented in this thesis illustrates that at least the house, a very important locale of day-to-day encounters, did change from the Viking Period to the Norse/Medieval Period. The new arrangement of the hearth and the high-seat were important in restructuring the encounters within the house and the new relations of power. The disappearance of the hall, along with the decline in the importance of feasting, also reinforced the restructuring of society in the Middle Ages. However, this does not imply that one can read off social organization or complexity from the house form alone.

There is one aspect of vernacular architecture which I have not addressed here, but which is usually stressed when discussing Norse building traditions. This is the suitability of a particular design to the climate and to climate changes. Many have argued that the changes in Norse architecture in Greenland, Iceland, Faroe and Shetland from the early colonization period to the Middle Ages reflect a necessary adaptation to climatic deterioration and the lack of fuel. This may well be partly true, but in this project I have attempted to address different questions. The fact that the later buildings may have been built in such a way to maximize scarce fuel resources or to keep animals warm in the winter (e.g., the true longhouses of the Norse Period in Shetland; see Bigelow [1987]) does not preclude the possibility that there were specific symbols and ideas associated with the house as well, and that these symbols may have been equally important to the occupants and to the structuring of society as a whole. Such symbols would include the high-seat and its position in the house, but might also include the building material used, for example the wood in the case of Papa Stour.

But along with changes in house layout and organization, one can also expect changes in material culture since objects themselves play a role in structuring day-to-day life just as architecture does. The house sites from Norway have not been particularly rich in artifacts, either in number or variety, but certain artifact types are fairly constant. For example, spindle whorls and loom weights are found throughout the period in question, although in the Middle Ages a new horizontal loom was introduced, at least in the towns. As I mentioned above, it appears that men took over commercial weaving on these new looms in the Middle Ages, although women still used the vertical loom for domestic textile production. I have mentioned the baking plates several times and the possible consequences of a change in the organization of food preparation for relations between men and women.

One of the more common find groups in the Northern Isles and urban Norway, the combs, go through a series of stylistic changes from single-sided long hog-backed combs to combs with straight backs and then to double-sided long and short combs. The changes in style are consistent throughout the Norse cultural area, and traces of mass production of these personal items may have been found at Vesle Hjerkin. But another group of personal possessions disappears in the Middle Ages--the oval brooches so typical of the dress of Viking women. Apparently this type of jewelry was no longer used for displaying one's social position. This is not to say that dress itself was no longer an indicator of social position, just that the traditional Viking symbols were no longer used. Even in Greenland the Norse population followed changes in European fashion, as the graves at Herjolfsnes indicate.

The leisure activities of the Norse population also changed over this period. As I discussed in Chapter 5, there are several examples of gaming boards representing the game *hnefetafl* in the Northern Isles and other parts of the Norse world. In Shetland they have been found on both high status and non-elite sites, indicating that the game was played by a large part of the population. The game boards used for *hnefetafl* varied in size and number of squares, and the point of the game was for the special piece in the center to reach the outside of the board in spite of the much larger opposing force. But in the Middle Ages a new game was introduced from Europe--chess. The chess board does not vary in size, so this was a more rigid game. Furthermore, the pieces mirrored the social hierarchy of medieval society, and chess is usually seen as a high-status pastime (except perhaps in Iceland, where the social hierarchy was very different from Europe anyway). In any case, one should not just dismiss the popularity of this new game as a new fashion in Norwegian society. Such a game would help to reinforce the new ideology of monarchy with a single king surrounded by subordinates.

The Norwegian kings and the Norse earls of Orkney also used architecture on a grand scale to reinforce their new and stronger position. In Norway the cathedral in Nidaros (Trondheim) was built, along with numerous other stone churches in the growing towns, and in Orkney the earls supported the construction of St. Magnus Cathedral, a structure totally out of proportion to the size and wealth of the population. And as I showed in Chapter 6, these two building projects were not at all isolated from each other. The Church hierarchy and the secular elites were in frequent contact with each other, facilitating the spread of new ideas as well as of the builders themselves. Just as Western European Christianity and church organization were penetrating Norse society, so, too, were other facets of European society from clothing to games to the use of Latin, monumental public architecture, and a new royal ideology. But Norway did not become a carbon copy of Western European society--it was still distinctly Norwegian and the outside influences had to be modified to be incorporated into existing Norse society, just as the growing influence of Scottish society in the affairs of the Northern Isles was incorporated in a way unique for those islands. The new had to adjust to existing conditions, the result of a distinct historical development, and there was still a great deal of continuity in everyday life as we can see from the slow changes in vernacular architecture and household items.

The Problem of Interaction

But I am not concerned here with just the changes in vernacular architecture and social organization in Norway and the Northern Isles over time. I have also attempted to address the problem of interaction: interaction between Norse and Pict, between settler and homeland, and between Norse and native in other examples of Norse colonization. In discussing the colonial situations in Greenland and Northern Norway I mentioned Giddens's notion of time-space edges which refers to connections between

societies of different structural types. In the case of the Norse settlement in the Northern Isles there does not seem to have been such a time-space edge, at least not a very profound one. I have already pointed out the many similarities between the two societies--the presence of chieftains with the attempt by some to become legitimate kings, the presence of a form of writing, the use of personal ornament to express status, the lack of imposing architectural features, and the same basic agricultural system. It does seem that the Pictish settlement in Orkney may have been contracting before the arrival of the Vikings, but it seems a bit much to argue that the Picts had entered a period of cultural decline. Also, Weber's (1992) recent work on the Pictish and Norse combs from the Northern Isles suggests that there were contacts between the two areas well before the actual Norse settlement began.

In any case, considering the structural similarities of the two societies, it may not have been that difficult to merge on some level, especially for the elites who were basically interested in the same thing. How the average Pictish farmer was affected by the influx of Norse settlers is difficult to say, but we must remember that the conditions of the lower levels of society do not necessarily change immediately because of changes at the top. The new authority must be physically evident in the landscape and therefore part of the day-to-day experience of the population (see Barrett and Foster [1991] on the Roman Empire in Scotland). Clearly the native settlement pattern had some influence on the Norse settlers since so many of the Norse sites in the Northern Isles are situated directly on top of native ones. This might be due in part to extensive Norse knowledge of traditional settlement boundaries and property divisions because of long-term contact, even intermarriage, with the Pictish population. There is as yet no evidence for a period of interaction between Pict and Viking in Shetland, however. In fact, with the

exception of Jarlshof, no early examples of settlement have been found, so the situation in the two island groups could well have been very different.

However, a possible sequence of events may be suggested, albeit very tentatively. The initial contact between Norway and the Northern Isles may have occurred as a result of trade. This is indicated by the presence in the Northern Isles of Pictish combs made from reindeer antler. It is clear from recent work in Denmark that at least parts of the Norse world had important external trading contacts in the eighth century (e.g., Ribe in southern Jutland) if not earlier in the Iron Age (Lundeborg on Fyn, Denmark, Helgö in Sweden). These centers are not known from the written sources either, so we should not dismiss the possibility of trade with the Northern Isles in the eighth century just because it is not mentioned in any sources. In any case, trade could have led to more intensive interaction, for example marriage exchanges, which in turn could have led to shifts in land ownership through inheritance and, finally, full-fledged Norse settlement.

The Scottish take-over of Dalriada at the other end of modern Scotland is an interesting case for comparison. The accepted view has been that the *Scotti* migrated from northeastern Ireland to southwestern Scotland around AD 500, implying "a swift imposition of an external power over the pre-existing population" (Nieke and Duncan 1988:8). But as these authors go on to point out, the archaeological evidence indicates that the native prehistoric inhabitants of Argyll had a fairly complex society. They argue that the establishment of the kingdom of Dalriada must have depended in part on prior social contact between the two areas, possibly including marriage alliances between senior households, which resulted in the "infiltration and eventual take-over of a pre-existing system" (Nieke and Duncan 1988:10). I am not claiming that this was the course of events in the Northern Isles; I have merely suggested that the possibility exists

for contact before AD 800, and further, how that contact could have smoothed the way for the coming settlement.

This is also the time to address one of the more vociferous proponents of the idea that the Norse settlers immediately and violently subdued the native inhabitants. Iain Crawford's 1981 discussion of the nature of the Viking colonization of the Northern and Western Isles is an unnecessarily harsh attack on those who suggest anything less than all-out war. Crawford argues that there is no real evidence for sustained interaction between Pict and Viking in the Northern Isles, although Ritchie's report on Buckquoy had appeared at that time. The fact that the Buckquoy excavation indicated that a pre-Norse occupation was followed by a Norse one is dismissed by Crawford as being insufficiently clear and therefore of no relevance to his discussion. He dismisses any possibility of peaceful interaction in large part because of the almost total disappearance of pre-Norse place names. However, as I discussed in Chapter 2, the interpretation of place name evidence is by no means uncomplicated and the mounting archaeological evidence of interaction reported in the last decade cannot be ignored.

Finally, after dismissing the evidence from all other sites, Crawford is left with his own, the Udal on North Uist in the Western Isles. This multiperiod site included a small fort used in the first decade of the Viking settlement. He concludes from his evidence that the "interpretation is simple--colonisation took place in the 9th century and it was sudden and totally obliterative in terms of local material culture" (Crawford 1981:267). Crawford's view of society and social change seems to me to be rather simplistic. Furthermore, I find it difficult to understand why he thinks it valid to dismiss the evidence from a single excavation in one region because of the evidence from a single site in another region. There is absolutely no reason to assume at the

outset that the colonization of the Northern and Western Isles followed the same path. As I have pointed out in this thesis, there are indications that even the colonizations of Shetland and Orkney followed different paths.

The other two cases of Norse colonization surveyed in this project are much clearer examples of time-space edges than are the Northern Isles, but in the case of the Norse settlement in Greenland there does not seem to have been much interaction, either conflictual or symbiotic, between the Norse and the Inuit. The evidence for interaction is very limited and neither group adopted any cultural traits from the other as far as we know. There is thus no evidence for a common symbolic repertoire which would facilitate interaction as we see in the case of the Norwegians and the Saami. Of course, any linguistic borrowing which may have occurred will be invisible to us today.

As I mentioned earlier, the Norse colony in Greenland may actually have been on two time-space edges with the second being between Norse Greenland and High Medieval society of Norway and the rest of Europe. In resisting the demands of the Roman Church, Norse Greenland society apparently erected very successful social barriers to change. It may have identified itself not only as Norse, but as the only true Norse society holding onto its traditional values in the face of encroaching influences from western Europe, values which were then being abandoned by its cousins elsewhere in the Norse world. If Keller is correct, Norse Greenland maintained its proprietary church system which was controlled by the chieftains, and the chieftains used the construction of churches as a display of their economic wealth and their political influence, not as a display of their piety. They also retained the open hall, a structure ill-suited to a place where fuel was scarce, but one with great symbolic importance and which was suited to entertaining large numbers of clients and therefore to strengthening the personal bonds between a chieftain and his followers. Their

resistance to European influence may have had the unintended consequence of blocking even helpful ideas and practices, whatever the source. Furthermore, borrowing between the Norse and the Inuit would have been very difficult if they had no means to communicate effectively or if they simply lived in different spheres which did not overlap. Finally, we should not ignore the fact that the Norse settlements in Greenland did last for several centuries and their ultimate failure does not necessarily imply that the population consisted of individuals who ignored or resisted new technologies out of sheer bull-headedness or ignorance of their advantages. They were capable of change and intentional action, but within historically defined limits. Given the distance from Europe, the climatic deterioration beginning around 1200, and the generally difficult conditions of life in Greenland, surviving for 500 years while resisting unwanted change from Europe was no mean achievement. It would be at least as interesting to study how this small colony managed to survive for five centuries as it is to study why it ultimately failed.

In northern Norway the situation was very different. The Saami and the Norwegians, particularly the north Norwegian chieftains, depended on each other's products for their own social reproduction. During the Viking Period the Norwegian chieftains seem to have controlled and limited Norwegian incursions into Saami territory since their own position depended on access to Saami products. Hansen (1990) suggests that at this time the Saami adopted a specialized hunting adaptation focused on reindeer in order to fit in with the Norwegian redistributive economy while still maintaining their autonomy. While there are some objections to specific details in his argument (e.g., Storli 1991, Zachrisson 1992), the broad themes of Hansen's argument make sense. It is quite possible that not all the Saami adopted this particular adaptation (witness the two house sites with an agricultural economy which were Saami). As

mentioned in the previous chapter, there are examples of linguistic borrowing which may have been part of a strategy to show solidarity with the other group. This borrowing indicates regular interaction and therefore a fuzzy time-space edge. At the same time a common symbolic language is visible among the Saami themselves in the Viking Age, perhaps because of the increased stress all this interaction produced within Saami society. So here interaction between two structurally different groups seems to have been facilitated by taking on distinct ethnic identities.

Hansen brings up one very important point in his work on the Saami: we have no record of how the Saami constructed social space or how they saw their relations with the Norwegians. The same is true of the Norse settlements in Greenland and the Northern Isles, i.e., we do not really know how the natives interpreted their situation. We also know very little about how the Norse themselves saw their situation, but the few written records which survive were produced by the Norse, often centuries after the events described. There are no examples in the material collected here of definitely Saami material found in Norwegian house sites, but so few have been excavated in northern Norway that this may not be significant. Likewise, the Inuit legends recorded in the eighteenth or nineteenth century are a flimsy foundation for any conclusions about Inuit attitudes towards the Norse in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.¹

Obviously the social organization of the two competing groups involved in colonization has an effect on the course of the colonization attempt. Pictish society was hierarchical, with a political elite, and based on settled farming. The Picts were therefore much more similar to the Vikings than either the Inuit or the Saami were. Furthermore, Pictish material culture, such as the bone pins and antler combs, was more similar to the Norse material culture than the Saami or Inuit material cultures were.

¹But see McGhee and Einarsson (1983) for a discussion of Icelandic and Greenlandic versions of what may be the same story about violent contact between Norse and Eskimo.

And we should not forget the probable contact between the Picts and Norse before the colonization began. The time-space edges defined by Giddens and used by Olsen in his explanation of ethnic interaction in the Varanger area of Norway do not seem to have been particularly well-defined in the case of the Northern Isles. That is, there does not seem to be such potential for the accumulation of structural contradictions along the time-space edges involved. In the case of Greenland it is impossible to determine at this point how extensive the contact was between the Norse and the Inuit in particular. In northern Norway, the two groups succeeded in differentiating themselves economically in the Viking period and both groups maintained their identity. Here, well-defined ethnic identities actually facilitated the contact and interaction between the Norse colonizers and the Saami natives. When this system fell apart, the Saami were still able to change and take on a new niche rather than be obliterated by the Norse society. These three examples of colonization by the same group of people in different geographical regions with different native populations illustrate the extreme difficulty one has in making any predictions about what course events will take since each settlement ran a different course and had a different outcome.

Perhaps the most important conclusion to be drawn from these examples is the importance of context, of the specific historical chain of events which play out in different ways in different circumstances. Above I suggested a possible chain of events for the Norse settlement of the Northern Isles, but clearly the strategy employed in this contact situation was different from that used in the Norse colonization of Greenland. There, foreign influences from all sides seem to have been resisted vigorously. In northern Norway, trade between the two groups was important, but apparently did not lead to closer interaction such as intermarriage (although this may have occurred more often than we realize), and maintaining one's ethnic identity seems to have been the

condition which allowed interaction to take place. An attempt to find a single overarching explanation for the developments in these three areas would obscure the very real differences obtaining in each case, and it is in just these differences that the rich variety of human behavior is visible. Similarly, any attempt to tie increasing segmentation in vernacular architecture to some general theory of social evolution would be an empty and ultimately unsatisfying project since the important but culturally specific historical details would necessarily be overlooked. The same form need not carry the same meaning.

The Broader Perspective of Interdisciplinary Research

The approach undertaken in this project is different from that usually used by those interested in the Viking and Norse Periods. I have attempted to cross disciplinary boundaries and to integrate a large portion of the available data, interpreting it as a coherent whole. This is a difficult project and there are undoubtedly holes in the interpretation presented here, especially since I have worked within a broad spatial and temporal framework instead of concentrating on a few specifics. For example, it would be desirable to have the artifact distributions within the houses and to have more detailed analysis of the artifacts in general (e.g., use wear, provenance of soapstone). And there are specific questions which need to be addressed in detail, e.g., the differences in hearth types and what they can tell us about food preparation. But such data were not generally available. This necessarily results in a loss of detail and some of the nuances which might be visible in a narrower study.

However, one of the problems with much of the current research on the Viking/Norse Period is exactly that narrow focus on specifics, for example, the paleoethnobotanical remains at a specific site, without ever presenting the broad historical background for and context of the settlement. The traditional periods are accepted--

Viking, Norse, Iron Age, Medieval--with little discussion of whether such divisions are relevant for the question under discussion. In this case there was a significant change in vernacular architecture in the Norse/Medieval Periods, although traditional forms were not replaced overnight, and this change seems to be associated with contemporary political changes which resulted in an increasing segmentation and bureaucratization of society. Also, ceramics and baking plates appear in the Norse/Medieval layers, but more detailed study is needed to determine how significant this change in material culture was. But by confining one's research to a single period the long-term continuities can be obscured. This study has demonstrated that such continuities were present in Norse society throughout the Norse North Atlantic.

It is often argued that we need more data before we can look at the 'big picture', but this is a specious argument at best. Obviously, narrowly focused research is essential in order to answer specific questions, but we should not be afraid to attempt broader syntheses, even if they must be punctuated by an annoying number of maybes, perhapses, and it-seems-to-be-the cases. In fact, the very same researchers who decry such attempts often depend implicitly on the results of previous research without demonstrating its validity or making clear what their own assumptions are based on. Research is always shaped and guided by what has gone before, whether explicitly or not. Future excavations may show that an interpretation was flawed or even completely wrong, and the job of the researcher is then to go back to the interpretation and rework it in the light of new evidence, the hermeneutic circle now advocated by several archaeologists (e.g., McGuire 1992, Hodder 1991). We should accept from the beginning that we are not ever going to discover the absolute 'truth' about the past (if such a thing even exists); we can only make tiny steps forward under the best of circumstances and this requires moving back and forth continuously between data and

interpretation. As a practical matter, given the current state of funding for archaeology in most countries, it is highly unlikely that our database will grow substantially any time soon. This means we must make the most of what we have so that we will know what questions to ask and can make the most of those excavations which do become possible. Furthermore, this research must address (or at least acknowledge) all the relevant data, whether archaeological, historical, toponymic or ethnographic. Clearly I do not hold with the view that the different source materials "are, by their very nature, so very different and the conclusions drawn from them so disparate in their significance, that it is to some extent an artificial exercise to attempt a complete integration within the compass of separate thematic subject headings" (Crawford 1987:10). Subject headings are by their very nature artificial and arbitrary, but this does not mean that a useful integration of the available evidence cannot be arrived at.

Part of the problem is the tendency of many scholars to agree with Peter Sawyer's assertion that archaeology is an expensive way of telling us what we already know (cited in Driscoll and Nieke 1988: 1). Also unhelpful is the attitude of another historian, Alfred Smyth. In writing about Scottish history and the Picts, he claimed that "the word 'Pict' is essentially an historical term introduced by Classical writers and taken up by early medieval monastic scribes to describe an historical people from the period 300 to 900. It is the historian, therefore, who defines the term *Picti* and it is up to the linguist and archaeologist to see how language and culture relate to that definition" (Smyth 1984:44). The fact is, since this was a term imposed from without, it may *not* have any relevance and it would behoove the historian to pay more attention to the material evidence in the ground and to the fact that archaeologists, while not able to identify individuals, can address the evolution of society and the growth and development of political institutions and ideas (see Driscoll and Nieke 1988). For

instance, I very much doubt that most archaeologists would agree with Smyth's claim, again in reference to the Picts, that, "The emphasis must be on the culture of the aristocratic warrior élite, since ultimately this was the only class that mattered in historical sources" (1984: 46). The historian may be limited by the interests of the contemporary chroniclers, but the archaeologist is not hampered in the same way.

The fact that the archaeologist does not deal with named individuals and known historical events does not in any way detract from archaeology's importance in attempts to understand the past. But in the study of proto-historic periods it is simply counter-productive to continue to claim that "...the two disciplines should use their own techniques on their own material and only then see what measure of agreement there is, and to what extent the different types of evidence can complement each other" (Sawyer 1983:47, cited in Driscoll 1988:165). This is a view which still prevails in Viking studies in many quarters. Many of those even today who work in the Northern Isles have been trained in traditional archaeology, history, even geography, but have very little background in anthropology or social theory. This is similar to the problem which Keller (1989) identified in Norse Greenland studies--for most of this century, the majority of researchers in Norse Greenland have been trained as medievalists, not as prehistoric archaeologists--although the problem is not quite so pronounced in the Northern Isles. This is not the case for those who excavated the Viking and Medieval material from Norway used here, most of whom were trained and worked as prehistoric archaeologists, but without the anthropological training which is part of the American research tradition. There have been practically no attempts from any quarter at a 'social archaeology' in Viking studies until very recently (e.g. Samson 1991). By coming at the material from an explicitly inter-disciplinary viewpoint and training, I can bring a fresh and, I hope, a useful perspective to a very rich set of data and show that given a

consistent theoretical framework we can demonstrate the links between the individual household and the institutions of a society, although we cannot read one off directly from the other. Certainly there are pitfalls in attempting to deal with many different types of evidence, but it is absolutely necessary that such attempts be made if we are to progress in our understanding of the past.

A Final Note

In closing I would like to return to the very recent history of the Northern Isles for a moment. Even though the islands were transferred to Scotland over 500 years ago, they are still tied culturally to Scandinavia through their common history, a history which is well known to most Shetlanders and Orcadians and which can be seen in the frequent use of Viking imagery in business and tourist advertising. The tourist industry attracts relatively large numbers of Norwegians and Danes who are also aware of the historical ties (contrary to many other visitors to the Isles). In 1986 this awareness took on a distinctly political note in the Declaration of Wyre, a petition which was signed by over 3000 islanders in response to the British Government's proposal to build a nuclear reprocessing plant at Dounreay in Caithness, just across from Orkney (*The Orcadian* 16 Oct, 1986). The text of the petition was as follows:

To the King's Most Gracious Majesty, OLAV, King of Norway and To the Queen's Most Gracious Majesty, MARGRETHE, Queen of Denmark.

We, the Undersigned, Being aware of the close proximity of the present nuclear installations at Dounreay, Caithness, to Orkney and Shetland, And being aware of the increased hazard inherent in the proposed siting of the European Demonstration Reprocessing Plant at Dounreay, And being aware of the real threat this poses to our economic base in renewable industries, ie fishing, fish farming, agriculture, tourism, food processing and distilling, And being aware of the strong historical, cultural and legal links between Orkney, Shetland, Norway and Denmark, In particular the linear descent of many of our inhabitants And being

aware that with regard to the Peace of Breda in 1667 the constitutional status of Orkney and Shetland is as yet unresolved, We humbly ask that your Most Gracious Majesties Confer and consult on our constitutional status, Reaffirm our strong historical ties with Norway and Denmark, Request the British Government, until such time as our constitutional status is resolved, to honour the guaranties made at the impignoration and subsequently to safeguard our laws, rights and traditions, And inquire into the legality in International Law of siting a nuclear reprocessing plant in such a place as to threaten the safety of the waters in an area of unresolved constitutional status.

(Orkney Archives)

Clearly the spheres of interaction so important in the Viking and Middle Ages are not yet obsolete and that fine old tradition of attempting to play one lord off against the other is still alive and well (although perhaps not quite so effective as it used to be).² There could hardly be a clearer example of the importance of historical context in shaping social strategy in a given situation.

²Still, the proposal was eventually scrapped.

Appendix 1

This appendix includes a summary of the Norwegian house sites from the Late Iron Age and Middle Ages which I have considered in this study. These sites are listed in Table 9.1 along with their archaeological date and the basis for this dating. For many of them (those in italics in Table 9.1) there is only sketchy information and these sites are not considered further except perhaps where they illustrate general trends. In describing room functions I have used the general terms in-room and out-room in cases where more definite description was not possible. This follows Myhre's *inrom* and *utrom* (1980) which are analagous to the term outhouse. That is, an in-room is a room used by people and an outroom is a room used by animals or for storage (like an outhouse). In most cases I do not discuss the geographical setting of the house or include a description of other ancient monuments on the site. However, in some cases I have included an extended discussion of the excavator's interpretation of the site, especially sites in so-called marginal areas.

Table 9.1: Late Iron Age/Viking Age and Medieval Rural House Sites in Norway.

FARM NAME	HOUSE #	DATE	DATABLE ARTIFACTS	MUSEUM
Arstad, Beiarn, Nordland		VA-MA-- C14	soapstone sherds, oval brooch, ring pin, whetstones, whorls, keys	T
Birkeland av Store Eige	4	MA	soapstone sherds, baking plates, whetstone, knife	S
Birkeland av Store Eige	5	MA	ceramics, baking plates, whetstone, whorl	S
Birkelandsstølen av Store Birkeland, Bjerkreim	1	VA-MA	ceramics, soapstone sherds, bead	S
Birkelandsstølen av Store Birkeland, Bjerkreim	2	VA-MA	ceramics, soapstone sherds, whetstone, knife	S
Birkelandsstølen av Store Birkeland, Bjerkreim	3	MA-LMA	whetstone, knife	S
Borg, Vestvågøy, Lofoten	1--main house	LIA esp VA-C14	gullgubber, 1 silver bead, whorls, soapstone sherds, slate whetstones, imported pottery, glass vessel frags	T

(Table 9.1 continued)

<i>Bøstad, Vestvågøy, Nordland</i>		<i>EIA and LIA--C14</i>		<i>T</i>
<i>Eiterjord i Beiarn</i>		<i>MA</i>	<i>bronze ringpin, baking plates, whetstones, soapstone sherds</i>	<i>T</i>
<i>Finnby, Karlsøy, Troms</i>		<i>Merovingian--C14</i>		<i>T</i>
<i>Fjetland, Røldal, Odde</i>		<i>MA</i>	<i>soapstone sherds, baking plates, whetstones, whorls, knife</i>	<i>B</i>
<i>Fodna Mossige</i>		<i>Migration/ MA</i>	<i>soapstone sherds, baking plates, whetstones</i>	<i>S</i>
<i>Friksdal, Leikanger</i>		<i>LIA--C14</i>	<i>whorl, cobalt blue bead, small whetstone</i>	<i>B</i>
<i>Frøya, Sogn og Fjordane</i>	<i>several</i>	<i>LIA/MA-modern</i>		<i>B</i>
<i>Grødeim, Time</i>		<i>EIA?/LIA</i>	<i>soapstone sherds, whetstones</i>	<i>S</i>
<i>Gudmedalen</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>VA--C14</i>	<i>whetstones, iron celt, whorl, half blue bead</i>	<i>B</i>
<i>Hanaland av Re, Time</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Migration/ MA</i>	<i>ceramics, baking plates, oil lamp</i>	<i>S</i>
<i>Hanaland av Re, Time</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>MA</i>	<i>baking plates</i>	<i>S</i>
<i>Hellaug av Frette, Etne, Hordaland</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>MA</i>	<i>baking plates, soapstone sherds, whetstones, whorl</i>	<i>B</i>
<i>Hjarøy</i>		<i>EIA-VA--C14</i>		<i>B</i>
<i>Hovden, Møsstrand, Telemark</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>LIA-MA</i>	<i>arrowhead</i>	<i>O</i>
<i>Hovden, Møsstrand, Telemark</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>MA--C14</i>	<i>baking plates, bone comb, scythe, whetstones, soapstone sherds</i>	<i>O</i>
<i>Hønnland av Åmdal, Eigersund</i>		<i>Migration/ MA</i>	<i>baking plates, whetstone, bronze cauldron, scythe, lock</i>	<i>S</i>
<i>Høybøen, Sotra</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>MA--C14</i>	<i>ceramics 12/1300s, comb</i>	<i>B</i>
<i>Høybøen, Sotra</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>MA</i>	<i>ceramics, baking plates, whorls, whetstones, comb,</i>	<i>B</i>
<i>Kirkøya, Østfold</i>		<i>MA?</i>		<i>O</i>
<i>Knustad</i>		<i>Migration/ LIA-MA</i>	<i>whorls, mold, knife</i>	<i>O</i>
<i>Krågeland av Slettebø, Bjerkreim</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>VA-MA</i>	<i>ceramic, soapstone, whetstone, knife</i>	<i>S</i>
<i>Kvikstadvika i Skjerstad, Nordland</i>		<i>EIA and LIA</i>		<i>T</i>
<i>Liland, Vestvågøy, Nordland</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Merovingian--C14</i>		<i>T</i>
<i>Lindland, Rogaland</i>		<i>Migration/ MA</i>	<i>baking plates</i>	<i>S</i>
<i>Liset, Bremanger</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>MA</i>	<i>ceramics, soapstone sherds, baking plates, whorls, whetstones</i>	<i>B</i>

(Table 9.1 continued)

Liset, Bremanger	2	MA	ceramics, soapstone sherds, baking plates, whetstone, bronze cauldron, whorl	B
Lurekalven, Lindås	1	MA	baking plates, knives, whorls, bronze fittings, earthenware, ceramics	B
Lurekalven, Lindås	2	MA	earthenware, whetstones	B
Lurekalven, Lindås	3	MA		B
Lyngaland	1	Migration Period/MA	baking plates, whorl, whetstones	S
Låkabø av Apeland, Vindafjord		MA	whetstone, frag of iron cauldron	B
Mo, Brønnøya, Nordland	1	VA	whorl, soapstones sherds	N
Mo, Brønnøya, Nordland	2	VA--C14 to LIA	soapstone sherds	N
Moland, Vestvågøy, Nordland		EIA-VA-- C14 [2 houses LIA]		T
Mosetet, Brennmoen av Skistad, Overhalla, Nord Trøndelag	-	VA-MA-- C14	glass bead, whorls, ceramics, gaming piece, bone comb like Møsstrond, soapstone sherds, bronze, whetstones, frag of cufic dirham 750-815, Norwegian coins/bracteates	N
Måkskitmyro av Nordvik, Utsira	1	LIA	ceramics	S
Nedre Rossavik, Forsand, Høgsfjord	2	MA/recent?		S
Neset, Møsstrond, Telemark		MA--C14	baking plates, knives, soapstone sherds, whorls, whetstones	O
Nordberg		Migration/ LIA-MA	whetstones	O
Nordre Valldalseter, Røldal, Hordaland	1	MA	baking plates, soapstone sherds, whetstones, scythe	O
Nyset-Stegge project, Årdal, Sogn		EIA-VA-- C14	knives, arrowheads, amber and glass beads, whetstones, whorls	B
Oma i Time		VA/MA	soapstone sherds, whetstone, whorl	S
Rapstad av Årstad, Eigersund	-	VA	ceramics, soapstone sherds, whetstone, whorl	S
Reve	1	Migration/ MA	ceramics, soapstone sherds	S
Risavika, Tjora, Sola	1 (13 in innb)	VA--C14	ceramics (viking), 1 bead, 1 cufic coin dated between 767-815, possibly 807/8	S
Risavika, Tjora, Sola	2 (16 in innb)	VA	few ceramics	S

(Table 9.1 continued)

Risøya		LIA-C14	soapstone sherds [1 type VA], whetstones	B
Sandøya		LIA/MA	soapstone sherds not known from VA, whetstones--1 MA type	B
Seltuftøyri, Flåmsdalen		MA-C14	whorl, whetstones	B
Skarg, Bykle, Aust Agder	1	LIA-MA	beads, soapstone sherds, baking plates, whorls, knives, skjekniv (VA), med (for lafting), whetstones,	O
Skattum, Gran, Østlandet		VA-MA		O
Småvågane av Beite av Nordvik, Utsira	-	MA	ceramics, whorl	S
Søndre Nygård, Fåberg, Opland	-	VA	whetstone, iron celt, scythe	O
Sørbo, Rennesøy	5	<i>Merovingian-C14</i>		S
Storrsheia av Vigesa, Bjerkreim	2	VA	soapstone, whetstone, knife	S
Tjøtta, Klepp		MA/LMA	grinding stone	
Tjøtta, Nordland	[3 excavated by H.E. Lund]	EIA-LIA	whetstones	N
Tjøtta, Nordland	[3 dug 1977 by Wik]	LIA-C14		N
Todneim, Randaberg, Hetland	3	LIA/MA	whetstone	S
Tranheim av Austreim, Utsira	-	VA	ceramics, soapstone sherds, whetstone, whorl	S
Tu, Klepp		LIA/MA	whetstone	S
Tussøy, Tromsø kommune, Troms		VA-C14	bead, whorl, weapon frag, knife frag, whetstone, soapstone sherds	T
Ullaland av Bø, Nærbo, Hå	1	<i>Migration Period/LIA</i>	whorl, whetstone	S
Utsira, Rogaland	<i>several sites</i>	?		S
Vardberg, Eidfjord, Hordaland	-	MA	baking plates, soapstone sherds, ceramics, whetstones	B
Vaula		<i>LIA/MA house in Migration Period naust</i>	<i>ceramics, soapstone sherds, whetstones, whorls, mold</i>	S
Vesle Hjerkin	1	VA-MA		O
Vesle Hjerkin	2	VA-C14		O
Vesle Hjerkin	3	VA-MA-C14	whetstones, knives, arrowheads, whorls, needles, buckles, locks, keys, soapstone sherds, combs	O
Vestre Hauge		<i>Migration/LIA-MA</i>	<i>soapstone sherds, whetstones</i>	O

(Table 9.1 continued)

Vestre Nape, Fyresdal, Telemark	1	MA?		O
Vestre Nape, Fyresdal, Telemark	2	MA-C14	scythe, whetstones	O
Vestvatn, Misvær, Salten		MA	bronze ringpin, double comb, criss-cross ornamented bone box, iron knives, whorls, bronze pendants, criss-cross ornamented bone tool	T
Ytre Moa, Øvre Årdal, Sogn	A	VA	bronze ringpin (8th/9th c), frag of trefoil brooch (2nd half 9th c), razor, arrow points (LIA), knife, whorl, whetstones	B
Ytre Moa, Øvre Årdal, Sogn	B	VA	unfinished gilt bronze pendant, whorl, beads, whetstones, knives, soapstone sherds	B
Ytre Moa, Øvre Årdal, Sogn	C	VA	whorl, whetstone	B
Ytre Moa, Øvre Årdal, Sogn	D	VA	beads, whorls, whetstones, knife	B
Ytre Moa, Øvre Årdal, Sogn	E	VA	bead, arrowhead, whetstones	B
Ytre Moa, Øvre Årdal, Sogn	F	VA-10th c	whorl, whetstones, arrowhead, upper plate to oval brooch 10th c (R 652 or 654), spearhead of Merov/VA transition type	B
Øvre Gilberg, Østlandet	1	VA/MA	bead, ceramics, whetstone, whorl, VA spear point, soapstone sherds	O
Øygarden av Fjøløy, Rennesøy	1	MA	ceramics, whetstones, bronze cauldron frags, soapstone ladle, soapstone oil lamp	S
Øygarden av Fjøløy, Rennesøy	2	MA		S
Åsestølen, Nygård av Gard, Skåre, Haugesund		MA-LMA	whorl, ceramics, whetstones, soapstone sherds	S

Norwegian House Sites

Arstad, Beiarn, Nordland (Stamsø Munch 1983)

This house site was excavated in the late 1960s and early 1970s by Gerd Stamsø Munch. The excavated area was a maximum of 45 m long and 5 to 15 m wide, but distinct phases of construction were not possible to identify. The cultural layer, where it

was found, varied from 20 to 30 cm thick. Wood remains were evident in the belts of stripes in the soil inside the earthen berms. In several places the inner and lower part of these stripes met with the outside edge of the cultural layer and merged into post holes which formed a row. In the middle of the house wall ditches were found up to .75 m wide and 1 m deep. Near the bottom this ditch split in two; there were traces of posts in this double ditch. There was a total of 450 post holes.

Stamsø Munch identified five separate parts of this house. She proposes that parts I, II and III were originally dug down in a natural elevation. Turf walls were built to protect the house. Posts were raised inside these walls. The walls between the posts may have been constructed of horizontal planks, perhaps a *sleppvegg*, which is represented in the stripes in the soil. The large number of post hole may indicate repairs. Stamsø Munch suggests that the wall construction in the middle part was the same, although she cannot explain why the construction is so much more solid in the east than in the west and why there were deeper posts in a double row. In part V Stamsø Munch interprets the slight row of stones as a drain between the posts, not as a foundation for a sill. She suggests that there was a turf roof represented by the brown layer, and further that the wall posts were the roof bearing construction although there may have been a few posts in the room.

Dating was based on the artifacts as well as several radiocarbon dates. These fell between 775 +/- 135 and 1155 +/- 135 (calibrated). There were over 700 finds, but most of these were unidentifiable bits of soapstone and iron. Those that can be identified indicate Viking Age occupation, though the period of use could extend over 400 years. There were lots of finds in the east part of the structure and several pieces of jewelry came from the middle--e.g. an oval brooch, a ringpin, as well as whetstones,

spindle whorls, keys, knives, and gaming pieces. The number of artifacts found in the wall ditches indicate that people sat along the walls.

Stamsø Munch proposes a functional division of the structure on her plan (Figure 9.1). Part I included a sleeping room/storeroom and a dwelling room. Part II contained the main dwelling room and the food preparation room with a longfire along the the midline of the room. Part III contained a dwelling and work room and a workroom/storeroom. Part IV lay to the west of Part II and may have been a midden, while Part V, also to the west of Part II, may have been a room for spinning and weaving. It is not clear if all these parts were connected under one roof or if they were separate structures. There were several other fireplaces and cooking pits besides the central one in the middle part of the structure. There was no sign of a byre.

The dimensions of the five parts were as follows:

Part I	12 m x 3.5-4 m (internal)
Part II	7-7.75 m x 4-5 m
Part III	20 m x 6 m
Part IV	?
Part V	3-4 m x 1-2 m

Birkeland av Store Eige, Eigersund (Petersen 1933, Myhre 1980)

Jan Petersen excavated five houses at Birkeland. Two of these lay close together near the western group of structures from the Migration Period, but date to the Middle Ages. The baking plates found here are a clear indication of medieval occupation. In addition there were soapstone sherds from medieval type vessels, whetstones and a grinding stone which also give the house a medieval date.

According to Petersen, House 4 (Figure 9.2) was 26 m long and 6.75 m wide (external). He interpreted it as having two rooms, one 15 by 4 m and one 4 by 3 m. He noted a cross wall and wrote that the outer walls were built of stone and earth. According to Myhre's interpretation the house had two dwelling rooms, one with a small

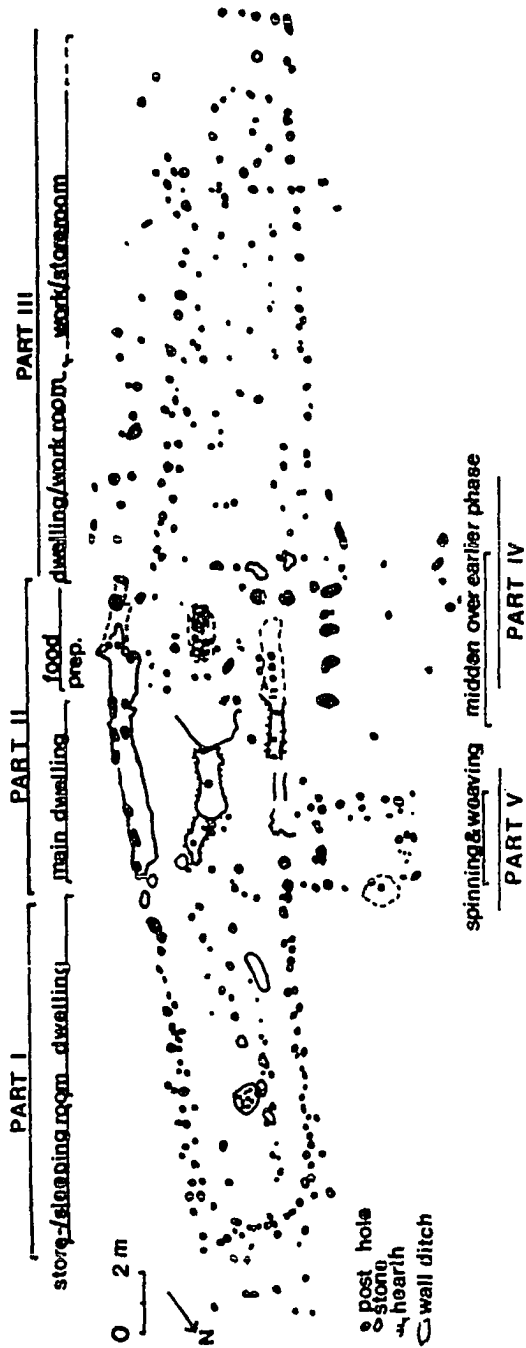


Figure 9.1: Arstad, Nordland, redrawn after Stamsø Munch (1983:145).

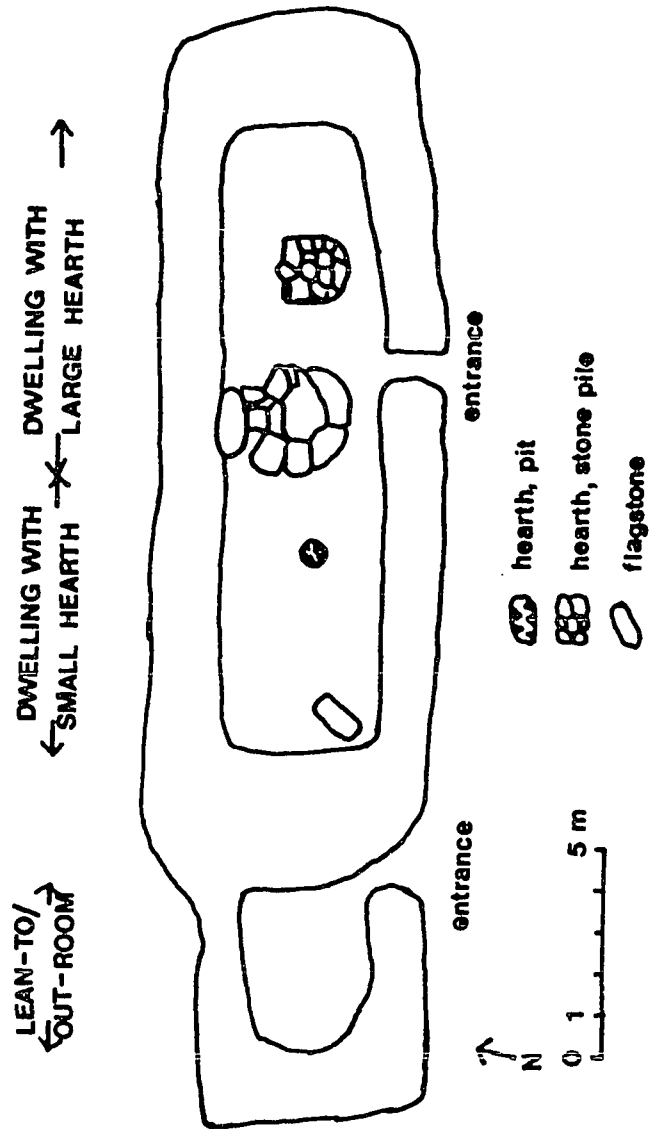


Figure 9.2: Birkeland 4, redrawn after Myhre (1980:Figure 180).

hearth where all the artifacts were found and one with a large hearth. Petersen's second room appears to be some sort of out-room or lean-to. One entrance was found in the middle of the south long wall and one to the lean-to. Myhre's room dimensions are as follows:

dwelling with main hearth	c. 8 x 4 m
dwelling with most finds	c. 7 x 4 m
lean-to/out-room	c. 3 x 4 m

House 5 (Figure 9.3) was different from the other medieval houses Petersen excavated. The house itself was 18.5 m long and 5.25 m wide, according to Petersen. Here three rows of stones formed cross walls which divided the house into four rooms. These could have been foundations for sill beams in a timber wall. Two possible entrances were found, one at the west end of the north long wall and one at the north end of the west gable.

Baking plates were also found in House 5 along with ceramic sherds identified as Danish Viking, several whetstones and a spindle whorl.

Myhre's division of the house includes a possible *gang* or passage, a feature which seems to appear first in the Middle Ages.

dwelling with hearth	c. 3.5 x 3.5 m
dwelling with hearth	c. 4.0 x 3.5 m
possible passage	c. 1.5 x 3.5 m
possible smithy	c. 1.5 x 3.5 m

Birkelandsstølen av Store Birkeland, Bjerkreim (Petersen 1936, Myhre 1980)

This farm lay 300 meters above sea level near Stølsvatnet. There were three structures here. House 1 (Figure 9.4) was 13.2 m long and 6.7 m wide (external). It appeared to have a cross wall, but Myhre argues that this was a later addition. He also points out that the placement of the post holes on the west side indicate that the west wall originally lay farther out in this smaller room. There were two paved entrances in the

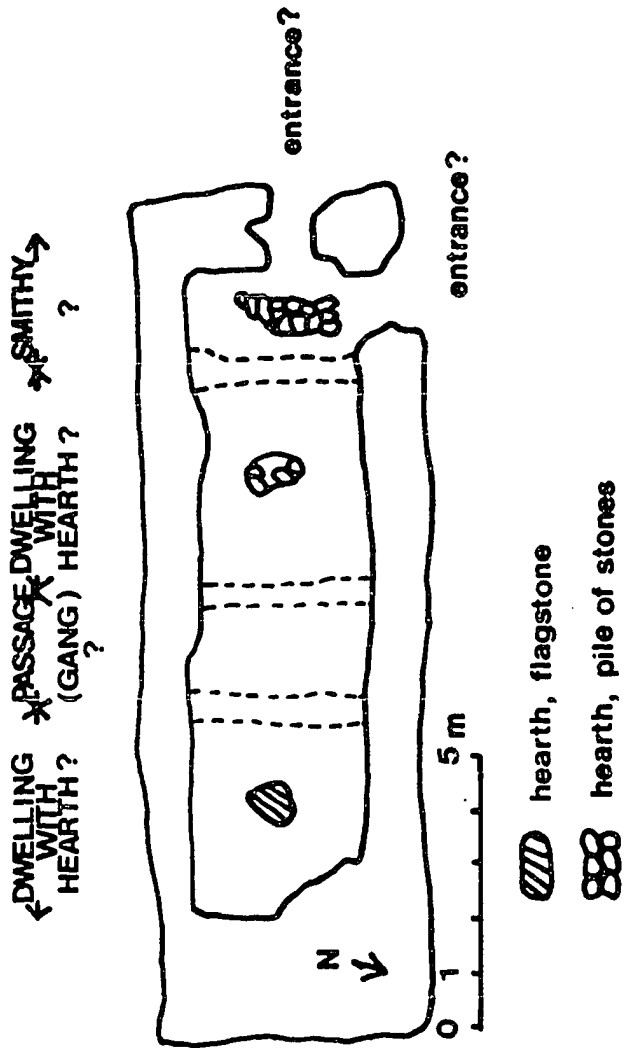


Figure 9.3: Birkeland 5, redrawn after Myhre (1980:Figure 181).

east long wall, one to each room, but Myhre notes that they could be from an earlier phase. In any case, the house appears to have been divided into two equal sized rooms, both with hearths. There may have been a corner hearth in the south room. The post holes generally lie in two parallel rows.

dwelling with hearth	c. 5 x 4.5 m
dwelling with hearth	c. 5 x 4.5 m

Finds from House 1 include a glass bead from the tenth century, soapstone sherds and a couple of ceramic sherds. These date it to the Viking Age or Middle Ages.

House 2 (Figure 9.4) lay parallel to House 1 and was 9.4 m long and 5.5 m wide (external). There was only one room with the entrance in the south gable wall. There was no hearth in the center of the room, just a possible hearth near the entrance which could not have been of major importance considering its position. Five post holes were found and there are faint indications that they lay in two parallel rows.

out-house/in-house	c. 6.5 x 3.5 m
--------------------	----------------

Finds from House 2 include several soapstone sherds, one ceramic sherd, a whetstone and part of a knife. Again, these finds place the occupation generally to the Viking or Medieval Periods.

House 3 (Figure 9.5) lay in a seter area 220 m from the other two buildings. Externally it was 10.5 by 4.25 m. Petersen interpreted it as one large room, but Myhre proposes room division in the middle leaving one dwelling room with a hearth and a room without a hearth.

dwelling with hearth	c. 4.5 x 3 m
room without hearth	c. 4.5 x 3 m

The walls consisted primarily of a single row of stones, though they were not complete: a section of the northeast long wall was missing and there was a large stone stuck in the ground in the southeast gable wall which was probably part of the wall.

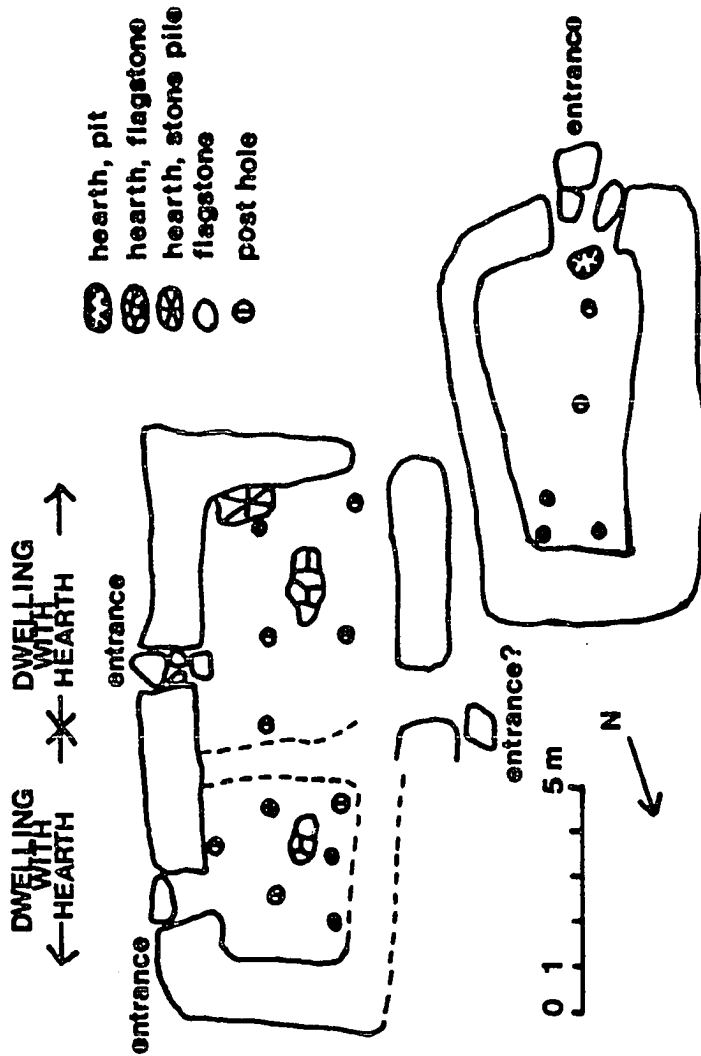


Figure 9.4: Birkelandsstølen 1 and 2, redrawn after Myhre (1980:Figure 186).

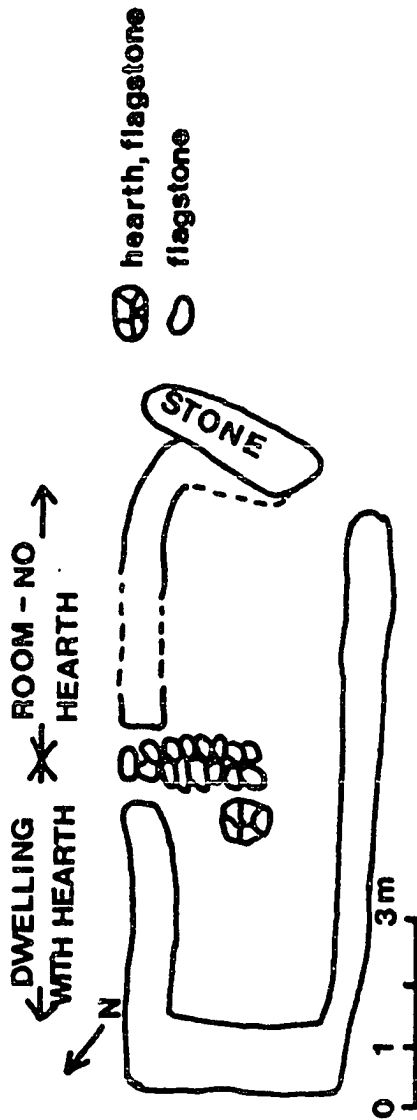


Figure 9.5: Birkelandsstølen 3, redrawn after Myhre (1980:Figure 187).

These stones probably served as a foundation for a sill beam. There was a flagstone hearth in the middle of the structure and a paved entrance in the middle of the northeast long wall. No post holes were found, so the house could have been *laftet*, as Petersen suggested, or a *stav* construction where the posts sat on the sill beam, as Myhre proposed.

Artifacts from House 3 include 4 whetstones or fragments of whetstones and a knife. These do not provide a satisfactory basis for dating the house. Petersen noted that written sources do not mention any settlement at Birkelandsstølen before modern times and he dates this house to the Middle Ages, preferably the first half of the fourteenth century.

Borg, Vestvågøy, Lofoten, Nordland

(Stamsø Munch and Johansen 1988, Stamsø Munch et al. 1987, Stamsø Munch 1991a, b)

This is a very important site excavated by a team of Scandinavian archaeologists in the 1980s. It has been interpreted as a chieftain's residence because of the richness of the finds and the size of one of the buildings in particular. There is a court site in the vicinity as well along with the remains of large nausts.

Most of the artifacts found at Borg are typical domestic artifacts--iron objects and fragments including knives and nails, soapstone spindle whorls and sherds, slate whetstones. But the site stands apart from all the other sites in this study in the number and quality of imported objects discovered--gold 'gullgubber' or foil amulets depicting two humans embracing, imported Continental tin-coated jugs, a gold filigree ornament, green and blue glass sherds (Iron Age glass is very unusual). In Norway these types of finds can only be compared with the finds from the trade center at Kaupang. Such finds have been discovered elsewhere in Scandinavia at Helgö, Hedeby, Ribe and Birka. The artifacts indicate eighth and ninth century occupation. Radiocarbon dates from across

the site show continuous occupation from 370-100 BC to AD 1010-1180 (Stamsø Munch et al 1988: 124).

The main structure at Borg was huge (Figure 4.11) (Stamsø Munch 1991a, b). The house was three aisled with two parallel rows of roof bearing posts and inner timber walls with outer insulating turf walls (Stamsø Munch 1991b:45). In the Migration Period the house was approximately 55 m long and 8 m wide. In the seventh/eighth century the middle aisle of the house was expanded at the expense of the two outer aisles. It was also expanded to at least 83 m x 8-8.5 m making it the largest Late Iron Age structure in all of Scandinavia. Stamsø Munch (1991a:325) suggests that there were 4 rooms: a byre, a storeroom, a feast hall and a dwelling room. Four entrances were found, three in the south long wall and one in the north long wall.

The feast hall is particularly interesting. It was 14 m long with three hearths in the sunken middle aisle. The long hearth was 4 m long and had obviously been cleaned out regularly as there were no burned bones or ashes in it. This is also true of the special round hearth in the northeast part of the hall. The middle hearth which lay in the middle of the room did contain burned bone and ash as well as fire-cracked stone. The outer aisles were probably covered with a wood floor. The greatest frequency of finds came from the northeast corner of the hall. According to Stamsø Munch (1991a:327) most of them were the type of artifacts one would expect from a dwelling room in the Late Iron Age, although it is striking that most of the spindle whorls were found here as well as all the fragments of loom weights, approximately half of the soapstone sherds and a large number of the beads. In addition, several of the 'status' artifacts were found associated with the hall, especially the north corner. Stamsø Munch suggests that the room had three functions--a regular dwelling room for most of the year where food was prepared and textiles were produced, a feast hall where the chieftain received guests and

where the exotic objects showed his status to all visitors, and a place where sacrifices were made according to the chieftain's religious responsibilities.

The gullgubber in particular can be tied to such religious functions. None has ever been found in a grave and they seem therefore to be associated with certain buildings or rooms. At Mære in Nord Trøndelag 19 gullgubber were found in or immediately next to a post hole under a medieval church. At Borg the gullgubber were associated with the northern post hole in the hall. Stamsø Munch suggests that the special round hearth construction in the northeast part of the hall may have been used only on ritual occasions.

The chieftain's seat must have been close to the north corner of the room. It is usually assumed that the high seat lay in the middle of the long wall and at Borg this would probably mean the northwest long wall which was closest to the north corner. In this case the chieftain would sit near the middle hearth away from the long hearth which ought to have been important on special occasions. If he sat by the northeast cross wall he was even farther from the long hearth and also at quite a distance from the middle hearth. But proximity to the long hearth may not have been the most important consideration. Instead, status may have come from the chieftain's religious functions in connection with sacrifices and in this case the special round hearth close to the cross wall may have been significant. If there was a door in the cross wall it does not make sense that the chieftain's seat lay there, so a third possibility is that it lay in the north corner between the two posts: the gullgubber were found in one and a jet ring in the other. Stamsø Munch points out in this connection that Emil Birkeli argued that the high seat was located in the corner. He also noted the tradition of a sacred corner in the house, often the north corner (Stamsø Munch 1991a:331).

Bøstad, Vestvågøy, Lofoten, Nordland
(Johansen 1978)

The site here lies partially on cultivated land so only two houses and two grave mounds are preserved. One of the houses was partially excavated and was found to date from the Late Iron Age, although the turf used in the walls evidently came from an older site. There was an undisturbed cultural layer under one of the long walls which was radiocarbon dated to the Roman Iron Age. A hearth under the other long wall was radiocarbon dated to the Celtic Iron Age. There were finds from both the Early and Late Iron Age and radiocarbon dates span the period from the Celtic Iron Age through the Viking Age. Like the other sites from Vestvågøy, this site demonstrates that in northern Norway there was continuous occupation through the Iron Age; the gap which occurs in southwestern Norway from the end of the Migration Period to the Viking Age does not occur here.

Eiterjord i Beiarn, Nordland
(Stamsø Munch 1966, 1983)

The plan for this site was unavailable in the Tromsø Museum archives so it is difficult to interpret the site report and a detailed discussion of the structure found here is impossible. There were four house grounds, but only one was investigated. It is clear that the structure was rectangular, that there were stones associated with the walls, that it probably had a paved long hearth and that the remains of wood planks were found in some places. However, the finds (e.g. bone combs, other bone objects) were dated to the Middle Ages and according to letters in the archives, had an unmistakable Saami flavor. Stamsø Munch originally interpreted the site as Norwegian with Saami influence (1982: 146), but later decided that the opposite was true, i.e. Saami with Norwegian influence (pers. comm. 1991). This is the most important piece of information to come from this site in the absence of plans.

Finnby, Karlsøy, Troms
(Johansen 1978)

A number of Iron Age sites were registered here in connection with the Helgøy project. There are house sites in at least five places which are of Iron Age type and which are associated with nausts and/or graves. Excavation of one of the houses did not produce datable finds, but two radiocarbon dates indicated Merovingian Period occupation. This site is included along with several others only to show that in northern Norway there seems to have been continuous occupation through the whole of the Iron Age. Because of the absence of specific construction details this site will not be included in most of the analysis.

Fjetland, Odda, Hordaland
(Fett 1953, Myhre 1980)

Per Fett excavated this long house in 1953. After deturfing the structure there appeared to be two rooms, the southern one with fewer stones which could have belonged to the walls (Figure 9.6). The south gable wall was very difficult to identify. The house seems to have been approximately 22 m by 4 m. In the northern end especially the stone walls had fallen into the interior of the building. As the excavation continued it became clear that the presumed cross wall was not as substantial as it first appeared. There was evidence of timber walls, probably *reisverk*, and for two possible hearths in the northern end. This is where most of the artifacts were recovered.

According to Myhre the house was divided into four rooms as follows:

out-room/byre	c. 7.5 m x 4 m
dwelling with hearth	c. 7 m x 4 m
in-room without hearth	c. 4 m x 4 m
in-room without hearth	c. 5 m x 4 m

He points out the similarity between this house plan and those from Martens' sites with the three dwelling rooms and a byre under one roof. This is also a medieval house as

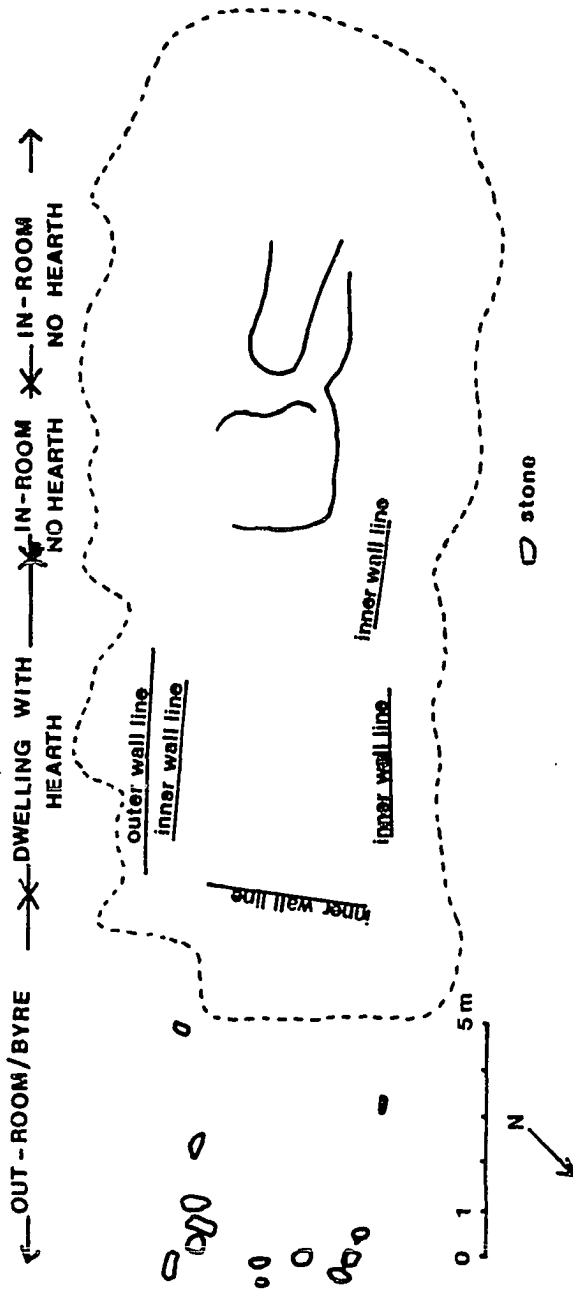


Figure 9.6: Fjetland, redrawn after Myhre (1980:Figure 179).

evidenced by the baking plates, soapstone sherds, whetstones, spindle whorls and knives. Some of the finds come from modern settlement activity.

Fodna Mossige
(Myhre 1980)

This is one of several examples of a site where Migration Period and Medieval artifacts were discovered in the same structure. Baking plates were found to indicate medieval occupation, but these younger artifacts were apparently found in part of the structure which had undergone alterations (Myhre 1980: 127). There were probably two building phases which seem far enough apart in time to preclude any idea of continuous settlement on the site. No plan exists of the excavation. Because of the uncertainty about which parts of the structure were contemporary and the lack of a plan, this site will not be considered further.

Friksdal, Leikanger, Sogn og Fjordane
(Magnus 1983, 1991)

Several house grounds were found about 2.5 km from Heimste Friksdal lying in steep terrain on the north side of the Friksdal river. They could easily be seen in the terrain and had low stone walls. According to Magnus (1982: 96) they did not look particularly prehistoric. They were rectangular with one of the gable walls missing, and some of them shared a long wall. Test pits gave radiocarbon dates of 695 +/- 95 and 830 +/- 100 AD (calibrated) and later work has shown that most of the houses belong to the period 600-900 AD. This dating led Magnus to connect them with the coastal house remains such as Risøya and Sandøya as these new house grounds clearly indicated resource exploitation in marginal areas in the Late Iron Age.

At Friksdal there were several structures, 8 of which had a common long wall (Figure 9.7). In these cases one of the buildings was a dwelling while the other had some other function. All of them had an open gable wall facing south towards the river

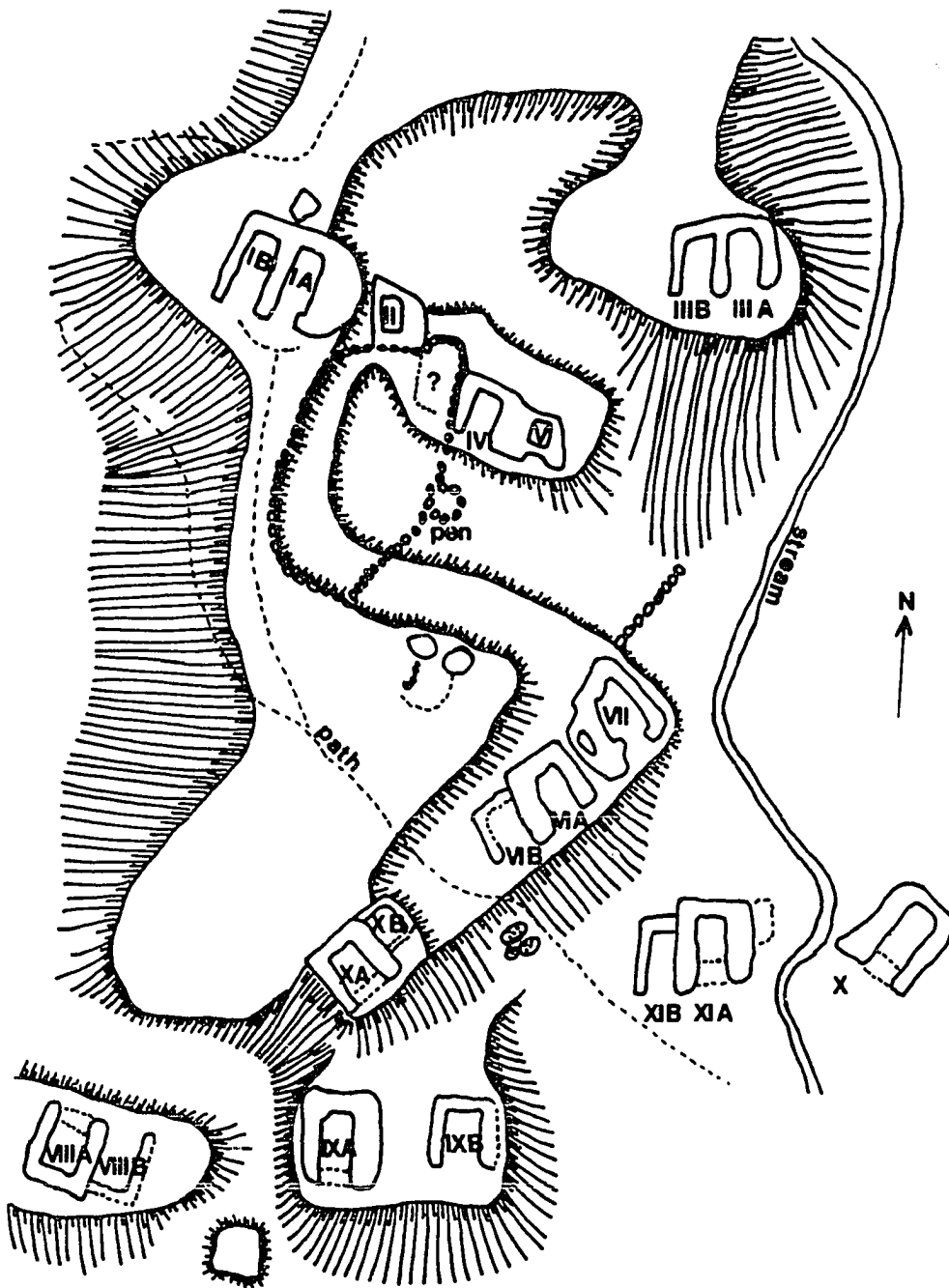


Figure 9.7: Site plan of Friksdal, redrawn after Magnus (1991:17).

which would enable the occupants to enjoy the sunlight for as long as possible. They varied in size from 4-7.7 m in length by 2.5-4.6 m in width. The walls measured .6-1.0 m thick and were up to .8 m high. Test pits showed that 12 of the house grounds had relatively thick cultural layers. Several clearly had a hearth in the middle and one may have had a corner hearth. A small faceted spindle whorl was found in one of the houses.

Test trenches were dug in House 1a and 1b which lay uppermost on the hill. In House 1a there was a central flagstone hearth with a cooking pit immediately to the south of it. Two post holes were found. Further work on the site has shown that there were usually two post holes, one on either side of the central hearth (Magnus 1991: 18). The walls were constructed of standing planks in a wall ditch with an outer insulating wall of stone. Finds included a soapstone loom weight, soapstone spindle whorl, a small whetstone, an iron hook and some worked soapstone. The textile tools are usually seen as indicating women were present. No ceramic or soapstone sherds were found. The west long wall was shared with House 1b. Near the wall in this house a cobalt blue bead was found.

As Magnus points out (1982: 100), the traditional archaeological understanding of the concept farm (*gård*) is a hindrance when interpreting sites such as this (and also Gudmedalen and Seltuftøyri). Farmers exploited a variety of resources and archaeological remains from a particular site must be fitted into the big picture of subsistence activity. In this case there is a local tradition that this collection of house grounds comprised a farm which was abandoned in the Black Death. There is also a long tradition of seter-use which continued up to the 1950s. The artifacts recovered here indicate that these buildings were used as seters. This also explains the paucity of finds: up to the twentieth century most of the containers and tools used at seters were made of

wood and therefore would not be preserved on these sites. For the settlement to have been permanent the climate in the Late Iron Age must have been better than it is today. However, other similar sites (e.g. in the Nysset-Steggje project) may have been full year settlements (Bjørøgo 1986).

Frøya, Sogn og Fjordane
(Magnus 1974)

This site is one of the Risøy-type sites recognized by Bente Magnus (see below). Her attention was drawn to the area by a newspaper article which discussed the fishing tradition at Geitholmen and claimed that it went far back in time. Registration of the area revealed a number of structures along a beach terrace between Geitholmen and the mountain Torshovden far from permanent settlement. These remains lie close together. Most are square (c. 6 by 6 m externally) with stone walls. Not all of these structures were occupied at the same time and it may be possible to document continuous use of the site from the Late Iron Age through the Middle Ages to modern times. Excavations have not been carried out here so more detailed information is not available.

Grødeim, Time, Rogaland
(Myhre 1980)

Harald Egenæs Lund excavated a small house here which measured approximately 9 m by 3.5 m internally (Figure 9.8). According to Myhre the house was divided in two rooms in the Late Iron Age or the Middle Ages. The south room contained two hearths along the midline of the building. Most of the artifacts were found around the hearths. Another hearth lay under the south gable wall and contained slag and remains of a clay lining for an iron smelting furnace. There was also a hearth along the east wall of the north room, but few finds were recovered from this area. A paved entrance led to the north room.

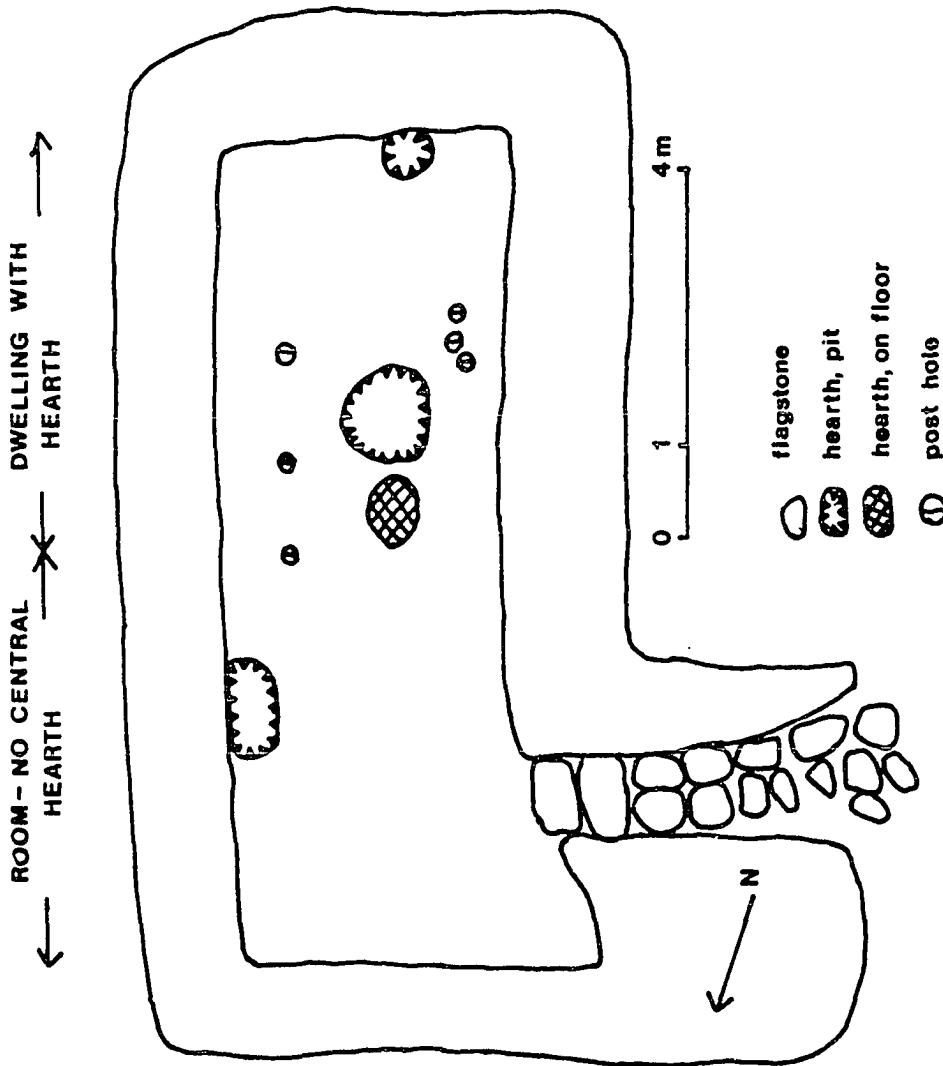


Figure 9.8: Grødeim, redrawn after Myhre (1980:Figure 191).

dwelling with central hearth	c. 4.5 m x 3.5 m
room without central hearth	c. 4.5 m x 3.5 m

The house lay in the vicinity of a Migration Period farmstead, so the older artifacts from the site might have been lying on the site before the house was built. Most of the artifacts indicate Late Iron Age occupation and, according to Myhre (1980: 129), the house is similar to other Late Iron Age houses in Rogaland. However, there is evidence for several building phases.

Gudmedalen, Flåmsdalen
(Indrelid 1990)

Several house remains were found in this valley at approximately 1000 m above sea level. They were not easy to distinguish in the landscape since they appeared as long shallow depression in the landscape. Two of the buildings were excavated radiocarbon dated. One was 17 m long by 4 m wide, the other 10 m long by 4 m wide. Both had a hearth in the middle of the floor in the inner part of the house, two parallel rows of roof bearing posts about 1 m from the long walls, and entrances in the lower gable wall. Few artifacts were recovered, but the radiocarbon dates place the smaller house in the Late Iron Age (750 +/- 100AD), but the larger one was older (fourth or fifth century AD).

Up until recently the only archaeological sites known from Flåmsdalen were graves. The question is whether these sites are an indication of full year occupation and if so what the basis of this settlement was. Slag was found in several of the houses, but Indrelid does not believe that this can explain the largest of the houses. He also dismisses the suggestion that they were hunting cabins since they are such substantial buildings. There is no indication of cultivation in the area around the houses. Therefore the most likely suggestion is that the area was used for pasture. While there were finds indicating the presence of both men and women, the cultural layers were not very thick.

Given the scarcity of fields in Flåmsdalen it seems likely that these houses represent seters to which the animals were taken in the summer in order to save the pasture around the farm to provide winter fodder.

Hanaland av Re, Time, Rogaland
(Petersen 1936, Myhre 1980)

Petersen excavated two house grounds here in 1935 (Figure 9.9). The houses lay close together and parallel to each other. According to Myhre (1980: 348-349) the were clearly built in the ruins of older structures which the finds indicate dated to the Migration Period. House 1 measured 20 m long and 7-8 m wide externally and had two rooms, one larger than the other.

dwelling room	c. 12 x 3.5 m
lean-to	c. 4 x 3.5 m

There were two entrances in the east long wall, one to each room. The larger room contained most of the finds and Myhre says must have been used as a dwelling room (1980: 349). However, since Petersen did not distinguish between the different phases it is difficult to decide which elements (e.g. paving, hearths) belong to which period. In this House 1 falls in the same category as several other sites listed here which show settlement activity from the Migration Period and the Late Iron Age or Middle Ages.

House 2 was very similar to House 1, but only 11.25 m by 6 m externally. It also had two rooms, one larger than the other. The smaller room had an entrance in the east long wall, but the larger room had an entrance in the west long wall across from one of the entrances in House 1. This is the room which may have been a dwelling room, according to Myhre (1980: 349).

dwelling room?	c. 5.5 m by 3.0 m
lean-to	c. 1.5 m by 3.5 m

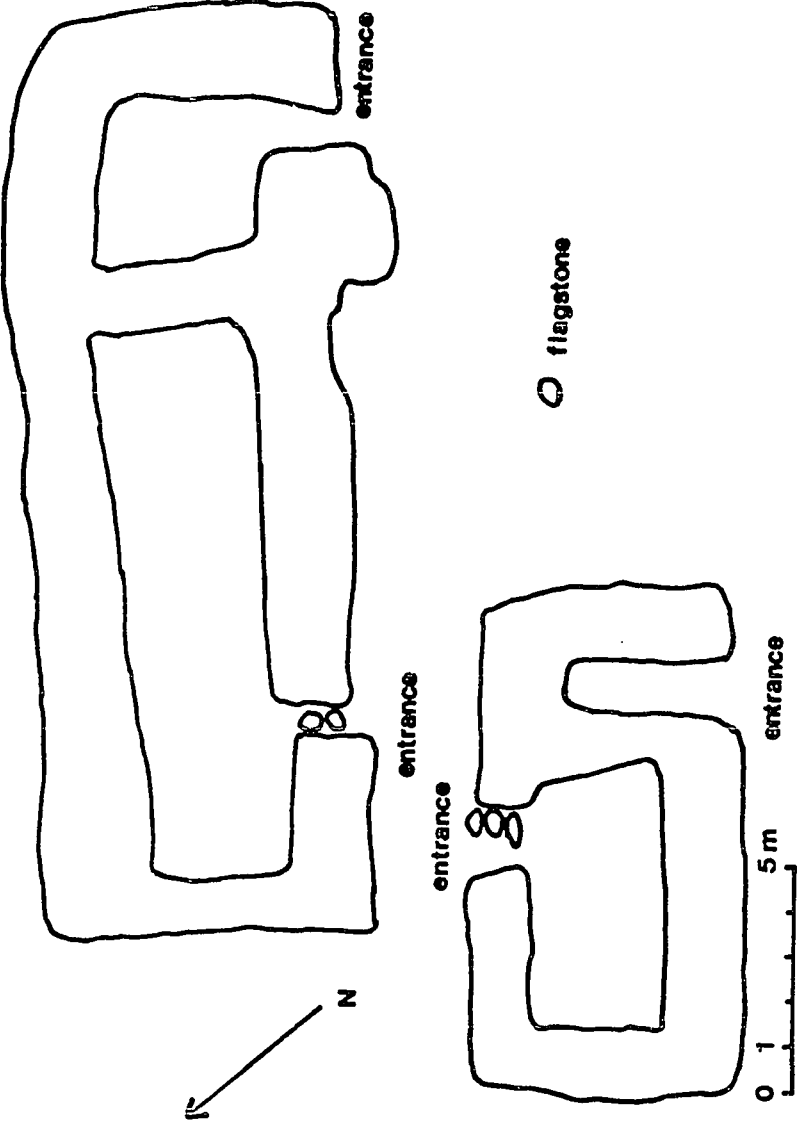


Figure 9.9: Hanaland 1 and 2, redrawn after Myhre (1980:Figure 188)

Artifacts from this site include baking plates, green glaze ceramics from the fifteenth century, whetstones, a spindle whorl and a grinding stone. Again, the baking plates are a clear indication by themselves of medieval occupation. The lack of construction details makes it difficult to use this site in an analysis of house layout, however.

Hellaug av Frette, Etne, Hordaland
(Lindøe 1932, Myhre 1980)

Two house grounds lie on this abandoned farm (*ødegård*). They measured approximately 24 m and 42 m externally. The larger one was excavated in 1932 by Johannes Bøe and Kristen Lindøe. It first appeared that the house had three rooms (Lindøe 1932), but Myhre has suggested two possible layouts with four or five rooms including a lean-to on the west end (Figure 9.10). Some of the cross walls may be the result of more recent alterations. Myhre's possible layouts are as follows:

dwelling without hearth	c. 10 m x 5 m
dwelling with hearth	c. 10 m x 5 m
byre	c. 6 m x 5 m
lean-to	c. 6 m x 5 m

or:

dwelling without hearth	c. 9 m x 5 m
dwelling without hearth	c. 5 m x 5 m
dwelling with hearth	c. 4 m x 5 m
byre	c. 6 m x 5 m
lean-to	c. 6 m x 5 m

Sognnes (1974) suggested that the structure had six rooms.

Finds from this house included many baking plate fragments, soapstone sherds from vessels with perpendicular sides, several whetstones and a spindle whorl. These date to the Middle Ages, but there were also finds from modern times.

More importantly, there are several elements in this house which also appear in other medieval structures. First, there was a byre with stone paving. This shows that

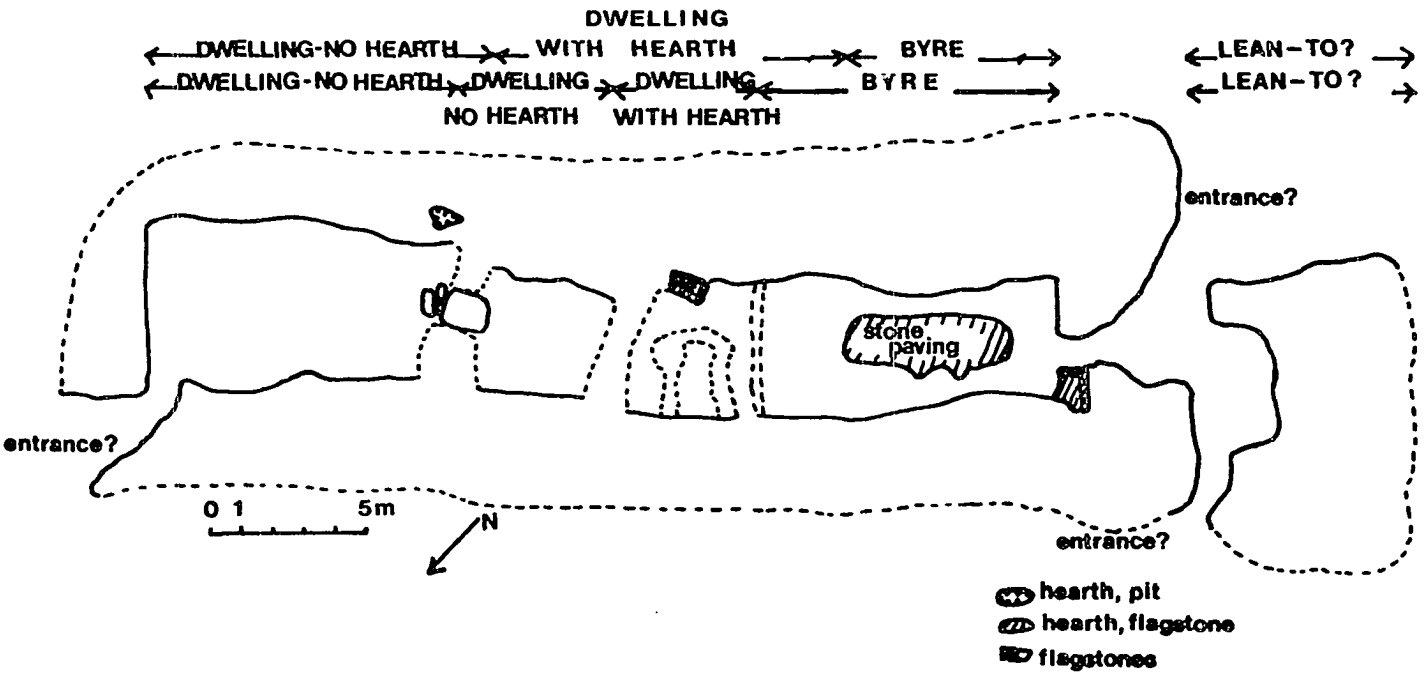


Figure 9.10: Helihaug, redrawn after Myhre (1980:Figure 178).

the tradition of the longhouse was not completely lost in the Middle Ages. Few artifacts were recovered from this part of the building. The room nearest the byre had a corner hearth like the one at Hovden (see below). The byre also had a corner hearth. The room in the west had a cooking pit, but since this lay under the south long wall it predates the house. Three possible entrances were found near the ends of the long walls, but because of the excavation techniques used it may be that some entrances were not uncovered. No post holes were found and there are also no signs that the house was *laftet*. It may have had an inner timber wall of *reisverk*, though there is no specific evidence for this.

Hjartøy, Hordaland
(Alsaker 1989)

Archaeological investigations were conducted here in preparation for an oil pipeline from the Oseberg field. These investigations showed that this area was exploited for its fishing resources from the Roman Iron Age at least to the beginning of the Middle Ages. Thirtysix house remains and 9 places for boats to be pulled up on shore were registered and the course of the pipeline had to be altered so as not to completely destroy the site.

The house remains themselves were difficult to spot. The walls were built of stone and where the terrain was steep a massive stone packing was built up as a foundation. All the houses la near the beach and in groups where it was possible to pull up boats. Some shared a wall with another house. However, the inner walls were built of timber and the roofs were birchbark and turf. Little excavation has been carried out here, but Alsaker suggests that, based on comparison with other similar sites, the houses in the Late Iron Age were either *laftet* or *reisverk* with some kind of *stav* or *grind* construction.

There were 25 radiocarbon dates from 13 of the houses. These showed that the site was occupied from c. 300-1050 AD. Within this period there were fluctuations: a gradual increase in activity until the end of the Migration Period, a period of stagnation and decline in the seventh century, and a great increase in activity from about 700 AD to the end of the Viking Period.

Artifacts from the site indicate without exception fishing and marine activity. In Chapter 4 I discuss the exact nature of this settlement--whether it was seasonal or not, whether the activity was organized or not. This site has a very strong similarity to Magnus' Risøy-type sites along the coast.

Hønnland av Åmdal, Eigersund
(Petersen 1933, Myhre 1980)

At this site finds from the sixth century and the Middle Ages were found in different levels in the same structure. According to Petersen the house was 18 m long and 6-6.5 m wide. He interpreted it as having two rooms, one 3 by 3.5 m and one 4 by 4.5 m. Only the larger room had a fireplace.

The finds dated from both the sixth century (ceramics) and the Middle Ages (a bronze cauldron, baking plates, a scythe and a lock). According to Petersen there was a 20-30 cm difference in the levels these finds came from. He suggested that the house was abandoned at the end of the sixth century or the beginning of the seventh and was reoccupied and perhaps improved in the Middle Ages, perhaps the fourteenth century. Unfortunately it is not possible to distinguish which structural elements belong to which periods, although the cross wall may belong to the second period (Myhre 1980: 127). Because of these problems in interpretation I will not include this site in further analysis.

Hovden, Møsstrand, Telemark
(Martens 1973, Myhre 1980)

Two house grounds lying close together were excavated here by Irmelin Martens in the 1960s. House 1 was 13.5 m by 9-10 m externally. It had a thin cultural layer and produced few finds. An arrowhead found here could be from either the Viking Age or the Early Middle Ages. The structure has been interpreted as an outhouse, possibly a byre.

House 2 was approximately 30 m long and 6-7 m wide externally. The walls consisted of few stones of variable size and were interpreted as the foundation for a *laftet* wall, although this could also have been a *stav* building. There were three possible cross walls of simple rows of stones. Other possible room divisions were marked by the remains of wood beams or by a change in floor level. In all there may have been six or seven rooms (Martens 1973: 45-46; Myhre 1980: 332):

	byre	c. 10 m x 5 m
	passage (<i>gang</i>)	c. 1.0 m x 5 m
	dwelling with hearth	c. 2.5 m x 5 m
	dwelling with hearth	c. 3.5 m x 5 m
	dwelling with hearth	c. 4.0 m x 5 m
	storeroom/smithy	c. 7.0 m x 5 m
or	smithy	c. 3.5 m x 5 m
	storeroom	c. 3.5 m x 5 m

The important features of this layout are the presence of a byre under the same roof as the dwelling and the presence of a *gang*, although Martens notes that this could be a passage between two separate buildings. There was also a small furnace in the east room.

House 2 produced many finds including a long narrow double sided comb with bronze rivets, an iron key and lock, a scythe blade, knives, soapstone sherds and baking plates and whetstones. Radiocarbon dates place the occupation between 890 +/- 80 and

1170 +/- 80 AD. Martens suggests an occupation period of 1100-1300 AD, but notes that this period could be extended in either direction.

Høybøen, Sotra, Hordaland
(Randers 1981, Kaland 1987)

This deserted farm (*ødegård*) lay on the island of Sotra just west of Bergen. It was excavated by Kjersti Randers and formed the subject of her magistergrad thesis. There were two houses on the site (Figure 9.11; see also Figure 4.15). House 1 lay farthest to the south and measured 22 m by 5-8 m externally. In its final phase it consisted of three rooms:

room 1a (storeroom/workshop)	c. 3 m x 3 m
room 1b (dwelling)	c. 5 m x 4 m
room 1c (byre?)	c. 9 m x 5.5-6 m (all internal)

A narrow paved passage ran between rooms 1b and 1c.

The quality and building technique of the stone walls varied from room to room, but they were generally substantial. A terrace of earth and stone was built up for the south wall to rest on in order to even out the terrain. The partition wall between 1a and 1b consisted of a single row of stones which must have been the foundation for a timber wall. Perpendicular to this along the south wall of 1a lay another row of stones, probably part of an inner timber wall. Similar foundations were found in the east end of 1b and the west end of 1c with the passage running between them. According to Randers (1981: 13), the house had an outer stone wall with an inner wood wall. This need not have stood on a stone foundation everywhere and would therefore be very difficult to spot.

Two possible entrances were found, one in the southeast corner of 1b and a doubtful one in the north wall of 1c. No entrance was found to 1a. The only hearth in the house lay in the northeast corner of 1b. In the northeast corner of 1c was a *pall* or bench. No trace of post holes was found, although posts could have rested directly on

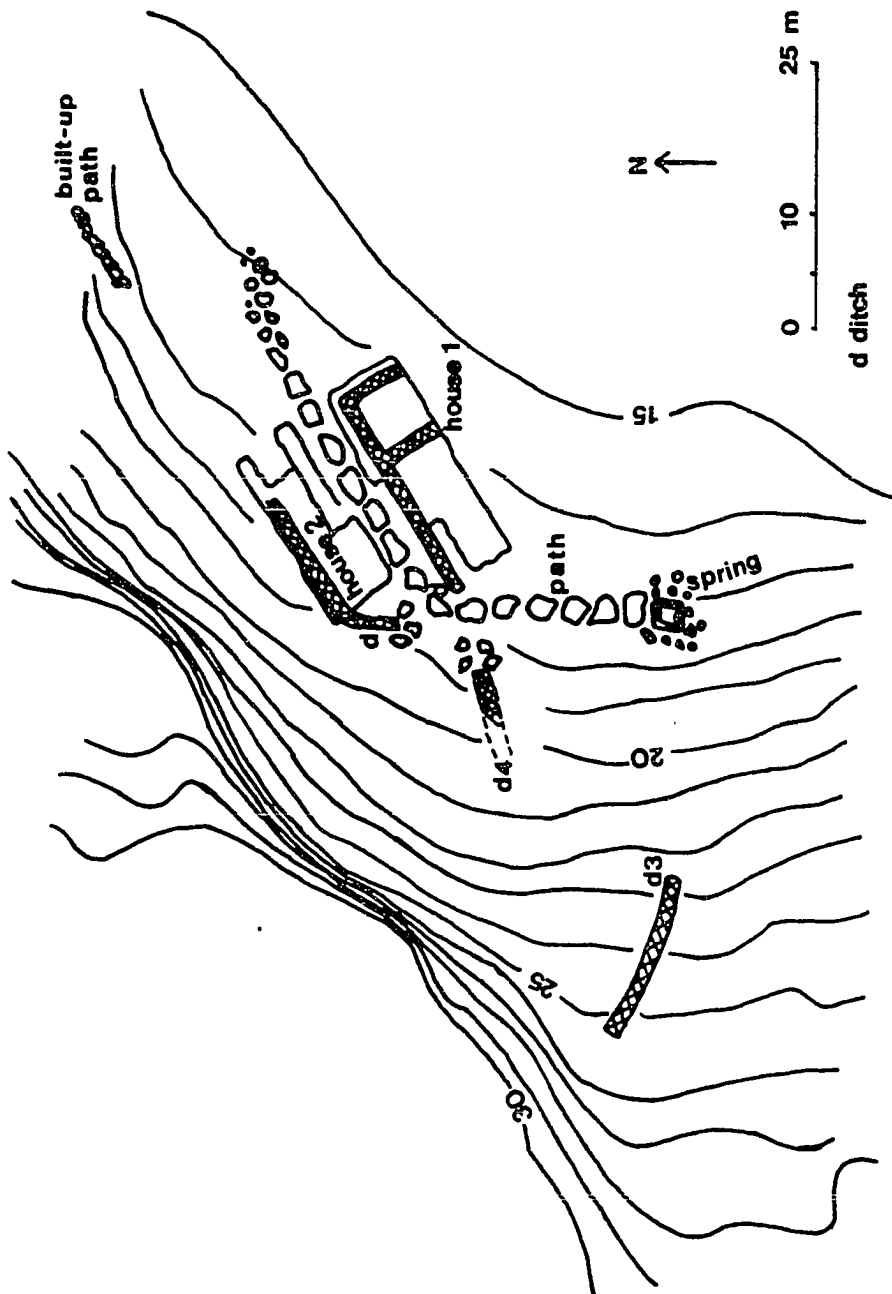


Figure 9.11: Site plan of Høybøen, redrawn after Randers (1981:Figure 18).

stone. Finally, a drain ran under the north wall, probably an effort to prevent the house from becoming too wet.

House 2 lay a few meters north of House 1. It was 14 m long, 18 m if the extension to the east is included. It consisted of two rooms of different widths:

room 2a (dwelling)	c. 5 m x 5 m internally
room 2b (dwelling)	c. 6 m x 4 m internally

Between these two rooms was a narrow paved *gang*.

The west wall was similar to the stone walls in House 1. The east wall was somewhat unclear, but did have a low narrow foundation of stone, probably for a sill beam. The north wall consisted of a double row of stones and the south wall, like the east, consisted of a low narrow row of stones. The east wall of 2a and the west wall of 2b matched the situation in House 1--two simple rows of stones with about 1 m between them, thus forming a narrow *gang*. There was also a low row of stones inside the north wall of 2a, again probably a foundation for a wood wall. So like House 1 this house had an outer wall of stone with an inner wood construction.

There was a paved walk between the two houses with stairs up over a terrace to the passage in the middle of House 2. This path continued 3-4 m east of the houses. The terrace continued to the east as did the north wall. This must have formed some type of shed or lean-to.

There was a small rectangular construction in the northwest corner of 2a with flagstones set on edge into the floor. There was no trace of charcoal so this could not have been a hearth. It may have been a small bench or perhaps used for storage. The only hearth lay in 2b in the southwest corner of the paved area in the southwest part of the room up against the wall. As in House 1 there was a drain running under the north wall. Two post holes were discovered, one under the paving in the middle of 2b, 4 m from the passage, and one on the same midline under the passage. There were five

possible post holes in addition to these. Three lay along the north wall of 2b at 1 m intervals and two lay along the north wall in 2a under the sill foundation. These may be associated with an inner wood construction which was later replaced by the sill. No entrances were found to House 2, but one probably led into the middle passage.

Finds from Høybøen include several kinds of ceramics--Scarborough ware (c. 1250-1350), Grimston ware (c. 1250-1350), vessels from Ardenburg, Holland (1275-1350), along with several other red, black and grey wares from the same period--earthenware, soapstone vessels of various types (all medieval, though some have a longer period of use), and combs (1200-1300s). Other finds groups include spindle whorls, baking plates, whetstones, locks, keys, and scissors. Radiocarbon dates from House 1 were 1100 +/- 80 AD and 1150 +/- 80. Thus the finds are concentrated in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The fact that the radiocarbon dates were slightly earlier is probably a result of the wood being old before it was burned.

The early limit for the founding of the farm is the period 800-1050 AD. There is no sign of occupation after the fourteenth century. Thus the farm was probably abandoned around 1350-1400. The artifacts indicate that it was fairly well off, so it is hard to understand why it was not reoccupied after the Black Death and the various agrarian crises. However, there does seem to have been economic exploitation of the farm after its abandonment even though people did not live there.

Food preparation took place in all three dwelling rooms. Baking was especially prominent in 1b, while boiling and roasting took place in 2b. Both were done in 2a where no hearth was found, though this may have been under the profile in the southeast part of the room. However, 1b and 2a seem to have been used for other activities as well--spinning, weaving, sharpening tools and repair and production of soapstone objects. The spindle whorls from 1b and 2a are interesting since the two rooms had

different types of whorls, perhaps for use in the production of different types of thread. There was a large amount of slag in 1a which came from a furnace, although this was not found.

In her discussion of this site Randers suggested that 1a and 2a were *bu*, 1b was a *eldhus*, and 2b was a *stove*. These names match the rooms mentioned in *Gulatingsloven*. See Chapters 4 and 6 for a discussion of this suggestion.

Kirkøya, Østfold
(Magnus 1974)

This is another of the Risøy-type sites discussed by Magnus. The sites here have long been known and connected to medieval herring fishing. There are actually four separate locations with these house remains on Kirkøya, but in all cases the houses are square, on average 5 by 5 m or 6 by 6 m with stone walls, and several of them have a clear entrance. In addition, the house grounds always lie in groups at least 2 m over today's high water mark. This distance indicates that these house grounds are younger than the Risøy ones, perhaps dating to the Middle Ages.

Knutstad, Lista
(Myhre 1980)

Like the site at Fodna Mossige, this structure also produced artifacts from different periods (the Migration Period and the Late Iron Age/Middle Ages). Sigurd Grieg did not distinguish between the older and younger finds and did not mention the possibility of occupation later than the Migration Period. The later dating is based on a knife, a spindle whorl and two soapstone moulds (Myhre 1980: 128). Again, there is not sufficient data from the site to consider it more closely.

Krågeland 2 av Slettebø, Bjerkreim
(Petersen 1933, Myhre 1980)

This house lay at one end of a Migration Period farmstead. Externally it measured only 11.5 m by 5.25-7 m (Figure 9.12). Petersen wrote that it had only one

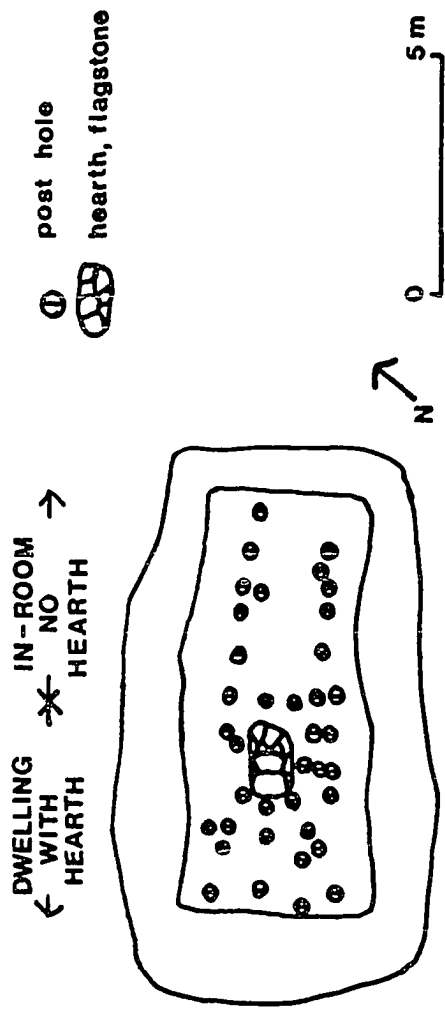


Figure 9.12: Krågeland 2, redrawn after Myhre (1980:Figure 183).

room, but Myhre suggested a division into two equal sized rooms, one with a hearth and one without:

dwelling with hearth	c. 4.5 x 4 m
in-room without hearth	c. 4.5 x 4 m

No entrances were found. On the other hand, 38 post holes were discovered. They were arranged generally in two parallel rows an average of .75-1 m from the long walls. Not all of them were contemporary, but are the result of repairs throughout the life of the house. A flagstone hearth lay along the midline in the southwest half of the building. Artifacts were found in both rooms, but their locations were not recorded on the plan. These finds include whetstones, soapstone sherds, ceramics and a grinding stone. The site has been dated to the Viking Age/Middle Ages.

Kvikstadvika i Skjerstad, Nordland
(Johansen 1978)

There is a large grave field on this site which as produced finds from both the Early and Late Iron Age. In 1977 Johansen registered three house sites of Iron Age type, one of them L-shaped. No excavations have been carried out on the site, but Johansen concludes that on the basis of the grave finds and other similar sites in the area, this site was also occupied continuously throughout the Iron Age. As with most of the other sites from Vestvågøy this site will not be considered in most of the analysis in this project.

Liland, Vestvågøy, Lofoten, Nordland
(Johansen 1978)

A house of Iron Age type was partially excavated here in 1973. The excavation did not produce datable finds, but as at Finnby two radiocarbon dates point to Merovingian Period occupation. Like Finnby, this site is only included to show the continuity of settlement in northern Norway throughout the Iron Age.

Lindland, Rogaland
(Myhre 1980)

This is another example of a site where Migration Period and Medieval artifacts were found on the same site. In this case there was a structure built within an older structure. The later period was evidenced by the presence of baking plates. Again, there is not sufficient data to include this site in further analysis.

Liset, Bremanger, Sogn og Fjordane
(Slomann 1948, Sognnes 1974, Myhre 1980)

Two house grounds here were excavated by Wencke Slomann. House 1 measured 15 m by 7.75 m externally (Figure 9.13). Much of the stone appeared to come from fallen walls. Outside the east long wall was an area paved with flagstones which ran along the east wall. There was a possible entrance midway along this wall. The house appeared to have three rooms, the two larger ones approximately 3 by 4 m with a small extension to the south. There may have been a hearth in the southwest corner of the middle room. Only one possible post hole was found and Slomann felt that the structure must have been primarily stone although a few signs of wood were recovered.

Most of the finds came from the north room. The finds included baking plates, loom weights, spindle whorls and fishing weights, whetstones, ceramic sherds and fragments of a bronze cauldron. These place the occupation of the house in the Middle Ages, possibly the fifteenth century.

House 2 measured 8 m by 4.5 m and narrowed somewhat toward the ends. There was a row of stones running across the house about 5.5 m from the north end. This may have been the foundation for a timber cross wall. One stone-packed post hole was found. There may also have been a paved entrance in the northeast end of the east long wall, but the report is rather unclear on the structural details.

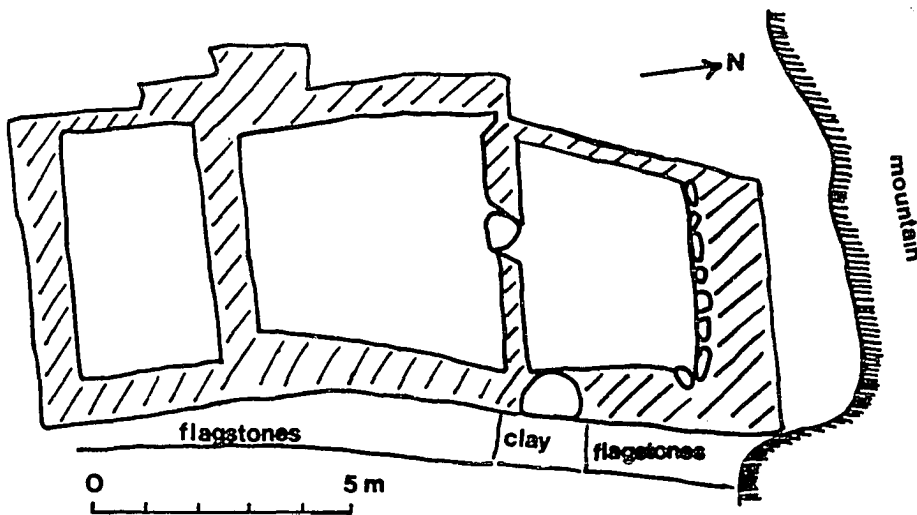


Figure 9.13: Liset, redrawn after Sognnes (1974:Figure 3).

Fewer finds came from this house--iron fragments, fishing weights, a couple of whetstones and a few sherds of glazed ware from the Rhineland. Slomann suggested that this structure might have served as an outhouse for House 1.

The location of these houses suggests that the people here were dependent on fishing (Sognnes 1974: 22). On the other hand, they lie in an area which is now pasture and there are several clearance cairns on the farm so agriculture must also have played a role.

Lurekalven, Nordhordland (Kaland 1987)

This site lies on the small island of Lygra in the heathland district of Nordhordland. Lurekalven was mentioned in *Bergens Kalvskinn* from c. 1360 as an

independent farm unit, but the farm was abandoned in the fourteenth century and never reoccupied. Three structures were excavated here by Sigrid Kaland (Figure 4.16).

House 1 measured approximately 10 m by 7 m. The eastern wall was placed against an uneven stone ridge and incorporated it into the foundation. Elsewhere in the house there were stones laid down as part of the foundation for sill beams. No entrances were found. A hearth and unlined cooking pit lay in the center of the room. Finds from the house included baking plates, iron knives, loom weights, fish hooks, spindle whorls, bronze fittings, earthenware, iron nails and iron fittings. Kaland interpreted this as an *eldhus* or *stove*.

House 2 measured approximately 20 m by 6 m. It was divided into three rooms with a further extension on the south side. The cross walls were preserved as sometimes uneven rows of stones. Again part of the stone ridge was incorporated into the foundation. The middle room was 4 by 6 m and in the southwest corner of it was a flagstone hearth. The room to the south was 5 by 6 m and had a large central hearth which took up most of the space in the room. The other two rooms did not have hearths and no other structural features are mentioned.

Finds from this house included loom weights, a spindle whorl, bronze fragments, lead, earthenware, sinkers and fish hooks, whetstones, iron fittings, nails and some burned bone. According to Kaland the room with the central hearth was the *eldhus*, the room with the corner hearth was the *stove*, the room to the south was a workshop and the other end room was the *bu*.

House 3 was approximately 20 m by 7 m. It was divided into two parts, the byre and the barn. A complete report on Lurekalven has not yet been published, so further structural details are unavailable and the plans are only very general.

Lyngaland 1, Time , Rogaland
(Myhre 1980)

This is another structure where both Migration Period and Medieval artifacts were found, the younger artifacts including baking plates (Figure 4.5). According to Myhre (1980: 127), in most cases like this the apparent cross walls may well be the gable walls of later structures built on top of the earlier ones. As at Fodna Mossige, Hanaland 1 and Hønnland there seems to be to great a time gap between the earlier and later finds for there to have been continuous occupation of the site. This example will not be considered further.

Låkabø av Apeland, Vindafjord
(Petersen 1937, Lillehammer 1975, Myhre 1980)

Jan Petersen excavated this site on an abandoned farm (*ødegård*) in 1937. The house turned out to be shorter than first believed, only 9 m externally (Figure 9.14). The internal measurements were 5.25 by 6.5 m (Lillehammer 1975: 282) and there was probably a shed on the north end since artifacts were found there. Two hearths lay near the south gable wall. There was also a hearth along the outside of the west wall.

Only seven finds were recovered from this house--two soapstone loom weights, two fragments of an iron cauldron, a small iron ferrule, a whetstone, a stone ax, some cow's teeth and some charcoal. This does not provide much basis on which to date the site. Lillehammer believes it was not a *husmannsplass* or cotter's farm from more recent times because the locals would have known and would not have shown it to Petersen. If it had been a Migration Period house there should have been ceramics. Lillehammer is left with an early medieval date for the site between 1000 and 1350 AD (1975: 285). If this is true it is an example of a farm which was cleared in the High Middle Ages and abandoned after the Black Death. It is not named in later written sources and the name

itself supposedly means 'poor farm'. Other signs of a farm, e.g. a byre or fence, were not found.

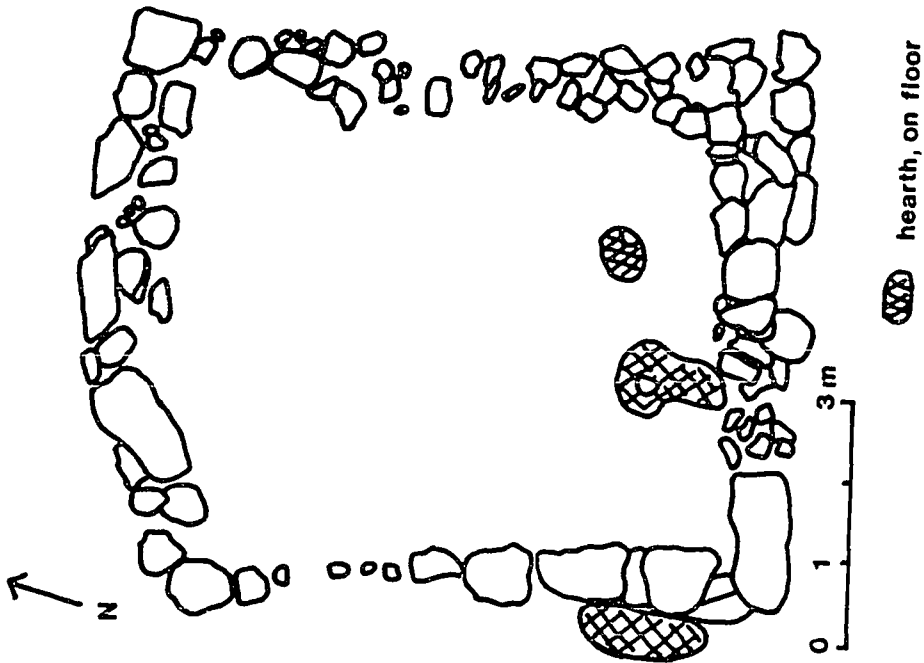


Figure 9.14: Låkabø, redrawn after Myhre (1980:Figure 194).

Mo, Brønnøya, Nordland
(Wik 1985, 1987)

Birgitta Wik excavated two house grounds here in 1972. They were almost square with walls 10 m long (Figure 9.15). The wall berms were of earth and turf and resembled *gammetufter*, the house grounds from Saami houses. They both appeared to have only one room. Wik looked for traces of an inner wood wall, but did not find any. The opening in the turf wall in the west corner of House 1 may represent an entrance. No other traces of the construction method were found, either, with the exception of one possible post hole in House 1. She points out that the posts might not have stood in

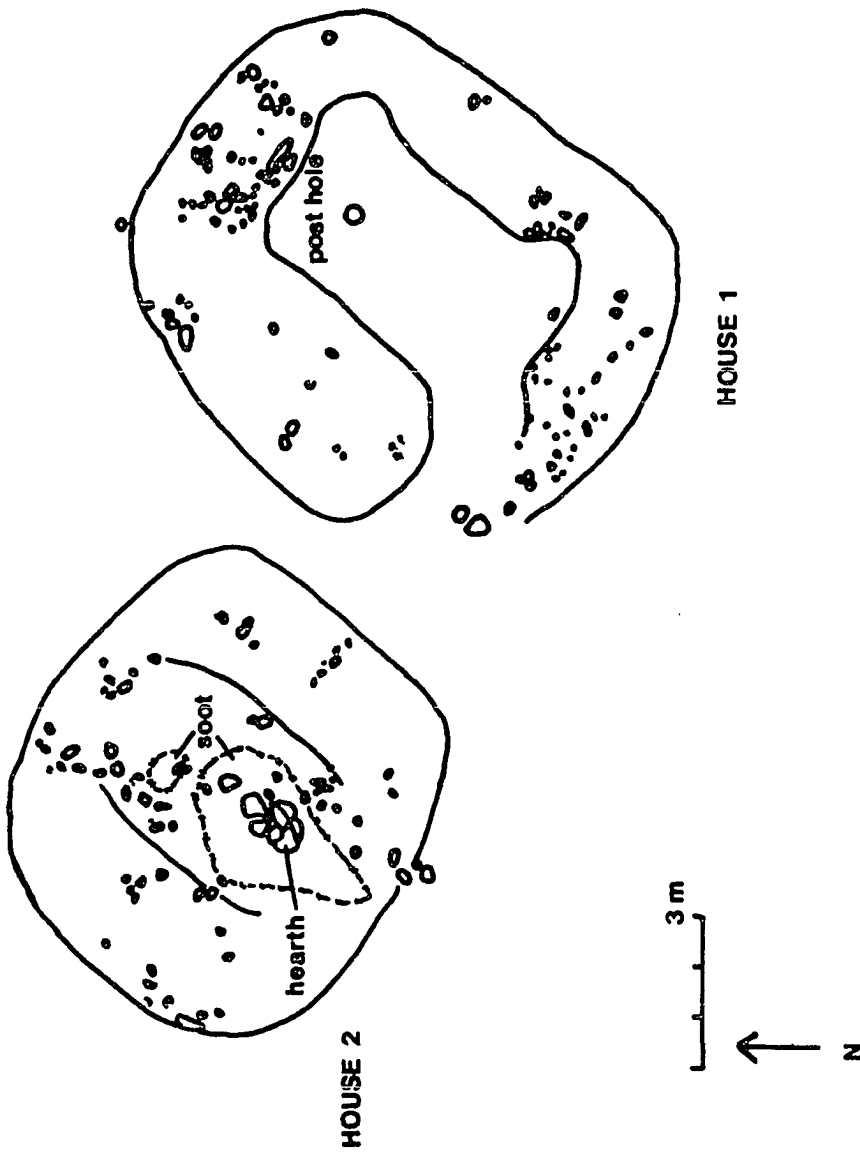


Figure 9.15: Mo 1 and 2, redrawn after Wik (1985:189).

stone-lined holes and the traces could easily disappear. There was also evidence of domestic activity in House 1 with soapstone sherds and a spindle whorl. House 2 had a hearth consisting of flagstones and soapstone sherds were found near it.

Wik suggests that the two houses had different functions, especially since only one had a hearth. House 2 may have been used for food preparation. The people may also have slept here, especially in winter when it would be warmer. She has difficulty suggesting a function for House 1, although she points out that the finds indicate domestic activity and there is nothing to suggest that it was a byre.

The finds indicate Viking Age occupation. The radiocarbon date to the Late Iron Age (780 +/- 130 AD) agrees with this. However, if the wood in the charcoal in the radiocarbon sample was old at the time it was used, the resulting date may be much too old. There is a possibility that the houses could date from the Middle Ages.

Moland, Vestvågøy, Lofoten, Nordland
(Johansen 1978)

One of the largest known Iron Age farm complexes in northern Norway lies on this site. There are six houses, the longest 35 m long, approximately 20 grave sites, 10-15 clearance cairns and a lynchet. There have been excavations in all six of the houses and the artifacts and radiocarbon dates show that three of the houses date to the Roman Iron Age/Migration Period while houses 2 and 6 date to the Merovingian/Viking Period. Again, this site is included to demonstrate the continuous occupation of Iron Age sites in northern Norway.

Mosetet, Brennmoen av Skistad, Overhalla, Nord Trøndelag
(Møllenus 1969, 1970; Alterskjær 1971)

This house ground was excavated in 1969-1970 by Kristen Møllenus. It lay a few kilometers from the modern settlement. The house measured 12 m by 5 m and was divided into two rooms:

west room	c. 6 m x 5 m
east room	c. 4 m x 5 m

There was a 2 m section between them which was higher and did not have a cultural layer. On the north and south sides the house was surrounded by a low berm. There were traces of unburned wood in these berms and partly along the east end of the house. These were probably the remains of sill beams. Remains of the wood wall construction were found in several places. There may also have been a wood floor. Other structural details are not available.

The cultural layer in the house was up to 35 cm thick and was full of charcoal. No certain hearths were found. Most of the artifacts were found along the walls and at a fairly deep level. They included glazed ceramic sherds, spindle whorls, gaming pieces, a fragment of a bone comb with closely placed rivets, soapstone sherds, pieces of bronze, and nine medieval Norwegian coins (these from the east room). Radiocarbon dates from the wood varied from 800 +/- 80 AD to 1040 +/- 100 AD. Just outside the west wall an arabic dirhem was found which dates to the period 750-815 AD. This all places the occupation of the site in the Viking Age/Early Middle Ages.

Måkskitmyro av Nordvik, Utsira
(Petersen 1936, Myhre 1980)

Petersen excavated this house in 1931. It measured 20.5 m by 6.5 m externally (Figure 9.16). According to Petersen it had three rooms, two in the house proper and an enclosure or pen on the northeast side. There was a cross wall between the two rooms of the house:

dwelling with hearth	c. 11.5 x 3.5 m
room without hearth	c. 6.0 x 4.0 m

Myhre suggests that the house itself could also have been divided into three rooms as at Oma (see below) instead of two, but there is not enough data to determine which solution is correct. The larger room had a flagstone hearth on the midline in the center of

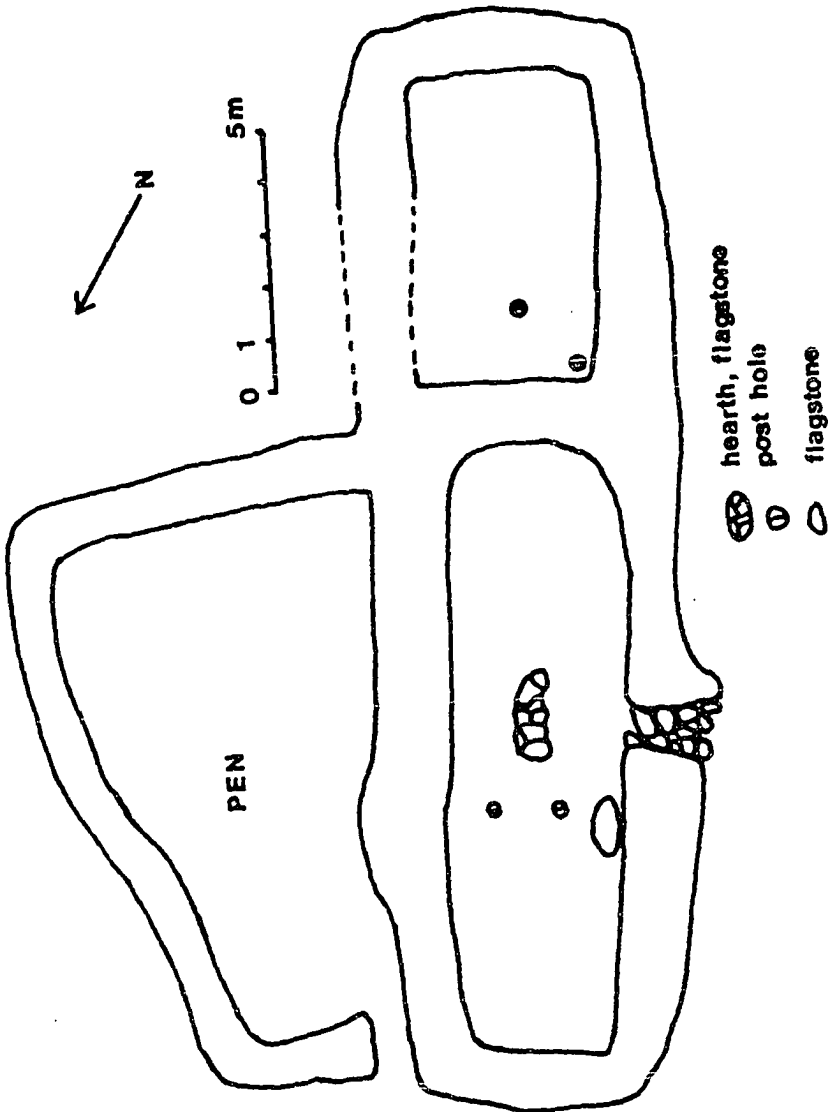


Figure 9.16: Måskitmyro, redrawn after Myhre (1980:Figure 189).

the room. There was also a paved entrance to this room in the middle of the west long wall. No entrance was found to the smaller room, but the walls had fallen and could have covered one. Artifacts were found in both rooms as well as in the pen. These included many ceramic sherds which are apparently Viking Age (Petersen 1936: 25) and a glass bead. The house probably dates to the Late Iron Age.

Nedre Rossavik, Forsand, Høgsfjord
(SMÅ 1939-40, Myhre 1980)

This site was excavated by Harald Egenæs Lund. The house ground was 28 m long by 4-4.5 m wide and apparently had only one room. There was a possible hearth in the east part of the structure and one in the middle of the room, but no plan exists of the house. The few artifacts from the house include two loom weights and fragments of whetstones. These do not provide a basis on which to date the site, but it was probably medieval or later. Because of the lack of information this site cannot be included in further analysis.

Neset, Møsstrand, Telemark
(Martens 1979, 1989)

Martens excavated this house in the late 1970s. Before excavation the house appeared to be 20 m by 5.8 m in size and a couple of room divisions could be seen (Figure 9.17). The walls appeared as low berms with some stone. After excavation the walls proved to have the character of foundations for a timber wall. Some remains of burned wood construction were found. Martens suggests that the house had five rooms:

room 1	with hearth/not dwelling	c. 4.8 m x 2 m
room 2	dwelling with hearth	c. 4.8 m x 4.3 m
room 3	with hearth?	c. 4.8 m x 2 m
room 4		?
room 5		c. 4 m x 3.6 m

There was a marked difference in floor level from northeast to southwest. The room partitions were marked by a berm and simple rows of stones. There was a corner

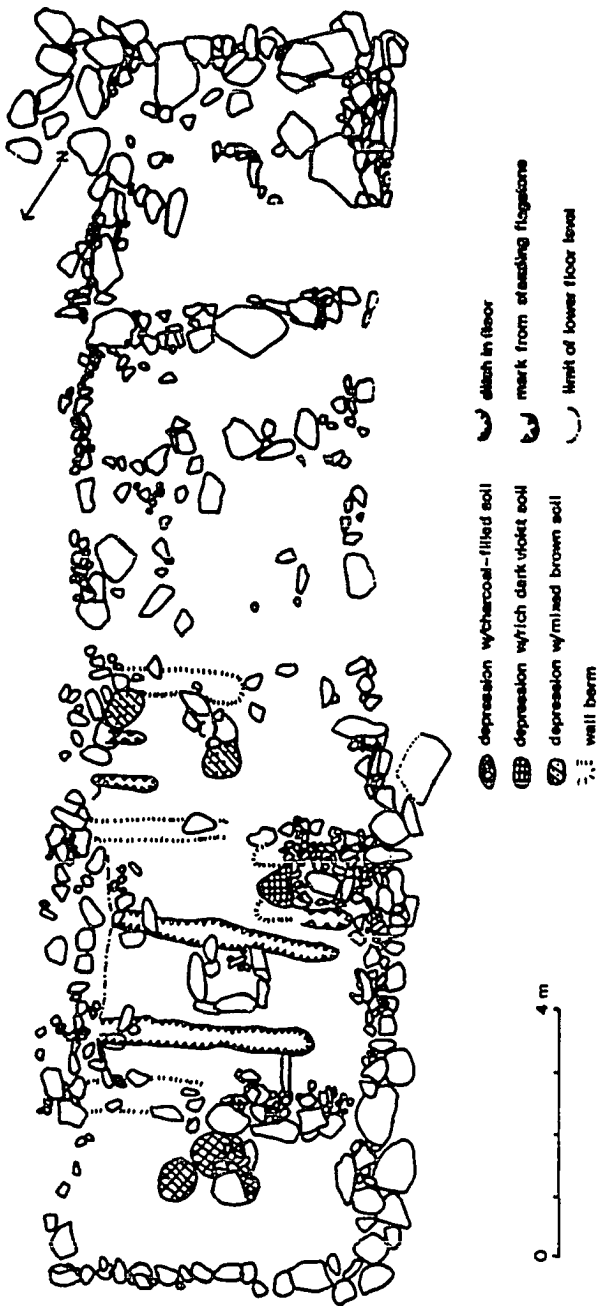


Figure 9.17: Neset, redrawn after Martens (1979).

hearth in room 2 as well as a central hearth. The shallow ditches in this room may have been associated with a wood floor or permanent fixtures. This room also had the thickest cultural layer and the floor was dug into the earth in places here. There was a 50 cm difference in floor level between rooms 4 and 5. Martens argues that room 5 was a separate building and the space in between the two structures was used to store tools. Room 5 may have been an outhouse. Otherwise only room 2 can be assigned a function, in this case the most important dwelling room in the house.

Finds from the site included knives, bronze fragments, soapstone sherds and baking plates. The house clearly dates from the Middle Ages. The two radiocarbon dates (1120 +/- 140 and 1200 +/- 90) agree with this.

Nordberg, Lista
(Myhre 1980)

In this case finds from the Migration Period and the Late Iron Age/Middle Ages were found in the same structure. As with Knutstad, the relationship of the finds is difficult to say. At Nordberg the later dating is based on only three schist whetstones, so the site may actually have been in use only in the older period. On the other hand it is also possible that there was continuous occupation up to the Late Iron Age. Because of this confusion, I will not consider this site further.

Nordre Valldalseter, Røldal, Hordaland
(Martens 1973, Myhre 1980)

The house ground here was excavated by Irmelin Martens in the 1960s. Externally it measured 23 m by 7 m (Figure 4.13). Before excavation the walls appeared as low earthen berms on three sides with some stone and it was possible to see that there had been several rooms. The inner edge of these walls became clear upon excavation since the floor had been dug into the earth through most of the house. Almost 30 post holes were found, but unlike most of the other structures included here

these posts stood along the wall line. According to Martens they served both as part of the wall and as part of the roof bearing structure. Many of them were packed with stone. Two definite entrances were found along with one possible in the southeast long wall. They all coincided with the positions of the inner cross walls.

The inner cross walls were marked by a low earthen berm and two wall ditches. Martens believed that standing planks stood in these. The two middle rooms had hearths, the thickest cultural layer and the most finds. One of the dwelling rooms also had an iron furnace which Martens felt must be older than the house, but Myhre disagrees. The suggested layout was as follows:

out-room/byre	c. 6.0 m x 4 m
dwelling with hearth	c. 5.5 m x 4 m
dwelling with hearth	c. 4.5 m x 4 m
storeroom	c. 3.5 m x 4 m

Finds from the house included two iron arrowheads, a sickle or scythe blade, knives, soapstone sherds and whetstones. Appropriate samples for radiocarbon dating were not available. The finds place the date of occupation in the Middle Ages.

Nyset-Steggje project, Sogn og Fjordane
(Bjørge 1986, Bjørge et al. 1992)

Archaeological investigations were carried out in this inner Sognefjord mountain region in the 1980s in response to a planned hydroelectric project. Three valleys were included, all at an altitude of 950-1300 meters above sea level, and no archaeological research had been carried out here before. A priority was given to finding sites not visible on the ground surface by coring the soils, and approximately 25,000 test pits were dug. In all, 134 new sites were discovered and judged to be older than the Viking Period. Included in this group were 40 house remains from the period 300-1000 AD. An interesting note on the survey is the fact that most of the sites situated at a distance

from traditional 'good areas' were discovered by crew members who were not experienced enough to have preconceptions about where the sites would be found.

Fourteen house sites indicated a stable use of the area between 300-1000 AD. The walls were built of stone, turf and earth and in some cases there was wooden paneling on the inside. The post holes showed that the roofs were supported by pairs of posts. On average the houses measured 10 by 6 m externally and 8 by 4 m internally. They had a central fireplace. The maximum number of house remains dated to the Merovingian Period.

Finds from these sites included slag, knives, arrowheads, amber and glass beads, soapstone spindle whorls and loom weights. These are taken to indicate the presence of both women and men. The charred bear, reindeer and ptarmigan bones indicate hunting activity and the remains of hazelnut shells and cereals as well as the bones of sheep/goat, cattle, pig, cod, coalfish, eel and herring demonstrate the economy here was complex and there was communication between the mountain areas and the fjord. The palynological data indicate grazing activity and at one site experimental cereal cultivation, the highest such site so far known in Norway.

In the preliminary report on the project, Bjørge wrote that these sites clearly represent the exploitation of summer pastures (see also discussion in Chapter 4). On the basis of the solid house construction, the finds and the faunal and botanical data he suggests that some of the structures were occupied year-round, not just in the summer. The economic base of these settlements was animal husbandry combined with hunting and trapping. In light of the results of this project attempts have been made to test the representativity of these finds in a regional perspective. These surveys indicate that the mountains of the inner Sognefjord region were intensively exploited for pasture from

500 BC to the end of the Viking Age. More than 60 house remains from the Iron Age have been discovered so far, showing that this type of site is not the least bit unusual.

Oma i Time, Rogaland
(Petersen 1933, Myhre 1980)

This is a very important site excavated by Petersen in 1931. Unlike many of the other house sites which have been excavated this one lay on a large wealthy farm. The house measured 25 by 8.5 m externally and had bowed walls (Figure 4.9). According to Petersen it had only one room with a flagstone hearth and a cooking pit in the middle of it. There were two paved entrances, one in the northwest end of each long wall. The house lay on a slope so that there was a 2.21 m difference in the level from one end of the house to the other.

Myhre suggests a three part division of the house:

dwelling with hearth	c. 11 x 5 m
endroom without hearth	c. 5 x 4 m
endroom without hearth	c. 5 x 4 m

This explains several features of the house. First, nearly all the finds came from the middle section around the hearth. Second, this part of the floor did not slope as much as in the two ends. The post holes lie in two parallel rows and, according to Myhre (1980: 346), give the house a feeling of regularity and symmetry. Placing the room divisions at the outer pairs of post holes leaves one with two endrooms of equal size.

The dating of the house is not perfectly clear from the finds. The whetstone and spindle whorls seem to be medieval types, but the soapstone sherds could be Viking Age.

Rapstad av Årstad, Eigersund
(Petersen 1933, Myhre 1980)

Petersen investigated this site in 1924. Externally it measured 17 m by 7 m (Figure 4.10). Again Petersen claimed it had only one room, but Myhre suggests a two part division:

dwelling with hearth	c. 6.5 x 4 m
dwelling without hearth	c. 6.5 x 4 m

There was a hearth built up of stone on the midline just to the east of the center of the house. One entrance was found near the east end of the south long wall. Post holes were not found, but the bare rock showed through to the floor in two places. Most of the finds came from the half without the hearth. These included soapstone sherds, spindle whorls, ceramic sherds and whetstones. These indicate a Viking Age occupation, although Myhre notes that there may also have been medieval occupation of the site. The name itself may date to the Viking Age as well.

Reve 1, Rogaland
(Myhre 1980)

This is yet another example of a site which produced both Migration Period and Viking/Medieval finds (soapstone sherds, ceramics) from the same structure. According to Myhre (1980: 128), the excavator did not pay attention to the fact that finds from different periods were found, nor did he try to distinguish between the different construction phases. The situation is very unclear and the site will not be considered further.

Risavika, Tjora, Sola
(Møllerop 1964, Myhre 1980)

Two house grounds were found on this farm along with several grave finds from the Migration Period. House 1 (Tuft 13 in the archives) measured 14.2 by 5.5 m externally (Figure 9.18). It seems to have consisted of only one room, a dwelling room,

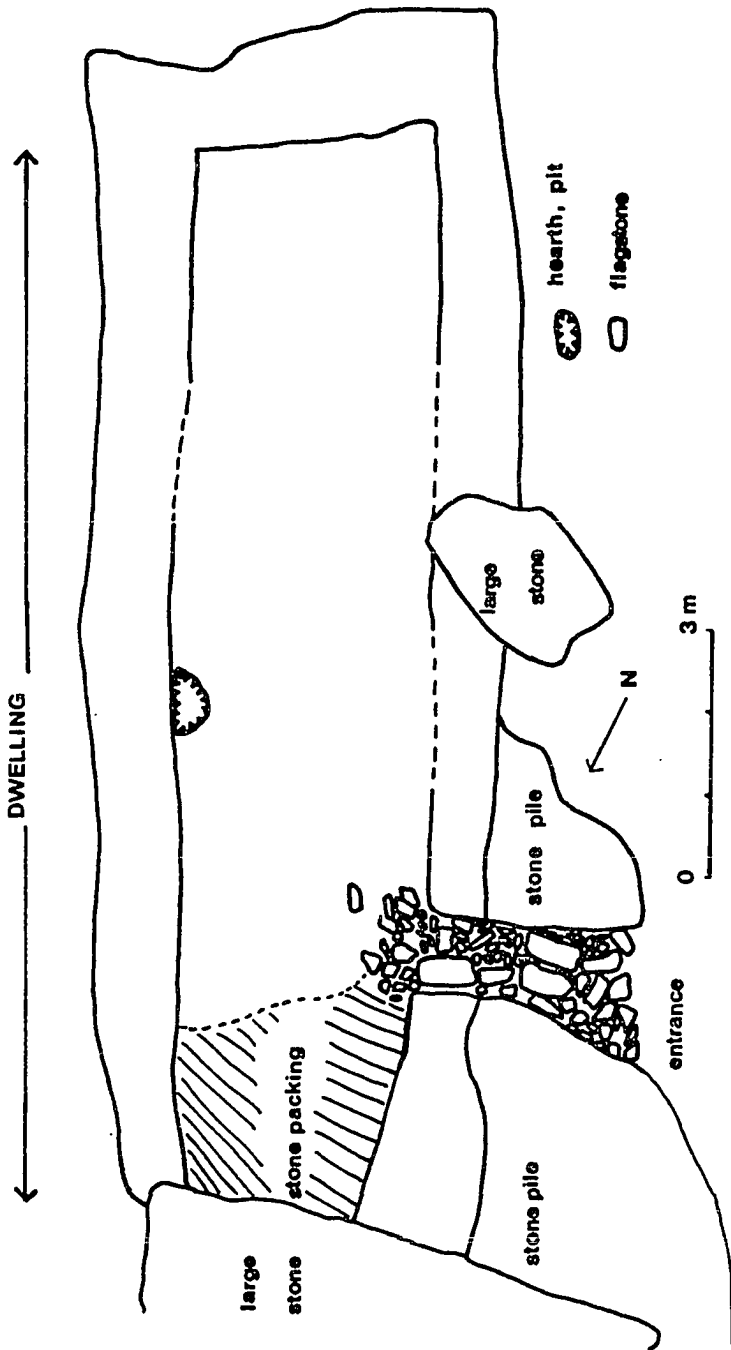


Figure 9.18: Risavika 1, redrawn after Myhre (1980:Figure 192).

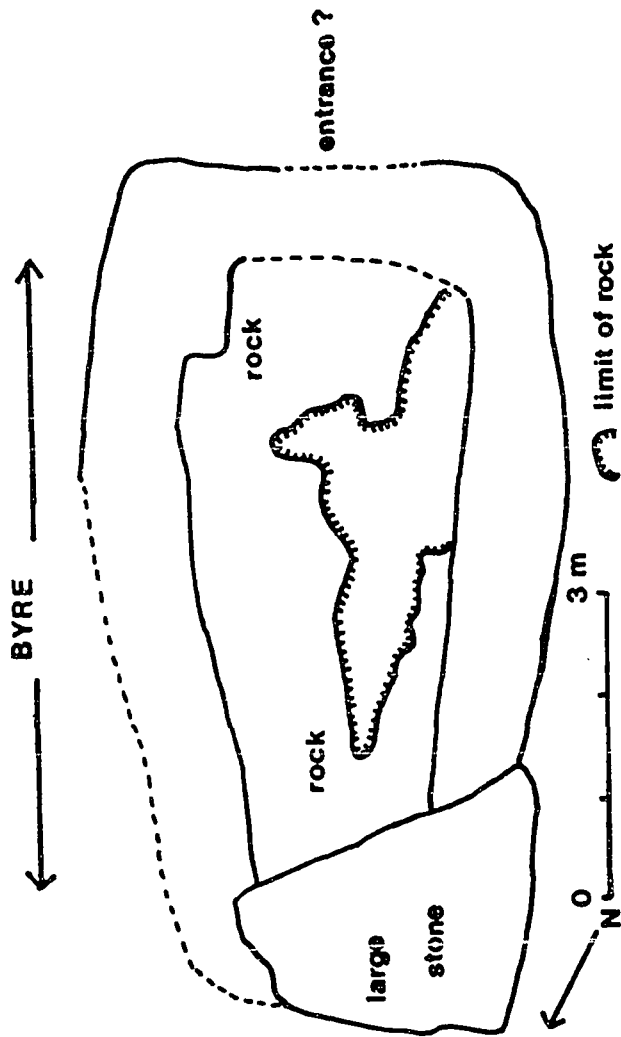


Figure 9.19: Risavika 2, redrawn after Myhre (1980:Figure193).

measuring 12.5 by 3 m. It had bowed walls. There was one paved entrance toward the northwest end of the west long wall and a large area packed with stone lay in the north end of the room. The only visible hearth lay next to the east wall in the middle of the structure. The few finds include ceramic sherds from the Viking Age and a cufic coin from 771-815 AD.

House 2 was irregular in form, about 6 m by 2.5 m (Figure 9.18). A large part of the floor was actually rock and no artifacts were recovered. The entrance may have been in the south gable wall. The building has been interpreted as a byre. Like House 1, this structure probably dates to the Viking Age.

Risøya, Hordaland
(Magnus 1974)

This small island is treeless and uninhabited and there is no tradition of settlement here. On the east side 10 house grounds and 7 spots to drag up boats lie in groups around one of the bays, Vestrevågen. The houses are square, approximately 6 by 6 m externally, with stone walls. No entrances are visible. In addition to the houses there are stone rings c. 1 m in diameter whose function is unknown. A trial trench in one of the structures, possibly a naust, produced artifacts such as iron clinker nails, flints, a couple of slate whetstones, burned bone fragments and charcoal. These did not allow for a definite dating of the site although the whetstones may indicate that the structure was used in the Late Iron Age/Early Middle Ages.

Another of the structures was also partially excavated. It proved to be c. 8 by 7 m externally and was built directly on rock. The original foundation for the walls probably consisted of two parallel rows of stones. However, there were not enough stones present for the walls to have been exclusively stone and Magnus suggests that the stone is from outer insulating walls which were built around inner timber walls. Remains of unburned planks were found 14 cm under the turf layer and may be the

remains of such a timber wall. No post holes or stone foundations for posts were found, but posts could have stood directly on the rock.

Within the house three cooking pits lay in a line from east to west. Few artifacts were found in them, but several of the soapstone sherds found elsewhere in the house were firecracked or stained with soot. Other finds from the house include soapstone fishing weights, iron fish hooks, a harpoon point, flints, clinker nails and other unidentified iron fragments, a fire steel and small whetstones for sharpening knives and fishing hooks. Nothing in this assemblage indicates that women were present, if one accepts the traditional interpretations. The soapstone sherds are from bowl formed vessels well known from Viking Age sites, although some sherds are of medieval types. Most of the fishing weights were made from sherds from broken soapstone vessels. As a whole the finds indicate Late Iron Age occupation at Risøya, but this may have continued into the Early Middle Ages. The 4 radiocarbon dates from the site range from the Early Iron Age to the Viking Age, but there is nothing else on the site to confirm the earliest dates.

This was a new type of site identified by Magnus, a type which has since been recognized in a number of locations. These sites apparently represent a specialized fishing activity which now seems to have started in the Iron Age (see Chapter 4).

Sandøya, Hordaland (Magnus 1974)

Sandøya is a small island which lies 400 m south of Risøya. It is also treeless and uninhabited. On the east side there is a small bay with a beautiful white beach from which the land rises up to talus slope. In front of this lie 5 house grounds in a row. The walls consist of double rows of stones, but there is relatively little stone inside or outside the structures. The average size of these buildings is 6 by 6 m. Southeast of the southern-most house in the row lay another house ground and in the middle of this

house was a 2 by 2 m square where scrub grew. This was very similar to the structures found on Risøya and half of it was excavated to see if it produced the same kind of artifacts.

In the middle of the house lay a hearth and a cooking pit full of firecracked stone. The cultural layer was 40 cm deep, though fewer artifacts were found than at Risøya. These were primarily of the same type, however--fish hooks, whetstones, soapstone sherds, clinker nails. A few of the forms were medieval in date (e.g. some of the soapstone sherds and whetstones. The two radiocarbon dates from this site also indicate Late Iron Age/Medieval occupation. In view of all this, the houses on Sandøya seem to be close parallels to the ones on Risøya. See Chapter 4 for a discussion of the function of these sites.

Seltuftyri, Flåmsdalen
(Indrelid 1990)

Several house remains were found here at a site known locally as Finnebuedn. As at Gudmedalen there were large structures here, but they were built with more stone in the walls. One of the houses was excavated and appeared to have two rooms (Indrelid 1991, pers. comm). The house produced a radiocarbon date from the central long hearth in the inner room of 1185 +/- 75 AD. The entrance was in one of the gable walls. Cow teeth were found in the hearth and on the bench along the inner wall lay a spindle whorl which has been interpreted as indicating a woman was present. A whetstone, some iron nails and some pieces of flint were also found. These structures may also be seters, although there is no historical memory of such sites. There may have been a break in tradition after the Black Death when the original use of these houses was forgotten and they somehow became connected to a tradition of 'finnar', a foreign people.

Skarg, Bykle, Aust Agder
(Rolfesen 1977)

Excavations were carried out near Bøssvatn in Bykle in the early 1970s in connection with the development of the Øvre Otra water course. Bøssvatn is surrounded by mountain plateaus at 1000-1300 meters above sea level. The east and north sides of Bøssvatn face the sun and most of the farms, seters and cotters' farms are found here. Skarg lies at the east end of Bøssvatn. The name is thought to mean 'a bare spot', that is, a place where the snow disappears early. There is also a tradition that the first church in Bykle stood at Skarg. The archaeological investigations here were concentrated on House 1 (Figure 9.20).

This structure had been plowed over and was almost invisible in the landscape. The south long wall appeared as an oblong raised area. A stone fence ran over the northeast end of the house and the part that lay north of the fence had been destroyed by plowing. The east end of the house was clear since the southeast corner was preserved, but the western part had eroded into the water so the length of the house was uncertain. The length of the preserved part of the house was 20 m and its width was 5.65 m.

In all 28 post holes were found along with two entrances, 12 hearths and a number of artifacts. The placement of the post holes gives the impression that the house was rectangular. Three post holes were in the north long wall and nine in the south, two of which were associated with entrances. Two inner rows of posts bore part of the weight of the roof (5 in the south row and 4 in the north). There were 7 other post holes, most of which were associated with hearths. The post holes in the long walls were consistently bigger and deeper than the others. It is striking how regular the placement of the post holes is.

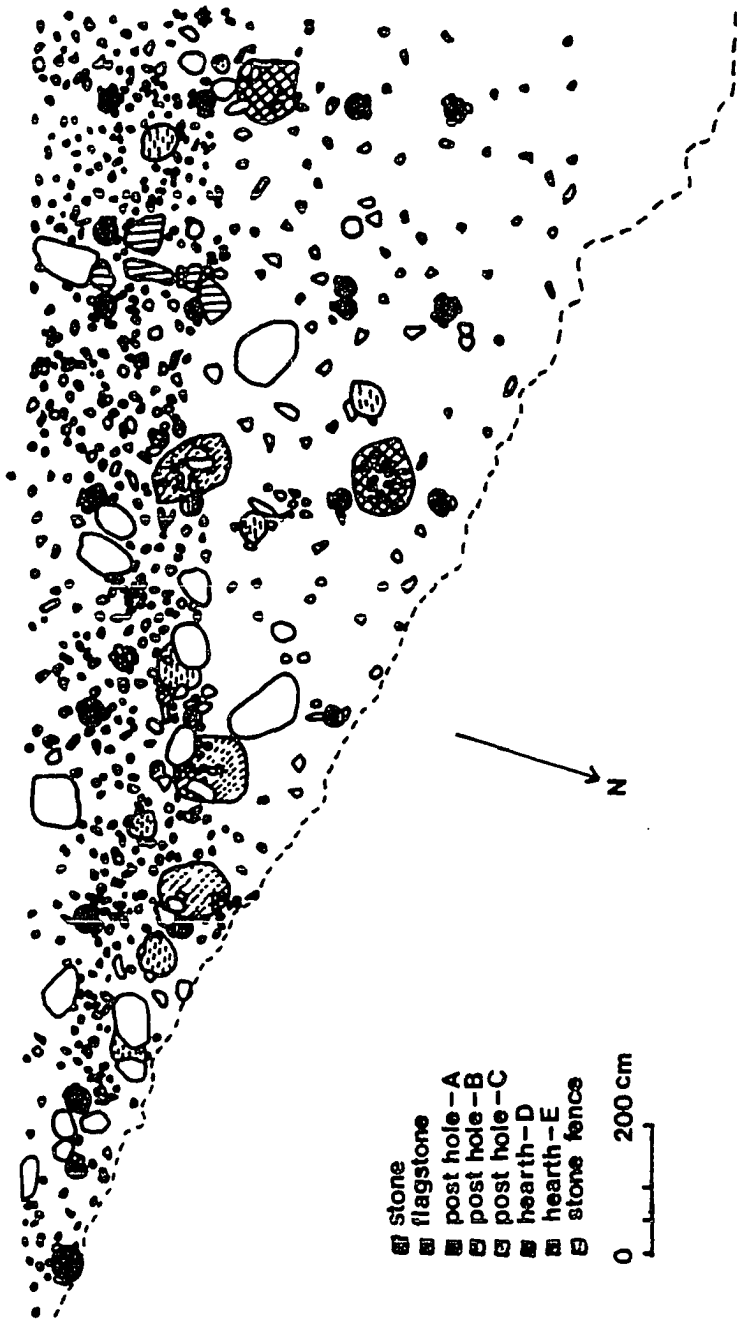


Figure 9.21: Skarg, redrawn after Rolfsen (1977:Figure 5).

Along the long walls there were traces of rotten wood, probably the remains of timber walls. The posts along the walls must have been part of the wood walls and, considering their size, also bore part of the weight of the roof. According to Rolfsen (1977: 101) it has not been possible to come up with a satisfactory explanation of the construction technique used here.

Both entrances were in the south long wall 12.2 m from each other. Flagstones lay directly on the subsoil in both entrances. Rolfsen argued that the number of entrances indicated that there were several rooms in the house. There is not enough data to determine where the partitions were, however.

There was an elevated area of earth and stone along the south long wall. This was probably an earthen bench, c. 1.2 m wide and 0.4 m high. Most of the artifacts came from this area along with firecracked stone. At the edge of this bench there were strips of rich soil running along the house's long axis. These are probably the remains of wood from the front of the bench. Such a bench could be used for working and sleeping on. Three hearths lay in the bench and five along the edge--these could have provided light and warmth for the people using the bench.

The 12 hearths can be divided into two groups, 5 pits with firecracked stone and charcoal and 7 pits with charcoal but no stone. These may have been used to keep coals burning. There was no long hearth. It is unclear which hearths were contemporary. However, the bench and the position of the hearths and artifacts indicate to Rolfsen that this was just a dwelling house without a byre.

A large number of artifacts came from this house and from outside the long wall. These included beads, sherds from bucket shaped vessels of a material with a high soapstone content, ceramic sherds, soapstone sherds, baking plates, spindle whorls, knives, a *skjekniv* where the blade was curved into a half circle, and a *med*, a tool

usually used in connection with *lafting*. This method of construction is known in Norway at least from c. 850 AD (from the Gokstad find). Charred grains of barley were found and radiocarbon dates from the site range from 659 +/- 80 AD to 960 +/- 190 AD (690 +/- 80 AD-1020 +/- 190 AD calibrated). Therefore, Rolfsen sees no reason why the house cannot date to the Late Iron Age (1977: 92). The house seems to have been occupied over a long period from the end of the Migration Period to the Early Middle Ages. No outhouses were found, but they must have existed.

I will not discuss the economic basis of this farm in detail. Written sources for Øvre Setesdal go back to the sixteenth century. Rolfsen argues that the pattern of agriculture and trapping which was dominant in the first half of the nineteenth century was not likely to undergo any fundamental changes over the centuries. Therefore, in the period 1600-1850 stock keeping was very important as well as hunting and fishing. There was also some iron production. However, salt and special goods had to be brought in. This area seems to have been occupied even after the Black Death and Rolfsen traces the traditional features of the economic system back into the Iron Age. Many of the ancient communication routes met at Skarg--those across the mountains to the west to Rogaland and its fjords. Thus the people at Skarg were in a good position to keep in contact with other cultural impulses in western Norway.

Skattum, Gran, Østlandet
(Hagen 1953, Komber 1989)

This farm complex was reported by Aksel Helmen in 1953. It consisted of four short rectangular structures built together (Figure 9.21). The largest, House 1, was 10 m by 8 m externally. According to Hagen, the complex had the same character as the one at Øvre Gilberg excavated by Grieg. Rows of stones formed the base for the sill beams of a timber construction, possibly *laftet*.

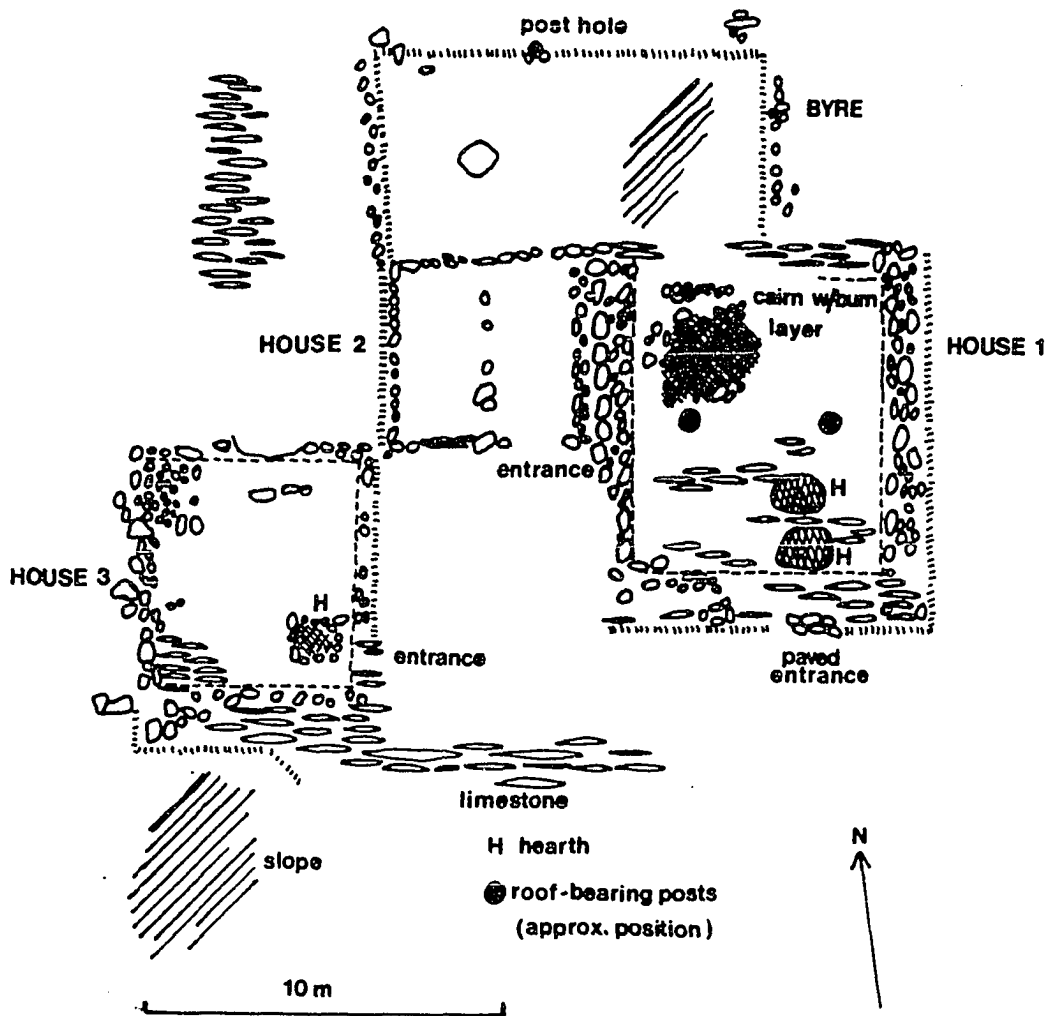


Figure 9.21: Skattum, redrawn after Komber (1989:Figure 8-1).

Komber has examined House 1 more closely and points out that it could also have been *reisverk*. It measured 8 m by 7 m internally. The northwest long wall consisted of two rows of stones with a width of 1.4 m. Helmen suggested that the original wood wall ran along the outer edge of the foundation and that there was a *pall* or

bench on the inside. The entrance was in east side of the south gable wall and was paved. The south wall ran about 1.3 m inside the house so the long walls and the roof overhang would have formed a *gavlsva* or vestibule. There were traces of two posts opposite each other in the middle of the house. These posts bore the weight of the roof and they stood directly on the stone floor. (Their position on the plan from Komber is approximate as the exact positions apparently were not recorded.) Komber suggests that the *mønsås* was supported by a *dverg* which rested on a *tverrbjelke* connecting the two posts.

There were three hearths in the house. In the northwest corner lay a rectangular pile of stones. The upper part was built up of flagstones. There were several signs of burning here as well as many animal bones. Komber interprets it as a hearth. In addition, there were two pits filled with charcoal, ash and animal bones, each with a flat stone in the bottom. These lay in the south half of the house just inside the entrance.

The foundation of House 3 also consisted of a single row of stones. In places the wall stood directly on the ground. As in House 1, the long walls may have extended past the south gable wall forming a *gavlsva*. This house measured 6.3 m by 5.5 m internally. The stones in the northwest corner are similar to the apparent hearth in the northwest corner of House 1. There was also a flagstone hearth in the southeast corner.

House 2 was interpreted by Helmen as a storehouse. He did not think it was *laftet*. It seems to have been two aisled. The flat stones down the middle may be the remains of a partition wall. The fourth structure on the site has been interpreted as a byre.

Finds from the site included glazed ceramics, soapstone sherds, spindle whorls, nails and knives. The ceramics indicate a Medieval date, but the complex could also have been occupied in the Late Viking Age (Hagen 1953: 185).

Småvågane av Beite av Nordvik, Utsira
(Petersen 1936, Myhre 1980)

Petersen excavated this house ground in 1931. It was the lowest lying structure of all the houses he excavated on Utsira and measured 7 m by 6 m externally. There was only one room, 4.3 m by 3 m. The walls were in very poor condition. There was an entrance in the northeast corner with four flat flagstones. A little west of the middle of the room was a simple hearth. Artifacts included a soapstone spindle whorl and ceramic sherds which both indicate a medieval date for the structure which makes it the youngest of the sites Petersen investigated on Utsira. Magnus (1974) has pointed out the similarity between this house and the ones she investigated on Risøya and Sandøya which were apparently connected with fishing activity. However, the finds from this house do not include fish hooks or fishing weights, so it may not have served the same function.

Storrsheia 2 av Vigesa, Bjerkreim
(Petersen 1933, Myhre 1980)

This house lay near a house from the Migration Period. Externally it measured 18.5 m by 6.75 m and according to Petersen it had only one room (Figure 9.22). There was a flagstone hearth in one half of the structure along with a cooking pit. The other half did not have a hearth. Myhre takes this as evidence of a two-part division:

dwelling with hearth	c. 8.5 x 4 m
dwelling without hearth	c. 8.5 x 4 m

There were 35 post holes placed fairly regularly in two parallel rows, although not as regularly as at Krågeland. A few actually lie along the wall line. There was also an entrance in the middle of the north long wall which may have been covered. The finds included soapstone sherds, whetstones and a knife fragment which all agree with a date in the Viking Age.

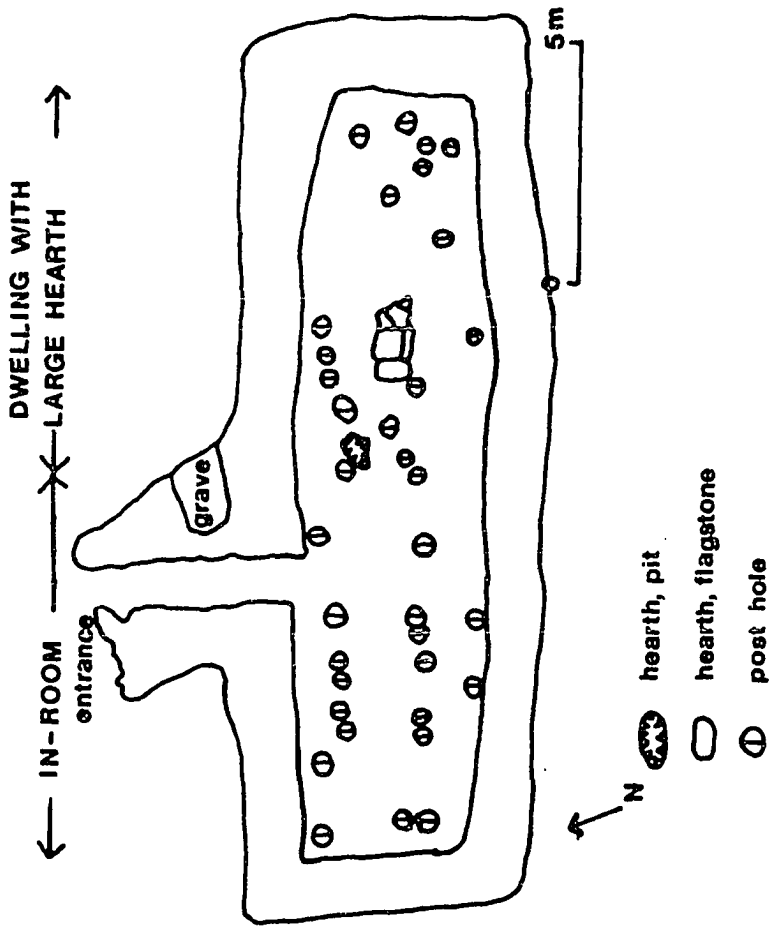


Figure 9.22: Storrshelia 2, redrawn after Myhre (1980:Figure 184).

Søndre Nygård, Fåberg, Oppland
(Grieg 1935, 1937, Komber 1989)

Sigurd Grieg excavated this house ground in 1935. It measured 17 m by 5.8-7 m and had bowed walls (Figure 9.23). According to Grieg it consisted of one large room 14 m by 5 m (1937: 105). Single rows of stones made up the wall line. In places there was some distance between these stones. They probably formed the foundation for a sill beam and Grieg noted that this house must have been built of wood and was possibly *laftet*. Komber points out that the bowed long walls make a *reisverk* construction more likely. Furthermore, post hole 4 lies in the wall line, possibly the remains of a door post.

There was a hearth about 6.2 m from the east end of the house along the midline. A total of ten post holes was found. These were arranged generally in two parallel rows and seemed to be paired. This would give the house a three aisled construction similar to the Iron Age houses from southwest Norway. Komber notes the similarity between the house here and the one at Oma i Time. The house at Nygård has an entrance near the west end of the north long wall just like the Oma house, although the entrance in the opposite wall is missing. Thus the Nygård house may also have three rooms, a central dwelling room with a hearth and two end rooms without hearths.

Artifacts from the site included iron slag, whetstones, loom weights and iron fragments. Most importantly were the iron celt and scythe, both of which are certain Viking Age types. The house has therefore been dated to the Viking Age.

Sørbø, Rennesøy
(Hemdorff 1990)

This house ground was investigated in connection with road building on Rennesøy. It proved to be a three aisled longhouse, 25 m by 5 m in size. There were eight or nine pairs of roof bearing posts, although repairs were probably made several

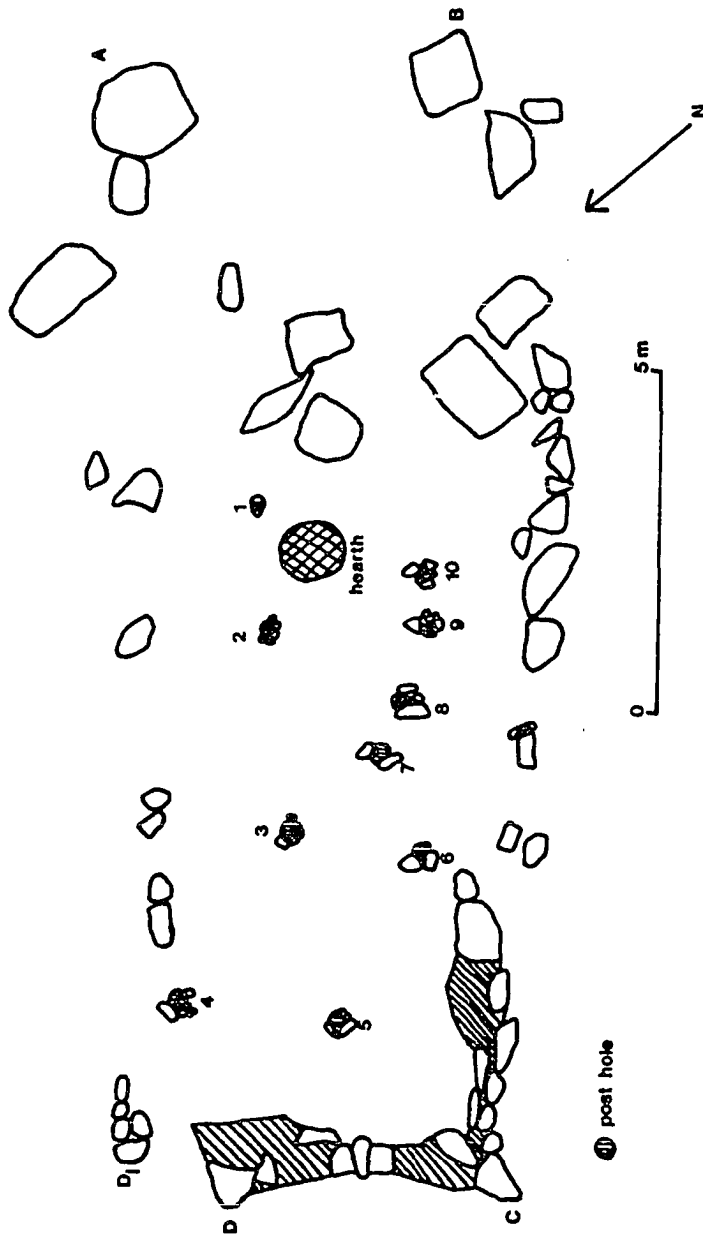


Figure 9.23: Søndre Nygård, redrawn after Komber (1989:Figure 8-8).

times as posts rotted. The house had two hearths, a smaller one in the east end and a larger one with a large flagstone in the west end, the dwelling end. Charcoal from this hearth gave a radiocarbon date of 650-780 AD. This makes the house the only structure from Sørvestlandet so far which has been dated to the Merovingian Period. Only one artifact was recovered from the house itself, a fragment of a whetstone with a hole bored in one end. However, the radiocarbon date makes this house important since it represents a previously unknown period in this part of the country.

Tjøtta, Klepp, Rogaland
(SMÅ 1956, Myhre 1980)

Peder Heskestad, a teacher, investigated this site in 1956 for the Stavanger Museum. The house ground was 15 m by 8.5 m externally. On the inside the walls were bounded by 14 flagstones which stood on edge half dug into the ground. They stood 0.5-1 m inside the walls. The only finds were half of a millstone and two cat bones. The millstone points to a date in the Middle Ages/Late Middle Ages. No plan was available and the site will not be discussed further.

Tjøtta, Nordland
(Wik 1983)

This is a court site on the island of Tjøtta in Nordland. Similar sites are known from southwestern and northern Norway, although the ones in southwestern Norway date to the Early Iron Age, not the Late Iron Age. Harald Egenæs Lund investigated this site in the 1950s, but it was not published. In 1977 Wik conducted test excavations on the site in connection with a registration project.

The complex at Tjøtta had a long occupation period as shown by the radiocarbon dates. It was built in the Early Iron Age, AD 500 at the latest and was used through the Merovingian and Viking Periods. There were few finds from the site: most of them were whetstones and iron fragments. Several whetstones were Late Iron Age types

which agrees with the radiocarbon dates. The bones were from sheep/goat. This is in line with the evidence from northern Norway.

There are about 12 house grounds at Tjøtta in addition to 17 mounds associated with the site. They lie irregularly placed around an open square with a gable wall facing the square. All have one gable wall open and in every case but one this open wall faces the inner courtyard. In some cases the long walls appear to be bowed. There are pits in the ground throughout the site. Parts of six houses have been excavated, three by Lund and three by Wik. The outer walls were of turf and there were indications of a wall along the inside of these berms. Post holes and hearths were found inside the houses.

Measurements for seven of the houses are as follows:

House 1	c. 13 m x 9 m, inner width at middle c. 3 m
House 2b	c. 12 m x 9 m, inner width at middle c. 5 m
House 3	c. 13 m x 6.5 m
House 4	c. 18 m x 11 m, inner width at middle c. 4 m
House 5	c. 12 m x 9 m, inner width at middle c. 2 m
House 9	c. 10 m x 8 m, inner width at middle c. 4 m
House 10	c. 18.6 m x 7 m, inner width at middle c. 3 m

The houses investigated by Wik were numbered 6, 7 and 8 by Lund, but she called them A, B and C. They were all approximately 11 m long. She only dug a test trench, however, so few construction elements besides the presence of hearths and post holes were discovered. The lack of finds indicates that these structures were not inhabited on a permanent basis and calculations of farm productivity show that Tjøtta could not have supported such a population until the Viking Age. These buildings were probably used on special occasions, whether as barracks, accommodation for guests at religious ceremonies or some other occasion.

These are clearly of a different type than the standard Iron Age house from southwestern Norway, both in size and placement of the entrance, not to mention the fact that they are in an organized group. Wik tested her data against Johansen and

Sjøbstad's hypotheses about the north Norwegian court sites and their function within a system of chiefdoms. As with the northern material, the site at Tjøtta was known from written sources to be the residence of chieftains, it was located peripherally to the ground best suited for cultivation rather than centrally, it was not possible to distinguish between the houses functionally, there were few finds from the houses even if the cultural layers were thick, there was no large Iron Age cemetery in the vicinity and the other ancient monuments in the area point to the existence of an upper class. Tjøtta is located at the mouth of a large fjord and also along the important trade route to northern Norway. This makes it a good location for redistribution of goods associated with the local chieftain. The site (and others like it in northern Norway) may have been abandoned in the Late Viking Age because the social system which it supported (and which supported it) was changing. Chieftains were giving way to royal power.

Todneim, Randaberg, Hetland
(SMÅ 1945, Møllerop 1952, Myhre 1980)

Four house grounds lay on this farm, two larger and two smaller. The finds turned up when a new field was plowed and supposedly came from the larger two houses. They included whetstones, loom weights and parts of grinding stones. The finds indicate a date in the Late Iron Age/Middle Ages. Very little is known about the structures themselves, so they will not be considered further here.

Tranheim av Austreim, Utsira
(Petersen 1936, Myhre 1980)

Petersen excavated this house in 1929. Externally it measured 15.5 m by 4-6.5 m. According to Petersen there were two rooms, a half open shed and a proper room which measured 9 by 2.5-4 m (Figure 9.24). There was a flagstone hearth in the middle of this room and a section of paving approximately 3.5 m long which ran into the north wall. There was also a paved entrance to this room in the west long wall by the south

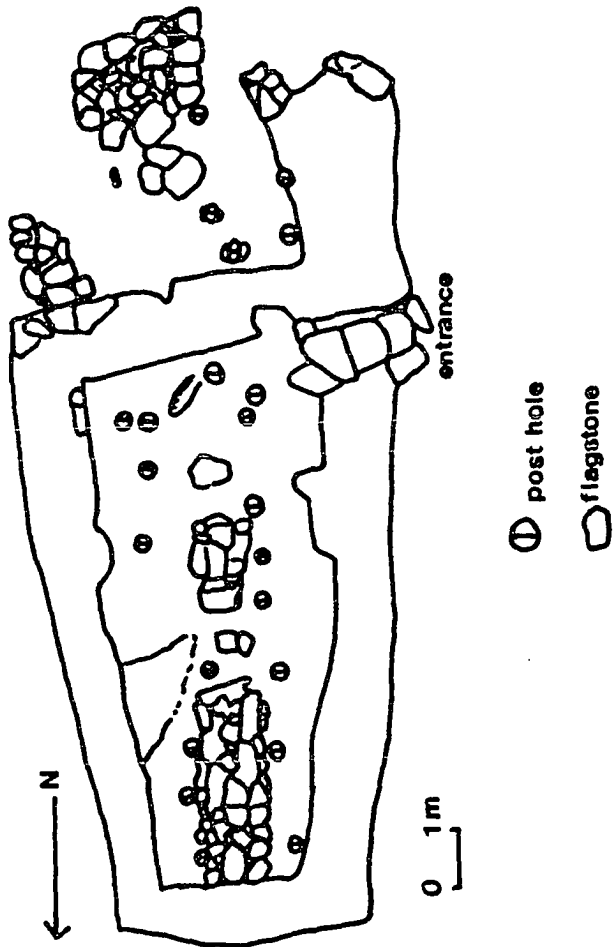


Figure 9.24: Tranheim, redrawn after Myhre (1980:Figure 190).

end of the room. There were 17 post holes in this room placed regularly in two parallel rows. Five post holes were found in the south room, but they were placed more irregularly.

Myhre suggests that the larger room might have been divided in two, one room with a hearth and the other with the paving. This paving is similar to the paving in byres from the Migration Period, but it probably did not have the same function in the Late Iron Age because the house is very narrow at this end and there is no entrance. Myhre also suggests that the paving may represent an earlier phase, something which is also suggested by the irregular construction of the opposite end of the house. Myhre claims that on a visit to the site in 1974 it was clear that Petersen had not uncovered the whole house ground. However, all the finds (e.g. soapstone sherds, ceramic sherds, whetstones and spindle whorls) date to the Late Iron Age.

Tu, Klepp, Rogaland
(SMÅ 1941, Myhre 1980)

Petersen investigated this site in 1941. The house ground was 20 m long externally. There were apparently two rooms, the in the northwest measuring 16.7 by 4.4 m and the smaller one in the southeast 4.4 by 4.7 m. There were simple open hearths in both rooms. There were also some flagstones on the floor in the larger room near the top and next to the cross wall. There was an entrance to this room in the southwest wall, partially paved. In the smaller room there were two post holes just inside the southwest wall.

Few artifacts were recovered from this structure--just a whetstone and parts of a millstone. The whetstone indicates a Late Iron Age/Medieval date for the site, although this is not much to build on.

Tussøy, Troms
(Støren Binns 1978, 1983)

The excavation of the house at Tussøy on the island of Tussøy formed part of Kari Støren Binns' magistergrad thesis. All settlement on this island is concentrated in two places on the southeast coast. Several archaeological sites have been registered here. House 1 appeared to be 19 m by 7 m before excavation. Its inner measurements proved to be 18 m by 5 m (Figure 4.12). As excavation proceeded it became clear that there were actually two house remains here, A and B. House 1B was the youngest and the most thoroughly investigated. Its outer walls consisted of earth and stone and the gable walls were rounded. Charcoal along the inside of the wall berms may be the remains of burned posts. There were two clear entrances, one in each long wall opposite each other in the south half of the house. These may also mark the location of a cross wall. There was also a cross wall in the north half of the house.

Thus there seem to have been three rooms:

dwelling with cooking pit	c. 5 m x 5 m
dwelling with main hearth	c. 7 m x 5 m
byre	c. 6 m x 5 m (measurements from plan)

There was flagstone paving in the byre which also led into the dwelling room next to it. There may have been an entrance to the byre in the northwest long wall. Phosphate analysis showed that the byre had a lower phosphate content than the dwelling area. This was also the case at Ullandhaug in Stavanger and, according to Støren Binns, supports the idea that this was a byre. The middle dwelling room had two hearths on the midline. One was oblong with flagstones standing on edge as a border. The other was almost rectangular and had been lined with stone. Four stone-packed post holes were also found. They were regularly placed at 3 m intervals along the

midline of the house making it a two aisled house instead of the three aisled house which is so familiar from the Iron Age.

The gable walls of house 1A were offset slightly to the west of the House 1B gables. House 1A had at least two building phases. Since it was not fully excavated I will not consider it further here.

The finds from House 1B were concentrated in the dwelling rooms, particularly around the main hearths. None of the finds were possible to date closely; they included soapstone sherds, spindle whorls, flints, beads, a sickle. There were two radiocarbon dates from House 1B: 750 +/- 100 and 850 +/- 150.

House 2 at Tussøy measures 15 m by 9 m. It was not investigated.

There were other structures on this site as well including grave cairns and clearance cairns. There seems to have been continuous settlement on this site over 600-700 years. The first phase of House 1 seems to date from the earliest part of the Late Iron Age, around 600 AD. The earliest occupants engaged in fishing and probably also agriculture. In the last stage of House 1, i.e. 1B, there is evidence of stockholding and cereal cultivation

Ullaland 1 av Bø, Nærbø, Hå
(Petersen 1933, Myhre 1980)

At this site finds dating to the Migration Period and the Late Iron Age were found in the same structure. According to Petersen (1933: 57) this house had three cross walls. However, spindle whorls and whetstones of Viking Age type were found in one part of the structure demonstrating a later occupation of the site than the Migration Period indicated by most of the finds. It is unclear what structural elements belong to the two periods, but a later structure was probably built on top of the earlier one. Because of the lack of detail, this site will not be considered further.

Utsira, Rogaland
(Magnus 1974)

Magnus notes a number of house grounds on Utsira which are of the general Risøya type. In general they are square, 4 by 4 m or 5 by 5 m. The walls consist today of stone. Magnus points out that these structures are very different from the other Migration Period and Late Iron Age structures on Utsira excavated by Petersen. They are located near the coast and have produced few finds. These sites are included in order to give a more complete picture of economic activity in the Late Iron Age, but since few construction details are known the individual houses cannot be used in an analysis of house layout or room function.

Varberg, Eidfjord, Hordaland
(Sognnes 1974, Bergen Tilvekst 1974, Myhre 1980)

Kalle Sognnes excavated this house ground in 1972. After deturfing the walls appeared as a single row of stones, probably the foundation for timber walls. The south end of the structure was destroyed, but the house was probably approximately 8 by 4 m in size. Finds from the site included baking plates, whetstones and soapstone sherds which pointed to a medieval date for the structure.

Vaula, Hordaland
(Myhre 1980)

At this site a house was found built inside an earlier naust, although the existing reports make it impossible to determine the exact relationship of the two structures. However, finds of a clearly Late Iron Age/Medieval character (ceramics, soapstone sherds, whetstones, spindle whorls) were found which demonstrate the younger occupation. But the lack of accurate information about the later structure makes it impossible to include it in this study.

Vesle Hjerkin, Oppland
(Weber 1986, 1987)

There are five house grounds on this site in the Dovre mountains. They lie at approximately 930 meters above sea level. Three of them have been excavated. House 1 was 20 m by 8 m. It had three fireplaces, one in a corner and two along the midline. There was no sign of partition walls. The elevation along the north long wall may have been a bench. The house was radiocarbon dated to the ninth-eleventh centuries.

House 2 was 9 m by 6 m and was radiocarbon dated to AD 855 +/- 85 (calibrated).

House 3 measured 13 m by 7 m (Figure 4.17). The house may have been divided into two rooms by a partition wall. In this house significant portions of the lower logs of the *lafte* construction were preserved so the corner joins could be seen. There was a central hearth in the northern part of the house and another more to the southwest. Benches built of wood and filled with gravel ran along three of the walls. There were some post holes, but they were underneath House 3. The entrance was not found, but may have been in the east long wall into the larger room and next to the partition wall. The house was radiocarbon dated to 1100 +/- 80 and 1030 +/- 50 (calibrated). House 1 was therefore the youngest, although House 2 may have overlapped, and House 3 was the youngest.

House 4 was 8 m by 5 m. Conditions for wood preservation in House 4 were poor, but the radiocarbon date from the hearth was 1385 +/- 45 (calibrated). House 5 lies at the bottom of a slope and in 1986 had not been investigated. The area between the houses seems to have been a large midden up to 80 cm thick and House 3 was covered by it after it was abandoned.

There was a great variety of finds from the site. The midden produced a piece of silver and 20 coins ranging in date from the beginning of the eleventh to the end of the

twelfth century. There was also a broken Irish brooch and half of a jet ring. A thin lead plate was discovered with runes and rune-like characters on it. The inscription could not be interpreted.

Finds from the houses themselves included whetstones, knives, arrowheads, fish hooks, spindle whorls, sewing needles, hooks and buckles. Soapstone sherds were found everywhere and geological analysis has shown that the soapstone came from quarries in the Lesja mountains 1500 meters above sea level. Most importantly, there were combs along with partially finished tooth plates and connecting plates as well as production waste. The combs have been dated to the first half of the eleventh century to the middle of the twelfth century. The function of this site is discussed in Chapter 4.

Vestre Hauge, Lista
(Myhre 1980)

At this site there were Migration Period and Late Iron Age/Medieval finds from the same structure. According to Myhre (1980: 128) the plan shows two cross walls. These may actually be the gable walls of the later house since all the younger artifacts (soapstone sherds, whetstones) came from this part of the structure. Because of the lack of complete information I will not consider this site further.

Vestre Nape, Fyresdal, Telemark
(Martens 1973, Myhre 1980)

Irmelin Martens excavated two house grounds on this site in the 1960s. House 1 was approximately 13.5 by 8 m externally and was probably an outhouse. Right next to it lay House 2 which measured 14.5 by 4.5 m externally (Figure 4.14). The stone marking the walls probably served as a foundation for sill beams and the walls could have been *laftet*.

House 2 was divided into three rooms by cross walls:

dwelling with hearth	c. 7.5 x 4 m
passage (<i>gang</i>)	c. 2.5 x 4 m

dwelling with hearth c. 4.0 x 4 m

Both the end rooms seem to have been dwelling rooms and both had hearths along the midline of the house. The hearth in the west room was made of flagstones while the one in the east was a stone lined pit and lay next to the cross wall. There was also some uneven paving in the east room near the gable wall. This may have been for a *pall* or bench. The only post hole in the structure was found in the east room just south of the hearth.

The finds from the site include fragments of three sickle or scythe blades and whetstones. No ceramic or soapstone sherds were found. The two radiocarbon dates from the site were 1190 +/- 80 and 1390 +/- 80 AD. This places the occupation of the site in the Middle Ages.

Vestvatn, Misvær, Salten, Nordland
(Stamsø Munch 1964)

Three house sites were found on this farm in 1960, one of which was rather large. It formed a dark spot in the field with many firecracked stones. Two possible post holes were found, but no remains of walls or beams. The farmer thought that before he plowed the house had had rounded corners and measured approximately 12 by 9 m or more. The excavation indicated a length of 13 m and a width of 7 m and the walls were probably bowed. The finds dated the house to the Middle Ages, 1200-1300, and considering the number of finds and meal remains and the thickness of the cultural layers the house must have been occupied for a relatively long time. No hearth was found, but this could be because it was in an area that was not excavated or because the entire house had clearly been exposed to great heat, presumably from a fire which destroyed it. As at Eiterjord the finds indicate Saami occupation with Norwegian influence (Stamsø Munch 1991, pers. comm). Several of them were bone objects with a carved braid pattern.

Ytre Moa, Øvre Årdal, Sogn
 (Bakka 1965, 1971, 1976, Lillehammer 1967, Nordeide 1990)

This site was excavated in the mid 1960s and is still the most important Viking Age house site in Norway. This is because it remains the only farm from the period to be thoroughly investigated. There were six house grounds and a number of mounds (Figure 4.8). They lie on a terrace with a steep drop down to the Utle and Tya rivers below and a steep mountain face on the other side. Today there is no fresh water source on the terrace.

The houses here are a completely different type from the familiar Iron Age long house. They are shorter and appear to have only one room. The entrances are in the gable walls, not the long walls. The house dimensions were as follows:

House A	c. 7.5 x 4 m internally (Figure 9.25)
House B	c. 7.25 m x 4 m internally
House C	c. 6 m x 3 m internally
House D	c. 6 m x 4 m internally
House E	c. 7.5 m x 5 m internally
House F	c. 8.5 m x 5.5 m internally

Before excavation the walls of these houses appeared as low berms of earth and stone. In House A significant traces of the inner wood walls were found along both long walls. There was a long hearth in the inner part of the house and a cooking pit in the center. Four post holes were found, two opposite each other. There was an area of stone packing along the east long wall, probably the remains of a bench for sitting and/or sleeping. Finds from this house included loom weights, spindle whorls, mill stones, a scythe/sickle, arrowheads, razors and a trefoil brooch. This last find dates the house to the second half of the ninth century. A bronze ringpin can be dated to the eighth or ninth century.

House B had an open hearth near the inner gable wall. There were nine post holes, five on the north side and four on the south and arranged in pairs in two parallel

rows. House B probably also had an inner wood wall. The inner edge of the earth and stone wall was marked by flagstones standing on edge. Again there was a variety of finds: a file, an unfinished gilt bronze pendant, a bit, spindle whorls, loom weights, soapstone sherds, beads and whetstones. The pendant dates to the first half of the tenth century and the soapstone vessels were Viking Age.

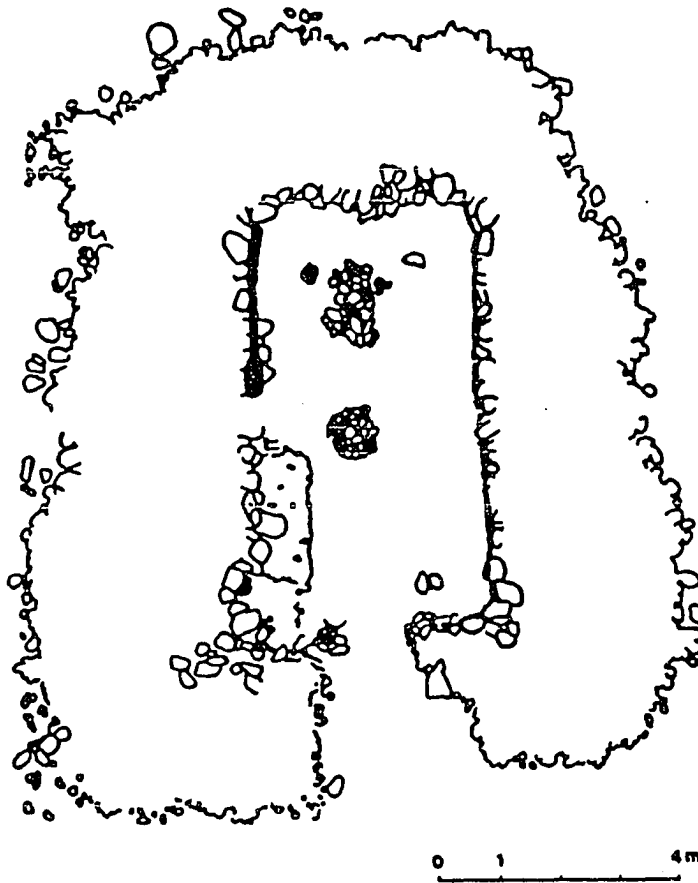


Figure 9.25: House A, Ytre Moa, redrawn after Myhre (1980:Figure 198).

House C was smaller than the other buildings. No post holes or hearths were found inside this house. One of the finds actually dated to the Migration Period and must be older than the building. There were not as many finds from House C, e.g. a knife, half a spindle whorl, a whetstone.

House D was clearly burned. There was a large cooking pit in the house which was twice as deep as any of the others that were found. It is unclear if there was another hearth in the house. There were a few post holes. House D produced numerous finds including fine beads, a scythe/sickle, loom weights, spindle whorls, whetstones and iron fragments.

House E evidently had seven post holes, but their exact position is unclear. There was no trace of a hearth in the house and the finds do not indicate any special function. They included a blue glass bead, arrowheads, whetstones, nails, and iron fragments.

House F also showed traces of inner wood walls. The house evidently burned. There was one open hearth and one cooking pit along the midline of the house with the hearth lying closer to the inner gable wall. Three definite post holes were found. The gable wall with the entrance was open so the entrance must have been built of some other material besides stone, probably wood. The finds indicate a variety of activity, e.g. spindle whorls, iron nails, whetstones, knives, arrowheads, loom weights, a scythe and numerous iron fragments.

Nordeide suggests the following functions for the six houses. Houses A, B and F were dwelling houses. House D was an *eldhus* which sometimes also served as a dwelling (perhaps during rebuilding after fire). House E was a byre and House C was a storage house. See Chapter 4 for a discussion of the interpretation of the site.

Øvre Gilberg, Fåberg, Østlandet
(Grieg 1937a, 1937b, Komber 1989)

Sigurd Grieg excavated this farm complex in 1937. It measured 24 m by 19 m and, according to Grieg, consisted of nine rooms or independent houses built together. He compares it to Icelandic and Greenlandic houses from the Viking Age and Middle Ages (1937b: 106). Others have argued against the conclusion that all the structures were in use at the same time. Martens (1973: 77) pointed out that the various wall lines and post holes do not seem to fit together into a single whole. Instead, they probably represent different building phases.

In spite of this confusion it seems reasonable to see the northern 'wing' as an independent house. It measured 7 m by 8 m and its visible walls were single rows of stones (Figure 9.26). Again, these were foundations for sill beams. Grieg suggested that the house was *laftet*, but Komber points out that they could have been *skiftesverk*. This house had a hearth and five post holes.

Komber attempted to reconstruct this part of the site at Gilberg. He suggested that there was a dwelling room starting at post holes 1, 3, 4 and 5 which extended to the east wall. The hearth lay in the southeast corner of this room. The area west of these post holes made up a kind of passage with a vestibule (*gavlsva*) farthest west. The entrance ran through the vestibule and the passage to the dwelling. There was also an open area between the dwelling room and the walls (i.e. between the posts 1 and 2, and 3 and an assumed post hole opposite 2) which he called a *skut*.

Many spindle whorls and loom weights were found in this structure. There were also soapstone sherds, knives, an arrowhead and some medieval ceramic sherds. The site has been dated to the Viking Age/Middle Ages.

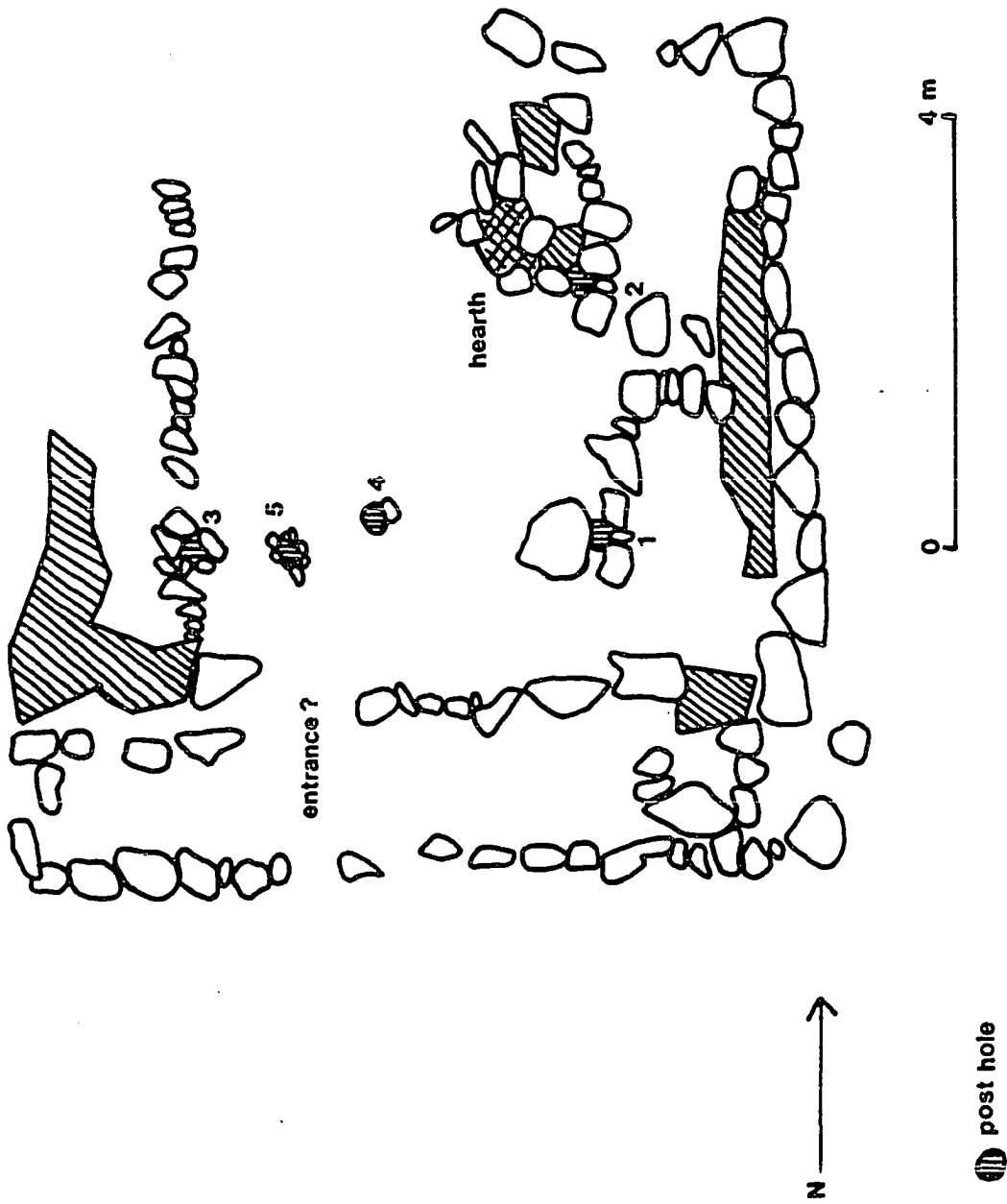


Figure 9.26: Øvre Gilberg, redrawn after Komber (1989:Figure 8-3).

Øygarden av Fjøløy, Rennesøy
(Stavanger archives, Myhre 1980)

Two house grounds lay close together on this site along with the remains of a fence and three grave mounds (Figure 9.27). The smaller house, House 1, measured only 6.6 by 3.5 m internally and was surrounded on three sides by a stone wall in poor condition. The south gable wall was open and must have had a timber construction. One paved entrance was found at the south end of the east long wall right next to the timber south wall. There was a hearth with a cooking pit in the middle of the room and the floor was partially paved. No post holes were found. There was probably just a single dwelling room in this structure.

The larger structure, House 2, was probably a byre and no artifacts were found in it. It measured 15.5 by 3.5 m internally. The floor was paved and there were stone walls on all sides except the east.

Finds from the site were medieval in type. Two fragments of a bronze cauldron and sherds of glazed ceramics point to the sixteenth century and the rest of the finds (e.g. soapstone oil lamp, soapstone loom weights, whetstones) are of general medieval types. Myhre notes that it would be very strange if such a marginal farm was occupied in the Late Middle Ages if there had not been an earlier settlement here. It is possible that there was continuous occupation throughout the Middle Ages.

Åsestølen, Nygård av Gard, Skåre, Haugesund
(Petersen 1954, SMÅ 1954, Myhre 1980)

This site was excavated in August 1954. The structure was approximately 20 m long and 5.5 m wide. Finds included two soapstone spindle whorls of a type known from Late Medieval Sweden, slag, whetstones, soapstone loom weights and part of an iron nail. Most important was a rim sherd from a pot with green glaze. It was dated to

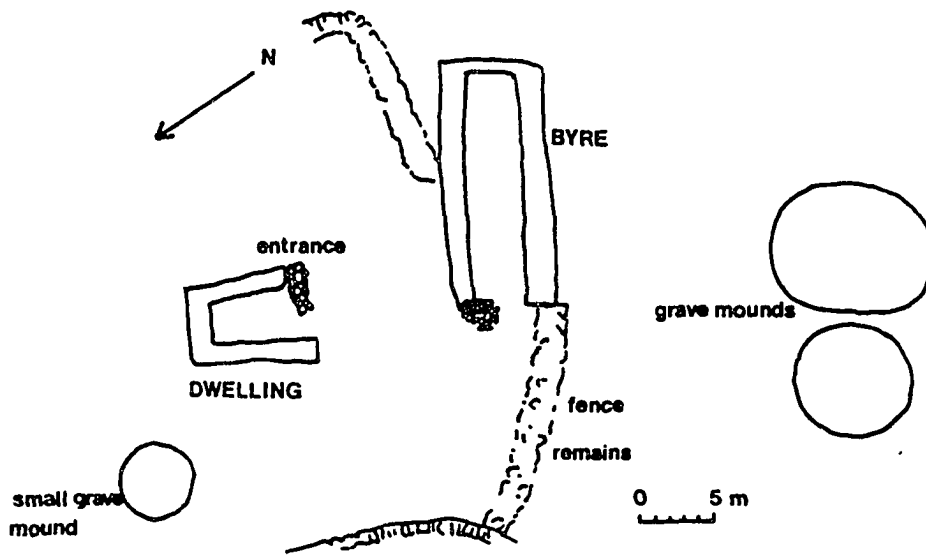


Figure 9.27: Øygarden, redrawn after Myhre (1980:Figure 192).

the sixteenth century, probably of western European origin. Thus the house probably dates to the Middle Ages or even the Late Middle Ages.

Only 14 m of the structure was excavated and the first 9 m of this was interpreted as a dwelling room. All the artifacts were found in this part of the structure and according to the plan in the archives they were all recovered in the area between the stone paving and the supposed cross wall. The assumption was that the other part of the structure, including the unexcavated part, was a byre, although only 3.8 m of it was excavated. There was flagstone paving across the structure which separated the two supposed rooms. In addition, there was an area 5 m long with nine flagstones lying along the midline of the dwelling. According to Petersen this did not appear to be a fireplace. About 1 m south of this area was the single post hole found on the site and in the southeast corner of the room was a stone lined cooking pit.

Appendix 2

This appendix includes the available information on Viking/Norse houses in Orkney and Shetland. Because several of the excavations are more recent than in the case of the Norwegian examples the site descriptions are also more detailed. There are also several multiperiod sites in this set, something which was not common or at least not recognized in the Norwegian data. Still, much of the information which would have been especially interesting to this project was either not collected or not published.

Sites in Orkney

Beachview, Birsay, Orkney (Morris 1983)

This site was examined in 1978 during a training excavation by the University of Durham headed by Christopher Morris. The site proved to be a large mound site with several periods of occupation rather like Saevar Howe (see below). The initial excavation uncovered the west end of a large building lying beneath rich Viking middens and prompted further work in 1979 and 1980. The structure measured at least 12 m east to west. Remains of benches along the long walls were uncovered. Radiocarbon dates were to be taken from the abundant samples of carbonized seeds recovered from the site, but these have not yet been published. A later structure with curved walls and partially overlying this one was excavated to a length of 7 m. This had a drain and may have been a byre (which may also be associated with the earlier building), but the associated layers were not excavated so the interpretation is merely speculation at this point. At the east end of the early structure a semi-circular structure was bonded into its north wall. This contained a hearth and may have been a corn-drying kiln (Morris 1983: 143-45).

There were also structures to the south of the rectangular building. Finds from the site apparently parallel those from late phases at Jarlshof, Sandwick and Freswick in Caithness (Batey 1987: 294). Bone and plant remains indicate domestic stockholding as well as exploitation of marine resources. Clearly these excavations were preliminary in nature and since they have not yet been published little can be said but that more Viking/Norse structures broadly similar to others already known have been found in the Birsay area.

Brough of Birsay Sites VII, VIII and IX, Orkney
(Hunter 1986)

The Brough of Birsay is a tidal island off the northwest corner of Mainland Orkney. It lies opposite the Point of Buckquoy across a 50 m channel and access is only possible at low water (making excavation interesting, to say the least). There are no sites suitable for landing either as the edges of the Brough are primarily formed by cliffs. Conditions were probably much the same 1000 years ago. However, because of Birsay's historical connection with the Earldom and because of the rich archaeological remains on the Brough, it has been the focus of archaeological investigation since the 1930s. Unfortunately much of the work has never been published.

Between 1974 and 1982 John Hunter and Christopher Morris both undertook research programs on the Brough and elsewhere in the Birsay Bay area in order to begin to clear up the picture of Norse settlement in the region. Morris's report has not yet been published. Hunter excavated three separate sites on the Brough, VII, VIII and IX. All of these lay on the eastern face of the island near the Guardianship area and all were seriously threatened by erosion and had already been partially destroyed. In some ways this was a blessing in disguise, since the certainty that these sites could not be saved persuaded the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments to allow the project to dismantle the walls of the structures uncovered. This provided important information on building

techniques and allowed the excavators to uncover the earlier buildings. The total area excavated was approximately 750 square meters.

Pre-Norse, Norse and Later Norse structures were found on all three sites. (Hunter does not use the term 'Viking', and I will follow his terminology when discussing these sites.) Unfortunately the remains had been subject to extensive robbing for building materials throughout the history of the site, so complete walls and internal features were not uncovered. However, the excavator could be fairly confident about the shape and general dimensions of most of the buildings on the basis of drainage gullies around the edges of structures, clay foundation pads and comparison between structures.

Even with the fragmentary remains these are very important sites and added to our scanty knowledge of the transition period. The beginning of the Pre-Norse phase was dated to the later seventh or earlier eighth century, ending no earlier than the later eighth or first half of the ninth century. Phase 2.1, the initial Norse phase, was found only on Site IX and began immediately after the Pre-Norse phase with the first Norse structure (16a) built on top of a pre-Norse (Pictish?) structure. Even the industrial character of the structure continued into the new period. Phase 2.2 continued with no break from 2.1 and ended between AD 980-1020, probably in the early eleventh century. Phase 3, the Later Norse phase, continued on from the end of phase 2.2. In this phase the alignments of the buildings shifted ninety degrees. These dates are supported by a series of radiocarbon dates. The abandonment of the site is difficult to date. We know that the church on the Brough was still in use into the earlier Middle Ages, but when St. Magnus's body was moved to Kirkwall the Brough would no longer have been a "pilgrim-trap", as Hunter has referred to it (1986: 142). Hunter

suggests that the secular buildings in his excavations were abandoned around the middle of the twelfth century.

Here I will simply present the basic dimensions and dates for the various structures. It should be borne in mind that this is a dense settlement when compared to other Norse settlements in the North Atlantic resembling a village more than a farmstead and therefore cannot be regarded as usual.

Norse Phase:

<u>Structure</u>	<u>Estimated length</u>	<u>Estimated width</u>	<u>Form</u>	<u>Site</u>
1a/b	9 m (max)	3 m (max)	bowed	VII
2	6.5 m	3 (?) m	sub-rect.	VII
3	9 m	3 m	sub-rect.	VII
9	10 (?) m	4 (?) m	sub-rect.	VIII
16a	12 (?) m	5 m	sub-rect.	IX
16b	7 m	5 m	sub-rect.	IX
17	14 (?) m	6 m	bowed	IX

Later Norse Phase:

<u>Structure</u>	<u>Estimated length</u>	<u>Estimated width</u>	<u>Form</u>	<u>Site</u>
4	?	c 2.5 m	?	VII
5	4.2 m	2.4 m (min)	?	VII
6a	c 12 m	2.9 m	sub-rect.	VII
6b	c 14.5 m	2.9 m	sub-rect.	VII
10	c 12 m	2.5-3.8 m	bowed	VIII

I have not included those structures for which there is little basis for an estimated floor area. Two points should be noted from the information above--the generally small size of the buildings and the presence of bowed walls in buildings of later construction. Furthermore, the structures were consistently built above previous ones, sometimes reusing parts of walls. This is true of all periods, i.e. the initial Norse buildings lie above Pictish ones reusing the same floor area, although not the same wall lines. The significance of this will be discussed in Chapter.

In general it was difficult to find traces of internal features such as hearths or benches. Traces of benches were found in at least two cases, however--Structures 10

(also comparatively rich in finds) and 17 (an example of fine Norse architecture). It should also be noted here that an annex was added to Structure 6b. Finally, several of the structures appear to have been outhouses connected with a dwelling, especially in the Later Norse Period.

Brough of Birsay, Guardianship Area, Mainland, Orkney
(Cruden 1965, Radford 1978, Hunter 1986)

The Guardianship area on the Brough of Birsay has been excavated over a period of decades. Unfortunately, a thorough report of the investigations has never been published so the structures from this area will not be discussed in detail, but a brief summary is useful. The Guardianship area includes the remains known as 'Thorfinn's Palace' from the eleventh century, the 'Bishop's Palace' and the ecclesiastical complex. In addition, two specific structures were excavated in the 1950s, C and D. Structure C actually comprised two parallel buildings measuring 22 m by 9 m and 19 m by 6 m respectively. They stood 1 m apart. The earliest phases of these structures had bowed walls. There was also evidence of two rows of posts which followed the lines of the bowed walls, but the posts were not set in pairs. One of the houses was apparently a true longhouse with a byre with drain at its lower end. Structure D measured 16 m by 8 m externally and again, the earliest phase had bowed walls. They were dated to the ninth century on the basis of comparison with Jarlshof and later phases were also dated by analogy to Jarlshof. The later structures on site D were built on a different alignment than the earlier ones, a feature also seen in Hunter's work (see above). The structures in the earlier phases of both C and D had benches along the long walls, but these could not be identified in the latest Norse houses on the two sites. The second and third phases on site D had annexes. But as I have stated, these sites have not been published adequately and the available plans are too simplified to be of much use other than as general guides.

Buckquoy, Birsay, Orkney
(Ritchie 1977)

Anna Ritchie excavated this site on the point of Buckquoy in the early 1970s. This lies directly across from the Brough of Birsay where important Norse sites have also been excavated (see above). Before excavation it consisted of a low mound 20 m by 0.5 m high which was subject to severe erosion. The site consisted of a series of farmsteads which had been built one on top of another. In general only the basal wall courses of the successive buildings survived. The first two phases were Pictish and next three Norse followed by a final phase represented by a tenth-century Viking burial in the ruins of the final farmstead.

The early Pictish farmstead was represented on the site by a house (House 6) with rectilinear cells opening off a central chamber with a hearth. Two construction techniques were used, upright slabs as the internal face at the base of the wall with loose boulders behind as the basal wall filling and horizontal drystone masonry as the inner wall face from the ground up. This is a common construction technique in post-broch structures in the Northern Isles and Caithness. The external face was probably turf. The total length of the house as found was approximately 8 m. If symmetrical its maximum internal width may have been approximately 9 m.

Part of House 6 was then dismantled in order to build House 5, a smaller house with a similar plan. Ritchie describes it as a trefoil plan (1977: 178) with three rectilinear cells around a central hearth. She also refers to them as cellular types and notes that this plan would reduce the span of the roof since the walling between the cells would act as internal roof supports. Drystone masonry was the primary construction technique. This house measured 2.75 by 3.6 m internally and each of the three cells averaged 1.3 by 1.6 m.

Few artifacts were found associated with the initial phase of occupation (including both Houses 5 and 6). These included bone pins, a bone spoon, part of a bone mount, and a bone comb. Though none of these artifacts is possible to date precisely, all of them are consistent with a seventh century date.

The Pictish structures were almost completely dismantled when House 4, a figure-of-eight type house, was built in the late Pictish phase (Phase II) (Figure 10.1).

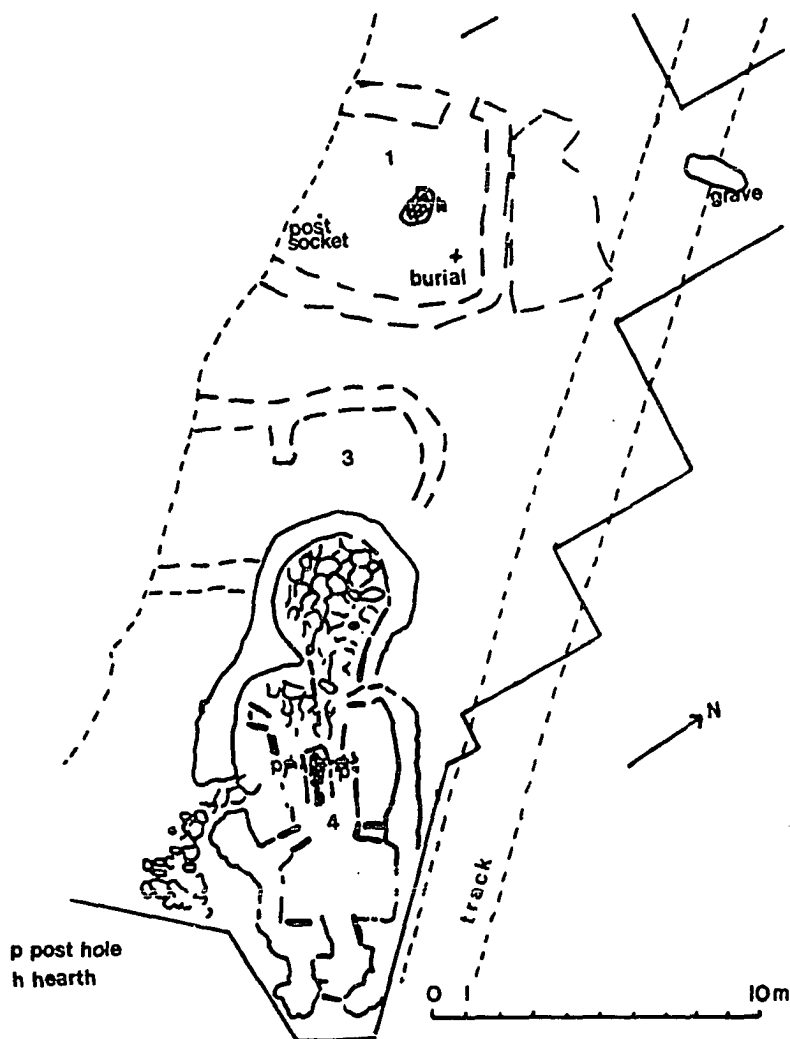


Figure 10.1: Figure-eight house, Buckquoy, redrawn after Ritchie (1977:Figure 3).

The plan of the house has a vaguely anthropomorphic appearance and may be associated with the common circular disc and rectangle with square indentation symbol known from Orkney, Caithness and Sutherland. There was a circular chamber at the northwest end of the house which was semi-subterranean. There were four interconnecting rooms in House 4 set in a line with two entrances, one at the southeast end of the house and one in the southwest wall of the main living hall. The southeast entrance led to a small unpaved vestibule which in turn led to a larger unpaved room. There were no features in this room and its function is unknown.

Next came the main living hall which contained a hearth and perhaps benches along the walls. Two post holes were found, one on each side of the hearth. According to Ritchie these were probably to support a spit across the hearth (1977: 180). At the northwest end of this room was an entrance into a circular chamber 3.4 m in diameter. Neither the living hall nor the chamber were paved at this stage, although the chamber and part of the hall were later paved with large slabs.

The four rooms of House 4 were separated from each other by short cross walls of which only the basal courses survived. These consisted of substantial stone slabs set upright which then formed box-shaped wall ends. Such upright slabs have also been found in wheelhouses. Ritchie suggests that they functioned as bases for piers of horizontally coursed drystone masonry.

Just to the south of House 4 were the remains of two structures which were roughly contemporary with House 4. Both overlay House 5. One consisted of an area of carefully laid paving and the other of a section of wall made of drystone masonry. The function of these structures is unknown.

Artifacts from Phase II included bone pins, spindle whorls including one with an ogam inscription, six pottery sherds comparable with wheelhouse pottery at Jarlishof and

Clickhimin in Shetland, and a painted pebble. The ogam inscription appears to be of early eighth century date.

In Phase III, the first Norse phase, House 3 was built partially overlying House 4. This has been interpreted as a byre/barn and measured 4 m across. What remained measured approximately 8 m in length. The wall was about 1.5 m thick and had an inner face of drystone slabs backed by turf. The byre was divided into two areas by means of a short cross wall projecting from the northeast wall about 0.7 m into the building. South of this partition was a stone-lined drain running down the midline of the building. Samples from this drain produced high phosphate values which support the interpretation of this structure as a byre. At a later stage an arc of low walling was built extending from the partition. This was probably used as a storage area for fodder or as a setting to hold a water barrel or milk churn. Similar features are known from Icelandic Viking houses. The original dwelling house associated with this structure has been lost, probably into the sea. Few finds could be unequivocally associated with Phase III, although there were some bone pins, fragments of double-sided composite bone combs and some iron object fragments.

In Phase IV a small rectangular building, House 2, was built to the north of House 3. It was later covered by House 1. What little remained of House 2 indicated that it had been carefully built with straight wall faces and angular internal corners. There was also fine paving on the floor. The structure measured approximately 2 m wide internally and at least 3.65 m in length. No entrance or hearth was found. Ritchie suggests that this may have been a threshing barn (1977: 186). It was torn down on purpose when House 1 was built.

Finds from this phase came primarily from the midden in House 3, although others were stratified in the paving from Phases IV and V. One pin came from the floor

of House 2. Other finds include several bone pins of common types, a decorated bone handle, a complete double-sided composite comb and fragments of a second, both of which are native in type, as well as a few pottery sherds of pre-Norse type. Otherwise Viking Age Buckquoy seems to have been aceramic. No steatite was found here either. Instead, wood and leather vessels may have been used. A gaming board was found in the midden in House 3. Two other gaming boards discovered in the spoil heap after a heavy rain probably also came from the Norse levels. These were all probably used in the Norse board game *hnefatafl* (see Chapter 5). No gaming pieces were found, however; perhaps simple pebbles were used.

Phase V contained part of a dwelling house, House 1. The remains measured approximately 4.5-5 m in width and 6 m in length, although the building had been longer. Again, this building had a drystone masonry inner face with an earth and turf backing. The surviving northeast corner of the house was squared and the end wall was probably actually the gable wall judging from its thickness. Two entrances were found, one in the northwest wall close to the gable and one in the southeast wall. This latter entrance was later blocked off. The area inside the southeast entrance was paved, but the rest of the floor was earthen. One of the paving stones showed signs of wear from a post used to support the roof. According to Ritchie, its position one third of the width into the house suggests that two rows of posts were used, though no other post holes were found. A small hearth lay on the long axis of the house near the gable end. In the northeast corner of the house a large stone slab covered the disarticulated bones of a newborn baby and individual baby bones were found elsewhere on the site. There may have been benches along the sides of the house, although the evidence was not strong. Outside the house on its northeast and southeast sides paving was found along with a wall leading to the southeast entrance.

Artifacts from Phase V included bone pins, two of which had animal heads very much in the native style seen in one pin from Phase II. These heads are at right angles to the shank unlike the Scandinavian animal headed pins which are larger and where the heads are carved along the axis of the pins. Fragments of single-sided composite combs were found, some of which seem to be in a native Orcadian style. There were also fragments from double-sided composite combs which were also of native origin.

The final phase of the site is represented by an inhumation burial placed in the ruins of Phase V. The body was that of a male approximately 40 years old. A coin found among the grave goods was identified as a silver penny of Eadmund (AD 940-46). Taken with the ring pin from the first half of the tenth century, Ritchie suggests a date in the third quarter of the tenth century for the burial (1977: 190).

In summary, three Norse structures were found at Buckquoy: a byre, a barn and a dwelling house. All date to the ninth century putting the original Norse occupation somewhere around AD 800. The Norse levels are actually dominated by native artifacts and the bone material from the site indicates continuity in the subsistence economy. Ritchie has discussed the houses themselves in some detail and argues that the slight curve in the southeast wall of House 1 is merely an irregularity, not the result of a boat-shaped plan.

Earl's Bu, Orphir, Mainland, Orkney
(Batey 1986, 1992)

Remains of Norse buildings have been found near the circular medieval church at Orphir, but they have not been published and the remains as seen today are confusing. The visible walls belong to different periods so there is no clear picture of what individual structures looked like. It is generally believed that this was the site of Earl Haakon Paulsson's hall which is mentioned in *Orkneyinga Saga*. The remains of the large building could not be dated, but there are numerous Viking and Norse sites in the

immediate vicinity including middens, a horizontal mill and a possible industrial site just down the road at Lavacroon.

Pool, Sanday, Orkney
(Hunter 1987, 1988, 1990)

In the 1980s John Hunter excavated the multiperiod (Neolithic to Norse) site at Pool on Sanday which included a Norse farmstead. Sanday is a low straggling island in the northern part of the Orkney group and Pool lies on the north coast of the southern extension of the island on a sandy bay. As the name of the island implies the soil is very sandy everywhere. Large-scale sand movement over the centuries means that the modern landscape probably looks very different from that of the tenth century. The site at Pool, however, seems to have been mostly unaffected by these sand movements.

This site has not yet been fully published, but preliminary reports provide some bits of information. The first possible Viking house on the site was a sub-rectangular structure built partly by using existing wall remains (Hunter 1990: 189). This building measured approximately 10 by 5 m and the walls were probably made of stone and turf. There was a central hearth. The house was not clearly of long house character, though it is more similar to Viking types than houses from Iron Age northern Britain. In addition, the artifacts from this structure are a mixture of native and Norse types in what Hunter refers to as a "phase of cultural interface" (1990: 189). Hunter points out that the circular building which had been the focus of the original settlement remained unaffected through this initial period of Viking occupation and maintained its domestic function. In fact, the roundhouse survived until the eleventh century when it was levelled and partly incorporated into a long house.

Another of the Viking houses measured approximately 20 m by 5 m internally (Hunter 1988: 1). The roof was apparently supported by a line of central posts resting on stones, not in post holes. In addition, the south hall may have had a timber lining of

some kind. There were also signs of internal partitioning through the use of timber supports. This structure did not have an obvious hearth or benches and was probably a byre or barn.

The main dwelling built subsequently to this was approximately 30 m by 4 m internally (Hunter 1987: 1). The main entrance was apparently in one of the gable walls and was paved. According to Hunter it was arranged so as to allow easy access for cattle, although this is not described in detail. There was a byre at one end of the house and a dwelling area at the other. The dwelling area had a hearth and benches, although the preliminary report does not say whether these were along the long walls or across the short end of the room. The house underwent two major changes. There was an eastern extension to the byre, perhaps as a response to increased land use. An annex or small storeroom was added to the north coinciding with the enclosure of a yard. In the final phase of use the building was converted to a barn and a wide entrance was added to the north wall.

As is usual at other Viking/Norse sites steatite was dominant over pottery at Pool, even though pottery is found in levels from the preceding periods (Neolithic, Bronze Age and late Iron Age). In fact, over 66 kg of steatite were recovered from the site including over 400 vessel fragments (Hunter et al. 1992:133; Hunter 1987:4). Most of the vessels were rounded but oval and rectangular forms were also present. Many show evidence of repair and reuse. However, some grass tempered pottery was present in the Norse levels. Other steatite objects found at Pool in the Norse layers include fragments of at least four baking plates. The only other such fragment from Orkney was found in Kirkwall. Sherds of late twelfth/early thirteenth century Dutch pottery were associated with the final phase.

Another change which occurred during the initial phase of Viking occupation was the introduction of flax. Flax has also been identified in Norse levels at Saevar Howe. It is unknown at this point whether flax was grown for fiber or oil or both, but its introduction does indicate a cultural change.

Some have suggested that this was a Huseby farm with administrative responsibilities for other parts of the outer islands. Before the excavation at Pool five possible huseby farms had been identified, but the area of the North Isles was twice the size of each of the other areas. The discovery of the farmstead at Pool along with a placename with the *hus* element in the vicinity suggest that this farmstead may have been an administrative center.

Saevar Howe, Birsay, Orkney
(Hedges 1983)

The mound at Saevar Howe measured 55 m in diameter and 3-3.5 m in height. It was first shown to contain archaeological remains in the nineteenth century when James Farrer excavated it, but the methods used did not allow for adequate interpretation of the site, although it was clear that there was a cist cemetery was present. The site was re-excavated in 1977 by John Hedges and this time it was shown that there was a Viking settlement overlying a Pictish one and that the cemetery was of Viking date. Unfortunately, the work could not be extended past the 1977 season so many questions were left unanswered.

The 1977 excavation opened seven unconnected trenches so in order to relate one area to another the excavator had to attempt to equate levels and likely combinations of features. This resulted in the identification of two main phases with the latter divided into three sub-phases with three superimposed Viking hall houses and some associated features. Phase I was difficult to interpret as it was not fully excavated. The structures from Phase I were apparently curvilinear and appear to have collapsed and partially

disappeared before the first hall house of Phase II was built. In both phases there were periods of sand drifting which are evident in the sections.

The earliest Viking structure in Phase II was poorly preserved and not excavated. Much of it had been destroyed by Farrer's nineteenth century excavation. However, its south wall seems to have been curved and, if the house was symmetrical, it would have been 3.5-4 m wide internally. It was apparently abandoned before the next house was built. The later two 'hall-houses', as Hedges refers to them, were much better preserved and measured between 11 and 12 m long. The Phase IIb house was probably a maximum of 4.4 m in width assuming that it was symmetrical internally. Its central axis lay just inside the old south wall and, according to Hedges, the construction of new walls indicates that the Phase IIa structure had either collapsed or was levelled. There was a path of large flags running along the center of the building which apparently ran from an entrance in the east end up to a large hearth. There was also a line of stones which may have been a sill for a partition wall which would have reached the south wall at the east end of the central southern entrance. The hearth lay west of this partition. As in the first house, a number of loom weights were found, this time concentrated on the north side of the interior. There was also a yard outside the south entrance which was enclosed by walls leading off from the house. This enclosed area had a surface of a thin layer of clay. There were also midden areas south of the house. The house was eventually abandoned and covered by a layer of sand.

The house in Phase IIc reused the south wall without alteration, but the north wall was completely rebuilt as it had deteriorated significantly and the new wall was curved. The internal width was reduced to 4 m. The sand in the interior of the house was cleaned out leaving about 10 cm of sand and the partition from the previous phase projected through the sand. The reconstructed north wall was single faced in some

places, double faced in others with a stone and sand core. The central south entrance was rebuilt and the Phase IIb yard was filled with sand and rubble. The entrance was extended into a passage at least 2.2 m long with single faced walls. A drain was added at this time which ran out the south entrance and was covered by large flags. Again a central path of large flags ran from a presumed east entrance to the middle of the long house where there was a spread of burn layers 4 m by 1 m. These partially overlay the flags. As before, this hearth was in the west room. The set stones were reused in the area north of the flags and east of the partition and incorporated into a raised bench which was made of small rubble and flagstones. The floor had scattered flags. Only one loom weight was found in this structure. Eventually the south entrance was blocked and the final layer from Phase IIc was a midden layer which spread inside the house, presumably after it was abandoned.

It seems, then, that the Viking houses had curved long walls, a feature more typical of Viking rather than Norse houses, and that they had at least two rooms. They may have had an outer face of turf with an inner masonry face and a stone core. There was no indication of anything besides domestic use in the later two buildings, i.e. there was no sign of a byre within the house itself. Traces of an outbuilding may have been found in Phase IIb.

Finds from the site included combs, spindle whorls, bone pins, a penny of Burgred of Mercia (reigned AD 852-874) which had been used as a pendant, various iron objects including nails, soapstone sherds and vessels, whetstones and loom weights. There was also a bell of a type associated with the Celtic church, but as this was from an unstratified context in the nineteenth-century excavations it is difficult to interpret. None of the soapstone vessels came from Phase I contexts and it is suggested that all the steatite vessels were imported finished from either Shetland or Norway as

steatite is not found naturally in Orkney. A handmade pottery vessel was found in the 1862 excavation. Its form is common in the Pictish period but is also known in Late Norse contexts.

None of these finds gives absolute dating evidence although the typological chronologies give some hints. The combs include both native Pictish and Viking types, but there is an absence of Late Norse types. There were also pre-Norse pins as well as Viking ones, but no Late Norse pins. The implications of the finds are discussed in Chapters 2 and 5. As I have already mentioned, there is no steatite from Phase I and in the Norse area this is usually interpreted as indicating a pre-Viking date. Several of the objects are high quality, e.g. the bell and some of the combs.

The bone and plant remains from Saevar Howe were also studied. The bones from cattle, sheep and pigs give a picture of animal husbandry which does not seem to have changed from the Pictish to the Norse periods. In the Viking layers evidence for oats, barley and flax were found along with crowberries and rowan berries.

Three radiocarbon dates were taken at Saevar Howe. They show Phase IIa to date to AD 715 +/- 78, Phase IIb to AD 760 +/- 90, and Phase IIc to AD 600 +/- 78 (all calibrated) (Hedges 1983: 109). This last sample contained a significant amount of a marine shell which skews the date somewhat earlier than it should be. It was from the drain where the ninth-century coin was found, however. The sample from Phase IIa was charcoal from spruce, a tree not native to Orkney which probably reached the islands as driftwood, so again the date cannot be taken too literally. However, none of these dates conflicts with the artifactual material and Hedges concludes that the site was occupied predominantly in the ninth century, although it may have been settled in the late eighth century and into the early tenth century. The Phase I occupation was probably eighth century and the cist graves excavated by Farrer probably post-dated Phase II.

Skaill, Deerness, Orkney
(Gelling 1984)

The site of Skaill is located on the east side of Mainland Orkney. Excavations began there in 1963 led by Peter Gelling. This site has not been fully published because of the death of the excavator, but work on a publication is now underway. The excavations have revealed continuous occupation from at least the early Iron Age down to the sixteenth century.

In a preliminary report on the site Gelling discussed five areas which had been excavated, sites 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6. The early Iron Age remains were found on site 5 just south of the modern bungalow. In the first century BC the occupation was moved to site 6 6200 yards to the north. A change occurred here around AD 600 when the large circular house on the site was abandoned at last. Much of the remains were paved over and some kind of rectilinear structures were built on top of them. At the same time new and delicate pottery shapes appeared, sometimes in much finer quality ware than previously known. This phase has been interpreted as Pictish.

Sites 1, 2 and 4 produced Norse and medieval remains, while site 3 was undated. Site 2 lies on a sand dune now only 36.6 m from the shore. House 2 was the first structure here which can be called Norse, but Gelling describes it as "squalid" (1984: 36). It was actually a remodelling of an earlier structure, House 1, which had probably become a ruin by this stage. House 1 has been dated to no earlier than the middle of the eighth century. One interesting feature of this earlier structure is that a stone used in the paving leading to the entrance incorporated what appears to be a Christian gravemarker. Also, House 1 was at least sub-rectangular in shape, not curvilinear.

The builders of House 2 reused the north and east walls of House 1, but built a new west wall which reduced the width of the structure. House 2 measured

approximately 5.2 m by 4.3 m. According to Gelling some of the walling was rather haphazard and the structure was probably only a temporary shelter, perhaps over the first winter. There was one entrance in the northeast corner of the house at the end of the east long wall. A bench probably ran along the west wall of the house and perhaps along the east wall, and there was a central hearth. It was difficult to distinguish between deposits belonging to Houses 1 and 2, although a steatite bowl seems to belong with the House 2 assemblage. House 2 was then abandoned and covered by sand, at least partially, but several artifacts seem to have been deposited at this point, which were later built into House 3 (e.g. a bone pin, some pottery sherds, a glass bead and two fragments of human skulls).

The north end of House 3 lay directly over the ruined House 2. There appears to be a gap in the record covering much of the tenth century, but a structure from this period could easily have been destroyed by erosion. The original ends of House 3 did not survive but the part that remained measured about 18.9 m by 4.6 m (maximum width). One well-preserved entrance was found in the middle of the west long wall. There may have been an annex on the east side of the house, but only 3.4 m of projecting wall remained. The main feature in the house was a long hearth (c. 4.3 m) along the midline in the south half of the building. It ran into a wider paved area at its north end. No traces of benches were found near the hearth, but benches appear to have run along both long walls in the north half of the room. There was a path running along the length of the west side of the house. Few finds could be definitely connected with House 3, although two spindle whorls were found. Midden 2 near the house was probably contemporary with this phase, but again there were few finds.

House 4 was built over the north end of House 3 and reused part of the east wall of the previous structure. The old entrance in the west wall was blocked and a new

entrance built just to the north of it. There were still benches along both long walls at the north end. A new south wall was built which significantly reduced the length of the room and there was an entrance in the west end of this short wall. South of this new wall was a new hearth. There was a doorway adjacent to this hearth on the east side. It is uncertain if this area was roofed, but this is the only hearth associated with House 4 and this appears to be a cooking area. A further difficulty is that the southwest entrance was eventually blocked, cutting off access to the hearth from the other room. Gelling suggests that the building was now used for storage (1984: 24). Only one find, a small loop of bone with the remains of a thin iron rod set in one side, was fairly clearly associated with House 4. The cruciform pins from Midden 1 suggest to Gelling that House 4 dates to the eleventh century since this is when the presumed occupants of the site, Thorkell Fosterer and his family, must have become Christian. House 3 predates this structure, but Gelling cannot be more specific (1984: 37).

House 5 was eventually built using the north wall of House 4 and parts of the east and west walls. It measured 3.7 by 2.4 m. There was an entrance in the southwest corner and just to the left as one entered lay the hearth. This hearth was very close to the position of the hearth in House 2. The benches were no longer in use. A stone lamp, part of a soapstone bowl and a clay loom weight were found associated with House 5. With this piece of evidence Gelling suggests that House 5 may have been a weaving hut, although to me this stretches the evidence rather severely.

Midden 1 was apparently connected with the occupation of Houses 4 and 5 and produced a number of finds. These included several combs, all single-sided composite combs, and bone pins, four with cruciform heads. There were also bone needles, spindle whorls and part of a whetstone.

Site 4 was directly south of site 2. Substantial Norse remains were also discovered here. The first building on this site was 11.6 m by 4 m (maximum width). The walls had a turf core and a well-built inner face of stone. The south long wall was curved, but the north long wall was straight. The short walls were not well preserved and may never have been as substantial. There was an entrance near the middle of each long wall. The floor of the building was clay and there do not seem to have been any benches along the long walls. There was, however, a hollow bench along the east short wall whose interior was half filled with hearth material. The stones in the area showed signs of being exposed to intense heat. Gelling interprets this feature as a kind of steam bath with the fire below heating the slabs above (1984: 32). There was also a hearth at the west end of the building with a flue running out the south wall of the house. The flue would have provided a considerable draft and the hearth may have had a specialized function. Gelling suggests that this hearth may have provided dry heat as opposed to the steam heat at the opposite end of the building. There was no sign of iron or craft working in the building. Gelling suggests that it was built somewhat late in the Viking Age, perhaps the eleventh century contemporary with the house on site 1 since a path seems to lead in that direction (1984: 32, 38).

Site 1 lies just to the south of site 4. Here scanty remains of a probably Norse house were found. Its walls, especially in the southern part, had been carefully constructed and, if all the walls belonged to the same structure, the plan of this building was more complicated than that of the others at Skail. There were two rooms and there seems to have been a bench along the west wall of the south room. The construction details were otherwise scanty, but seem to indicate a complicated plan. Based on the stonework Gelling dates this structure to the eleventh century (1984: 36). This is supported by the only find from this context, a bone comb with an animal head on its

surviving end. This comb has been referred to casually as the 'green comb' because of the green staining from the copper alloy rivets and perhaps from a comb case now gone. Gelling also suggests that this structure may be the one associated with Thorkell Fosterer in the early eleventh century.

Gelling claims that the coming of the Vikings caused a regression in material culture at Skaili lasting almost 200 years. According to him, the Pictish buildings were elaborate and indicate that the occupants may have been higher status individuals. The lack of continuity between the Pictish and Viking occupations may indicate that the Skaili household left for the Pictish heartland when the Picts lost control of Orkney (Gelling 1984: 39). If Skaili was indeed a high status Pictish site, it is also very interesting that it remained a high status site during the Viking/Norse periods (assuming it is the site of Thorkell Fosterer's household).

Tuquoy, Westray, Orkney
(Owen 1983, 1988)

The site of Tuquoy is located on the south shore of the Ness of Tuquoy on the island of Westray, one of the northern islands of Orkney. It lies just to the west of a ruined twelfth century church, Cross Kirk, which is now a Guardianship site. There are a variety of archaeological remains associated with the site, some of which are eroding out of the cliff walls into the sea. Trial excavations were undertaken in the early 1980s and showed that there had been a Late Norse hall on the site, the walls of which were substantial and had lime plaster on the outside. This is a twelfth-century innovation in Orkney also seen at Cubbie Roo's castle on Wyre (Owen 1983). It had been carefully paved inside and no post holes were found, though posts could have stood on the paving stones. Neither was there evidence of a hearth or benches, but the finds within the building were of high quality including a runic inscription. This had been followed by other Late Norse and Medieval structures. In 1988 further excavation was

undertaken to clarify the extent of the site and its suitability for sampling of nearby resources for paleoenvironmental evidence. Test pits showed that the site extended up to 50 m inland and examination of the cliff sections showed that the archaeological deposits extended at least 150 m.

The cliff sections were straightened to vertical faces, then drawn and photographed. The deposits were dominated by midden, cultivated soils and windblown sand, although in some sections stone structural debris was more evident. Analysis of these strata revealed that a Late Norse house was followed by a substantial rectilinear building on the cliff edge, possibly 13 m in length and over 5 m in width. The floor was partially paved with flagstones with drains below. There was much evidence of burning and possibly flues running to the hearth, leading to the suggestion that this was a smithy.

To the west of this was another rectilinear structure which was subsequently dismantled and reused. A stone lined drain was also found under this building. Unfortunately most of the information was two dimensional from the section face, and it is difficult to say anything specific about these structures.

Some artifacts were recovered including bone and stone artifacts, steatite, pottery and metal. Unfortunately, the report is not specific about the types of artifacts recovered except to say that they were Late Norse-Medieval. A radiocarbon date from an apparent dung pit on the beach below the cliff indicates possible ninth/tenth century Viking occupation complete with byres which were then mucked out.

Clearly there is little detailed data from this site, but it does constitute another known Norse occupation site in Orkney and its Late Norse date makes it an especially important addition to the known Norse structures in Orkney. The substantial nature of the buildings and the proximity of the twelfth-century church also indicate that this was a

high status site, perhaps the farm of Hafliði of Tuquoy who was a prominent Orcadian in the mid-twelfth century.

Westness, Rousay, Orkney
(Kaland 1973)

Sigríð Kaland conducted excavations at Westness in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The farm lies on the west side of Rousay facing Eynhallow Sound. Westness is mentioned in *Orkneyinga Saga* in connection with a visit by Earl Páll to Sigurd of Westness.

The site included three house grounds, a naust and a cemetery. The wall remains of the hall were just visible before excavation began. Unfortunately, all documentation of plans during excavation was done using a photo tower and photographing each stage of the excavation instead of drawing traditional plans. Plans of the houses have never been published, so we just have the written description of the excavation to base our discussion on. In addition, the finds were not available for study at Tankerness House Museum in Kirkwall, so all descriptions are taken from Kaland 1973.

The house grounds lay perpendicular to the beach terrace. There was one long house (House 1) with two smaller structures (Houses 2 and 3) lying one after the other on the south side of the long house. House 1 was at least 35 m long, although its exact length cannot be determined because the road to the abandoned farm at Skaill destroyed one end of it. The house was 6.5 to 7 m wide and was widest in the southern part where the walls were straight. The walls in the northern end bowed in towards the gable wall. The walls varied some in width, but were generally over 1 m and were built in a drystone technique with turf as an insulating material.

House 1 had three or four rooms--two halls (one in the north end and one in the south end which probably had two building phases) with a smaller room between the halls. The northern hall was 15 m long with an entrance in the middle of the east long

wall and an entrance in the middle of the north cross wall. The hall had a flagstone paved center line which ended in an oval hearth in the south part of the room. The hearth was bordered partly with flagstones standing on edge and partly with smaller flat stones. On either side of the center paving there were rich cultural deposits which lay somewhat higher and slanted up towards the walls. Some of the soil had also slid down over the paving. No post holes were found in the area between the center paving and the raised areas, but posts could have stood on the outer edge of the paving or on smaller stones which lay spread in the floor. Kaland interpreted these raised areas as *paller* or benches. They must have been 30 cm high. Excavation of these benches produced several finds including ceramic sherds and some iron nails. Other finds from the hall included soapstone sherds, fishing weights, whetstones, comb fragments, spindle whorls, knives, and animal and fish bones. Samples from the cultural layers in the hall (both the hearth and the benches) produced carbonized grains of barley, rye and flax.

The remaining rooms south of this hall all had several building phases with additions and repairs, but Kaland does not discuss these. However, next to the north hall lay a small room, 2.5 m long with a narrow passage 0.5 m wide on each side of the cross wall to the hall. Half the floor in this room consisted of hard packed ash in colors ranging from yellow to red and black. There was also a packing of firecracked stones in and under the ash along with a rough layer of stone. According to Kaland the area must be seen as a large hearth.

South of the southern cross wall in room 2 lay a room which was not more than 4 m long with an entrance in the west long wall. This entrance had two building phases with the second phase half the width (0.5 m) of the first. The entrance was slightly slanted which protected the entrance somewhat from the wind. The area outside the door was paved as was the entrance itself, and the paving ran across the floor and also

joined a paved area along the midline of the room. The floor was otherwise yellow-grey hardpacked clay and ash. Along the eastern long wall lay a 0.75 m wide area for an open fire.

The cross wall at the south end of room 3 may not have been contemporary with the long walls. However, the room (4) to the south of it was 8-10 m long. Room 4 had benches on each side. The benches were edged with rectangular stones and were filled with stone and earth. Undecorated ceramic sherds were found in the western bench and a bone needle with three runes was found in the eastern bench. In front of the western bench lay a series of flagstones covering a probable drainage ditch. The soil in this area was very moist and consisted of grey stamped ash with large areas of red-yellow-black ash. Again Kaland interprets these areas as hearths. The end wall of the room was not found.

Houses 2 and 3 were built together and lay parallel to House 1 on its east side. House 2 was 11 m long and 4.5 m wide at its widest point. At the north gable wall it was only 3.7 m wide. The entrance lay in the northern corner across from the paved entrance to House 1. It was 0.7 m wide. Inside the door lay a large round threshold stone. The midline (0.7 m wide) was sunken and paved. On each side of this lay 1.65 m broad benches along the walls which were edged with stone. These benches were filled with earth with the exception of the southern half of the western bench. This was covered with stone slabs. There were clear signs of an open fire on the eastern bench along with a knife and comb fragments. Other finds from the building included soapstone sherds and some animal bone.

The interpretation of House 2 is confused, however, by the fact that the Norwegian text of the article by Kaland (1973: 88) refers to the structure as "*en slags bolighus, muligens et sovehus*" ("some kind of dwelling house, possibly a sleeping

house"), while the English summary (1973: 100) tells us that House 2 may have been a byre for cattle. The guide to a 1987 exhibit at Tankerness House Museum in Kirkwall, Orkney, also refers to House 2 as a byre for cattle and goes on to tell us there was room for about 18 cows (1987: 20). I can see no reason to interpret a structure with wide benches on each side as a cattle byre, although if the finds from the house amounted to only soapstone sherds and animal bone it does not seem to have seen heavy use as a dwelling. The suggestion of sleeping room should be kept in mind.

House 3 was almost square, 5 m by 5 m. The entrance to this structure was also in the west wall facing House 1. The floor of house 3 was paved and slanted slightly to the east. There were 40 cm deep and 50 cm wide ditches in the southeast and southwest which were filled with animal bone and shell. The corner of the house did not meet where the ditches met. This structure was probably used as a byre for small livestock. The slant of the floor allowed the room to drain and the ditches carried the manure to the openings in the corners where it could be removed. According to Kaland a similar byre was still in use at Deerness on Mainland Orkney.

According to Kaland the placement of the structures in the terrain, their placement relative to each other and their method of construction show that the traditional building style in Orkney can be followed all the way back to the Viking Age and Early Middle Ages. Kaland also claims that the economy must also have been much the same as that of later periods with primary dependence on agriculture and stockholding supplemented with fishing and hunting. While this may well be true, I would be more careful about making such conclusions without the results of paleobotanical analyses.

As I mentioned above, there was also a boat naust at Westness well east of the houses. In addition there was a cemetery about 50 m west of the naust and 250 m east of the houses. A young woman's grave with a newborn baby was uncovered there.

The grave was richly outfitted with two oval brooches from the ninth century. Other finds included a bead necklace, a Celtic ringpin, scissors, a knife, a sickle, and a comb. The Celtic ringpin was probably made in Scotland and has been dated to the eighth century, so it was probably over 100 years old when it was buried.

A second grave contained the body of an individual in his or her sixties who suffered from arthritis. In a lower level was a 30 year old man with a shield under his head. This was a boat grave, though all the wood from the boat had decayed except for the bits around the rivets. The boat was in the shape of a traditional Norwegian small boat. On the man's left lay 25 bone gaming pieces, arrows, a sickle, a knife, scissors, and possibly the remains of a bronze scale. The finds date the grave to the ninth century.

Grave 3 had been destroyed by rabbits and Grave 4, next to the naust, had no grave goods. The Viking graves vary in shape and number of grave goods. There were also Pictish-type graves in the cemetery (1987: 22). Radiocarbon dates indicate the cemetery was in use from the fifth to the ninth century. The Vikings respected the earlier Pictish graves and none of them were disturbed by Viking burials. The graves were not visible on the surface, but excavation showed that most of the graves had had markers in the form of a headstone. The Picts had no grave goods and were laid in narrow full-length shallow graves. Some of these were partially or completely lined with stone slabs and sometimes slabs covered the body.

In her 1973 report Kaland does not specifically date the structures, but refers to them and the artifacts recovered as "Viking". However, Batey (1987: 295) writes that an interesting feature of this site is that the cemetery can be dated no later than the tenth century while the structures have been dated to the Late Norse period. Certainly the fact that pottery was found in the structures points to a later date.

Sites in Shetland

Da Biggins, Papa Stour, Shetland (Crawford 1984, 1985, 1991)

The house at Da Biggins on Papa Stour was excavated by Barbara Crawford in the 1980s. The island of Papa Stour lies on the west side of the Shetland island group and measures approximately 2.75 by 2 miles. Only the eastern third of the island is cultivated, however, in an area concentrated around Housa Voe and Kirk Sand bays. The central settlement area is known as Da Biggins and lies on a rise between the two bays on the best land on the island. This was farther from the sea than chieftain's settlements usually were located, perhaps because the Norse took over an existing Celtic priestly settlement (though there is no direct evidence for this besides the name of the island itself). The actual site within the the area of Da Biggins was located on the basis of place name evidence and proximity to the church.

This site is particularly interesting because of the existence of written documents mentioning the site in the Middle Ages. In a document dating to 1299 Duke Håkon of Norway (later Håkon V) is informed about a quarrel between his bailiff Thorvald Thoresson of Shetland and Ragnhild Simunsdatter of Papa Stour. She had accused the bailiff of dishonesty in his assessment and collection of ducal rents on the island. The document also reports that the argument between the two took place in the main room of the duke's house, the *stofa*. I discuss the function and significance of rooms such as the *stofa* and *skáli* in Chapter 6. Here the important point is that an important estate existed on Papa Stour at this time which belonged to the Duke Håkon and, in addition, that there was a house on this farmstead which was important enough to have a room called a *stofa*.

It soon became clear that this area had been the site of a very successful settlement well into the nineteenth century, so many of the earlier buildings had been destroyed by later construction. The Norse house lay directly underneath a house torn down after 1846 and had apparently had the same alignment since the twelfth century (Crawford 1991: 39). When a new structure was built the earlier foundations were left to provide a firm foundation. This is unlike the other excavated sites in Shetland from the Norse period which were all abandoned at some point.

One of the excavation trenches (J) hit on 4.5 m of the side wall of a building dating to the Norse period (Figure 10.2). Although only the basal courses survived it

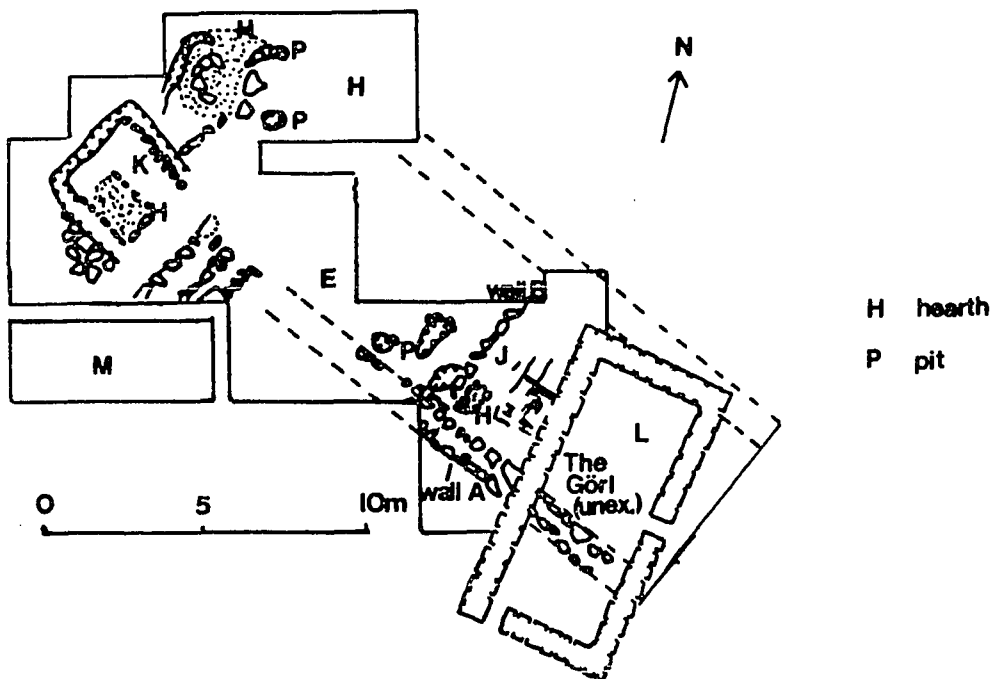


Figure 10.2: Da Biggins, redrawn after Crawford (1985:Figure 23).

was clear that the walls were built in the familiar Norse technique of carefully constructed outer and inner faces with a stone and earth core. The wall was approximately 1.2 m wide. A line of flat stones running along the inner face may have been a sill for supporting a wooden lining as seen at Tjørnuvik in Faroe (Crawford 1985: 141-42) and in several instances in Norway, as we have already seen. The layout of the house could not be reconstructed from the amount excavated, but there may have been at least one internal cross wall formed by a line of stones also serving as a sill (Crawford 1991: 40). Again this is familiar from Norwegian examples. The building seems to have been about 5 m wide. There was also a well-preserved corner hearth and remains of a wooden floor were also uncovered. In addition, there appears to have been internal wooden panelling and a bench along the south side of the room with a hard packed earth core 55 cm wide (a typical width for such benches in twelfth-century Norway). Thus there is archaeological evidence for a room that may have been a *stofa*, but this cannot be definitely identified with the *stofa* of the thirteenth-century document. Still, the archaeological evidence is suggestive.

The radiocarbon date for wood from this floor is AD 1013-1156 (calibrated) (Crawford 1991: 40). Dates from associated peat and heather charcoal support this date. The presence of a wood floor is unique in this context; all other floors in Norse houses so far excavated were flagstone and/or beaten earth. I will discuss the importance of this fact in Chapter 6. Later floors were found above the wood one, however, and these were of beaten earth and flagstones.

This structure was not the only one discovered. Rather, there was a complex of buildings on the site which one would expect on a farmstead as well as several pits of uncertain function. Several hearths were uncovered with the latest one dated to the fifteenth century on the basis of pieces of stoneware from Lower Saxony/north Hesse.

Many baking plates of scored soapstone and schist were found associated with this hearth along with three quernstones. This was clearly a cooking area, although it constituted a reuse of the area, and it may have been an *eldhus*, perhaps even the Eldhus recorded from Papa Stour in the early seventeenth century. The pits mentioned above were used for burning seaweed to produce lye which was then used for various domestic purposes including as a scouring agent or a mordant for dyeing wool (Crawford 1991: 42). The pits appear to belong to the initial period of Norse occupation.

The finds from the site included many soapstone objects as well as large unworked pieces of soapstone. Soapstone is readily available in Shetland, although not on Papa Stour itself. The typical soapstone vessel from the site was square with a flat bottom, although round ones were also found. As is typical, fragments from broken vessels were reused, for example as linesinkers and loom weights. Soapstone spindle whorls were also found along with lamps. Pottery came into use in Shetland in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and a large amount of coarse handmade pottery was found at Da Biggins. There was also imported ware from Yorkshire and Holland (both late thirteenth/fourteenth century). These are the earliest datable pieces from the site. There were almost no bone or iron objects recovered from the site because of the acid soil conditions. On the other hand, these same conditions resulted in the preservation of the wood floor and some wooden objects as well as textiles. Of particular interest is the standing soapstone lamp with a square base, a shallow bowl for the oil, and shaped like a clover leaf. The closest parallels to this lamp were found in medieval Oslo and this object illustrates the close connections to Norwegian urban power centers at this time.

Jarlshof, Shetland

(Curle 1933, 1936, Hamilton 1956)

The multiperiod site at Jarlshof on the southern tip of Shetland produced the first examples of Viking/Norse architecture in the Northern Isles and since then, for better or for worse, has been the site turned to for comparison with all subsequent excavations of Norse building in Orkney and Shetland (Figure 10.3). It is not exaggerating to say that Jarlshof is the classic site. Unfortunately, while the site was extremely rich the reports leave many questions unanswered, and as others have noted it is past time for a reevaluation of Jarlshof. That is beyond the scope of this project, however. Here I hope to summarize (in some detail) the phases of development as interpreted by Hamilton, the primary excavator, noting those points which others have taken issue with.

A summary of the Viking and Norse phases of occupation is presented in Chapter 5. Here I have simply listed the phases and their dates. I then discuss the development of the individual structures in detail. The long period of occupation at Jarlshof resulted in extensive midden deposits, but the house floors themselves were kept fairly clean so relatively few artifacts were found in them. The vast majority of the finds came from the various midden deposits which have been dated on the basis of these finds, particularly artifacts such as bone combs which show several stylistic changes over the period of occupation. The houses were dated based on their stratigraphic relationship with these dated midden deposits. Jarlshof was excavated before the advent of radiocarbon dating, so the chronology is entirely dependent on the dependability of the various artifact typologies. Furthermore, the 1992 Braer oil spill off Shetland resulted in Jarlshof being covered by a fine sheen of oil and detergent, so it is quite likely that any future samples for radiocarbon dating will be adversely affected.

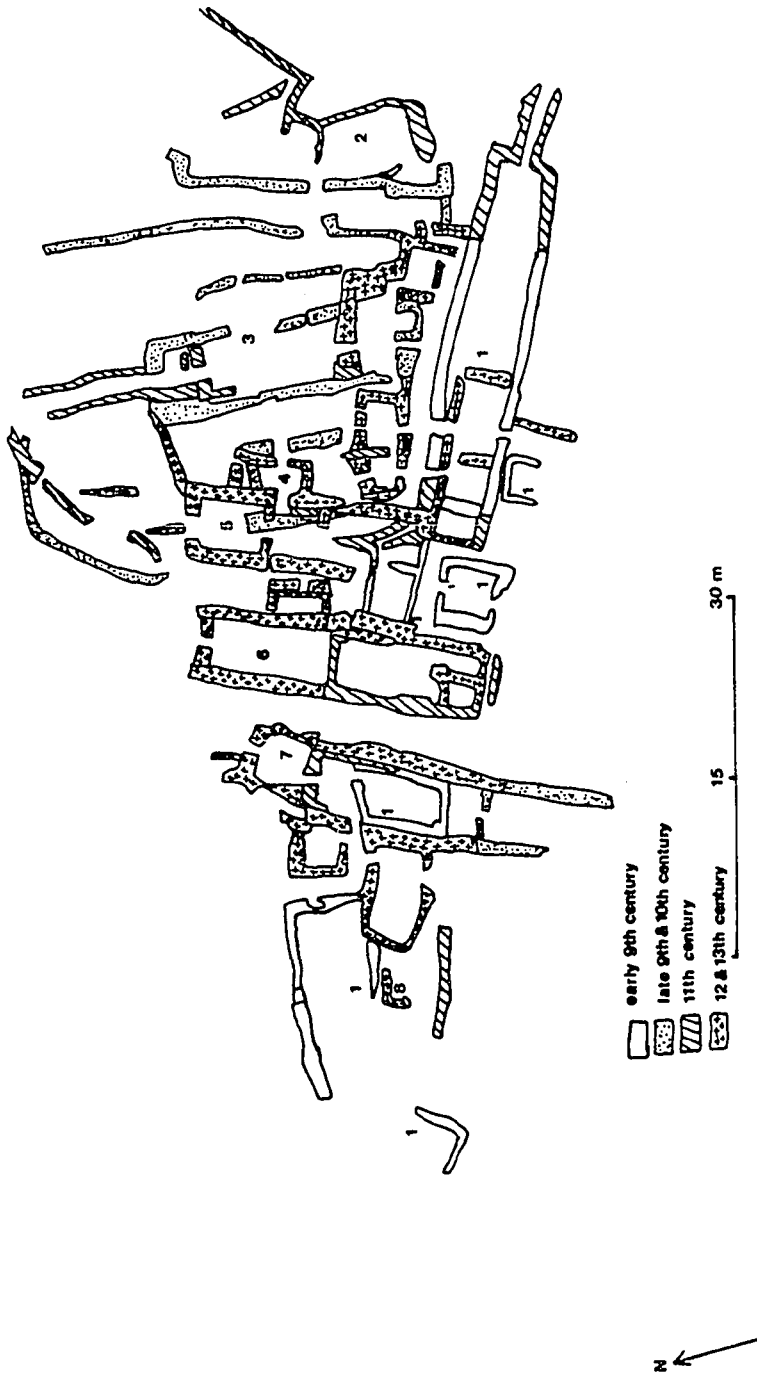


Figure 10.3: Site plan, Jarlshof, redrawn after Hamilton (1956:back pocket).

Hamilton identified seven phases in the Viking/Norse occupation of Jarlshof.

They are as follows.

- Phase 1:** c. 800-850 AD
- Phase 2:** mid-ninth century
- Phase 3:** tenth century
- Phase 4:** early eleventh century
- Phase 5:** late eleventh/early twelfth century (beginning of Late Norse period)
- Phase 6:** twelfth and thirteenth centuries
- Phase 7:** thirteenth century

I will now discuss the individual layouts and development of the six major structures. I will only mention the outhouses insofar as they are connected with the houses themselves. House 1, often referred to as the parent farmstead, originally measured 21.3 m by 6.1 m (Figure 10.4). The walls were built of undressed stone with a compacted earth core, though the outer face of the north wall had alternate layers of stone and turf. According to Hamilton it had bowed walls (see Chapter 5) and was originally divided into two rooms which Hamilton identified as the living room/*skáli* and the kitchen/*eldhus*. The main entrance was in the north long wall approximately 4.6 m from the west gable wall. There may have been a cross wall just east of this entrance and the floor level changes here as well. This would mean that the living room took up about two thirds of the house and the kitchen one third. The remains of a bench or *pall* were evident along the north long wall and there was probably a bench along the south wall too. There was a long hearth along the midline of the room and post holes were found along the bench edges at intervals of about 1.8 m indicating the presence of two parallel rows of posts serving as roof supports. The kitchen had a central hearth and an oven inserted into the gable wall. The fireplace was apparently used to heat stones for the oven.

House 1 was not significantly altered until Phase 5. At this time a byre measuring approximately 7 m was added to the east gable. The walling here was

inferior quality. The paving from the *fegata* continued down the center of the byre for some 1.8 m where it overlay part of the earlier dwelling area. Here two post holes were found set closer together than the original posts. They may indicate the presence of a partition wall between the byre and the dwelling. Because of this alteration the length of the living room was reduced. In addition, a new cross wall was built just to the west of the center of the house and the old partition between the living room and the kitchen was removed. The central long hearth was destroyed and two new hearths were inserted, one at the east end of the room and the other in the center 2.4 m from the partition. Hamilton suggests that this room now functioned as a sleeping room/*stofa*. The west gable was extended about 1 m. This along with the new position of the cross wall meant that the length of the kitchen increased by about 3 m.

In Phase 6 several outhouses were built closely associated with House 1, one off the south long wall and the others along the north long wall but separated from it for the most part by a path. One of these outhouses may have served as a byre and, according to Bigelow, had a drain (1987: 26). House 1 was finally abandoned in the last phase of Norse occupation.

House 2 was built in Phase 2 at right angles to House 1. Very little of it survived, but it was 21.3 m long with a parallel yard wall 22.8 m long (Figure 10.5). Only the west long wall and parts of the two gables remained, but there appear to have been three entrances--one in each gable and one in the middle of the west long wall which was paved into the interior. Traces of paving survived in the lower (north) end of the house which may have been a byre. Few original internal features survived the later rebuilding on the site, but two post holes were found in the south half of the house indicating the presence of two parallel rows of posts. These are not shown on the plan.

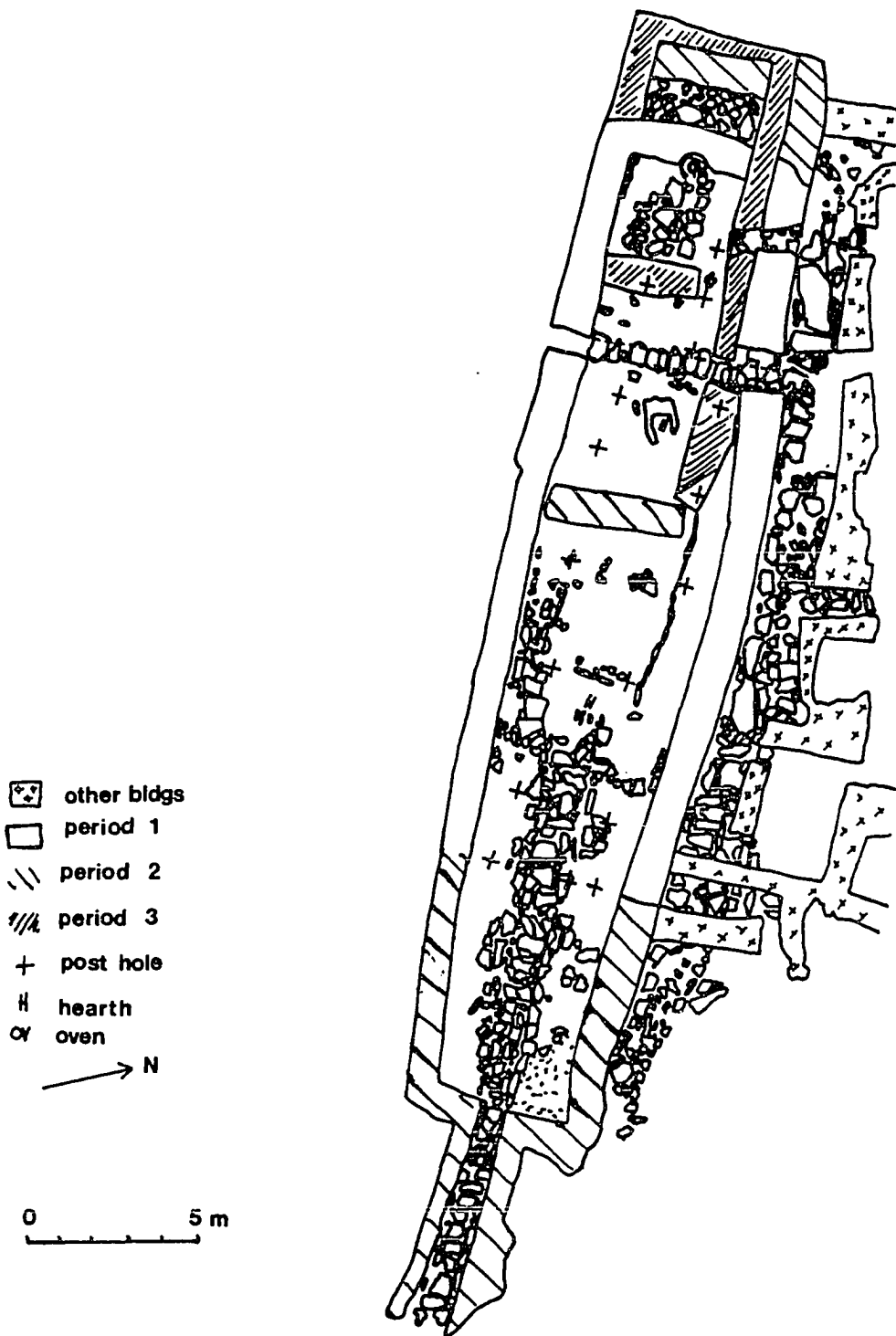


Figure 10.4: House 1, Jarlshof, redrawn after Hamilton (1956:Figure 52).

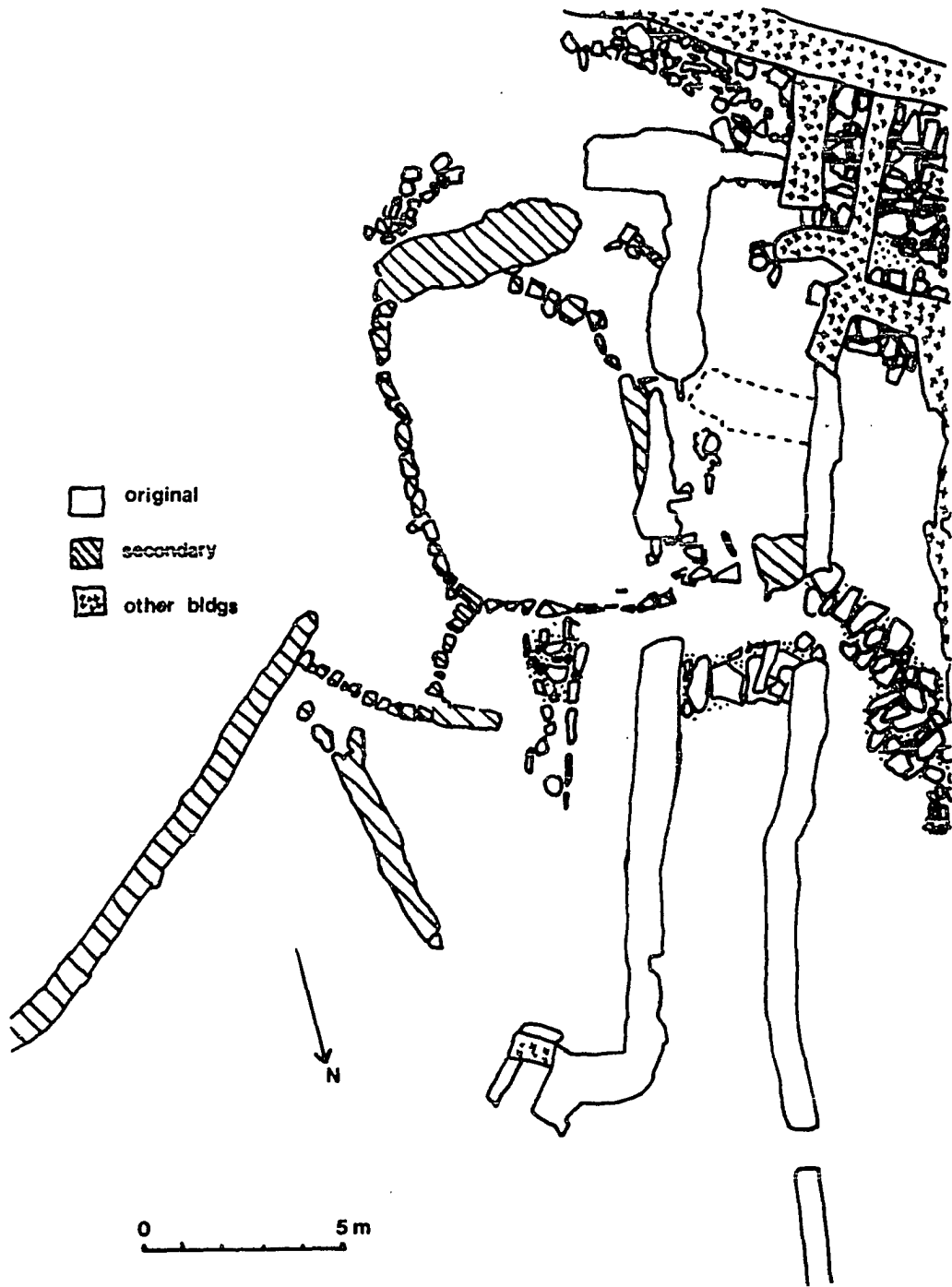


Figure 10.5: House 2, Jarlshof, redrawn after Hamilton (1956:Figure 62).

A hearth lay in the center of the house. If it was symmetrical, the width of the house was probably about 5 m.

In Phase 3 an outbuilding was added to the southwest corner of House 2. It measured 7.3 by 3 m and had a paved floor and an entrance at the south end between its gable and House 2. It does not seem to have had an entrance from the house itself. House 2 was mostly demolished in Phase 5 and the area was later used for cattle compounds.

Phase 3 saw the addition of House 3 which ran down the slope parallel to House 2 but separated from it by a yard wall. House 3 measured 22.3 m, 19.2 by 4.9 m internally (Figure 10.6). Again, the walls were stone with an earth core. There was an entrance near the middle of the west wall and perhaps one opposite it in the east wall, although the east wall was damaged at this point so we cannot be certain. The south gable was also much damaged, but there may have been entrances in both of the gable walls. A scatter of red peat ash in the south end indicates that this was the dwelling area. Hamilton suggests that the paving in the north (lower) end may indicate that this was a byre as in House 2 (but see discussion in Chapter 5). The idealized plan of the settlement in this period shows a cross wall just north of the entrance in the west wall, but there is no sign of such a wall on the actual plan, nor does Hamilton discuss such a cross wall in this period. Hamilton also assumes that there were two parallel rows of posts running on either side of the central hearth area, although only one post hole was found. It lay in the eastern half of the building and a subsequent drain in the opposite wall would have destroyed its pair.

In Phase 5 House 3 was abandoned as a dwelling and converted to a byre with a paved *fegata* at the lower end. The paving continued along the center line of the structure for 2.7 m where a new north gable wall was built. The center part of this

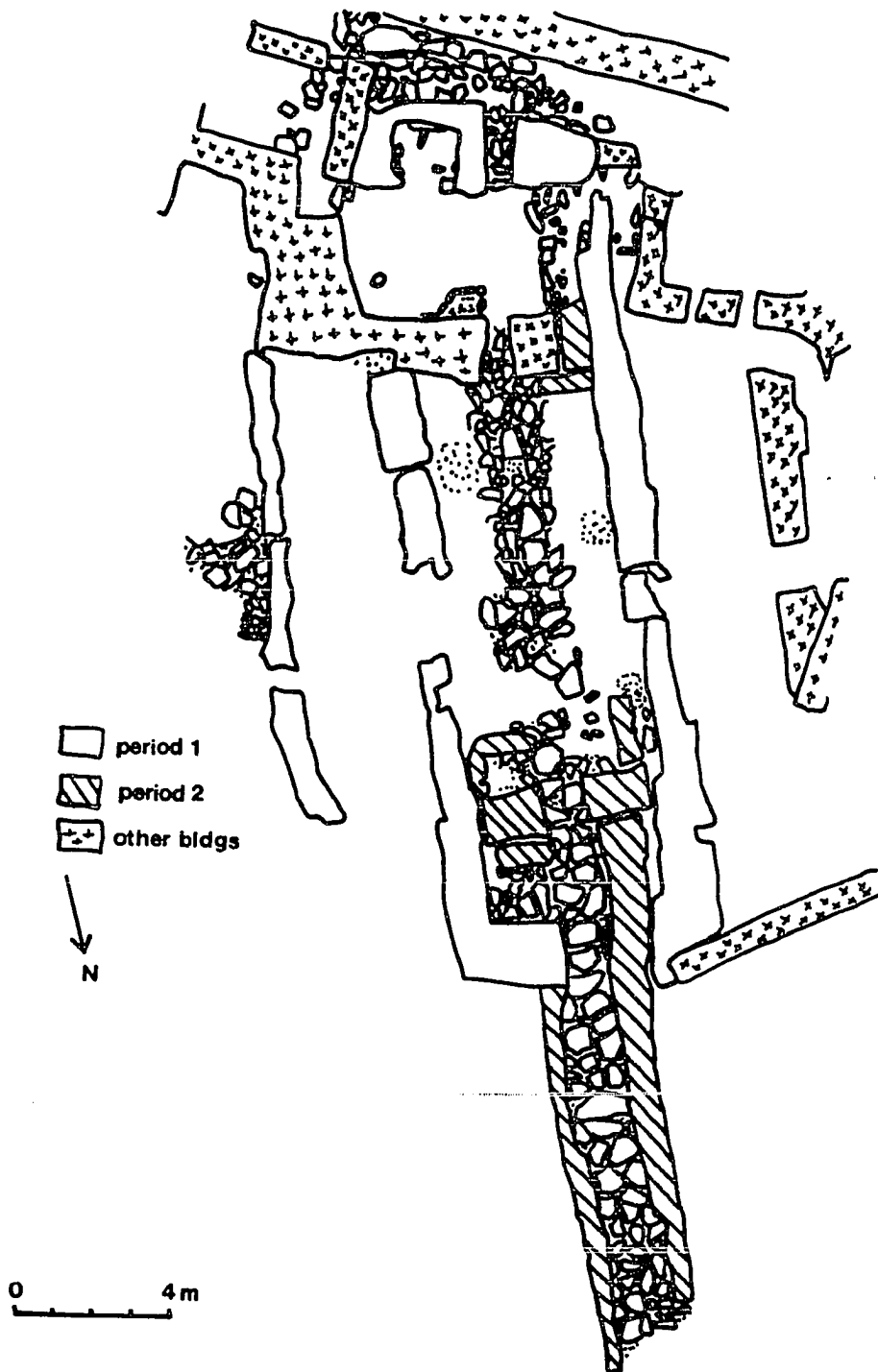


Figure 10.6: House 3, Jarlshof, redrawn after Hamilton (1956:Figure 64).

shorter structure was also paved for a distance into the original structure. Hamilton says that this paving ran up to the line of the partition which divided the original house into two rooms. However, in the discussion of this original structure no such partition wall was mentioned. In any case, this would give the byre a length of 9.1 m which is comparable to the other byres. House 3 was abandoned for good in Phase 6 and several outhouses associated with House 1 were built on top of it.

Hamilton's House 4 was an outhouse built in Phase 4 and it will not be discussed here.

House 6 was built in Phase 5. As with all these structures the original plan is difficult to determine because of later alterations. However, it seems to have been approximately 13.7 m by 4.9 m, much shorter than the previous structures (Figure 10.7). There was an entrance in the north gable and there may have been a drain in the south gable, although this is not definite. There were traces of benches along both long walls on either side of a central hearth. The remains of a block projection 4.6 m from the north gable may indicate a cross wall dividing the house in two. The north end would have been the living area with the central hearth, cooking pit and benches. According to the plan most of the finds came from this area. Three post holes were found, two in alignment across the floor about 1 m north of the hearth. Again this is interpreted as the remains of two parallel rows of roof supports. The third post hole was close to the other post hole on the east side of the house and may have been used to suspend pots over the hearth. None of these post holes is visible on the plan.

In Phase 6 House 6 was extended north down the slope a distance of 11 m. There was an entrance in the new north gable and another in the east long wall between the older wall and a later addition. This was approached by a paved path at the base of the extension wall. A series of minor partition walls extended from the long wall into

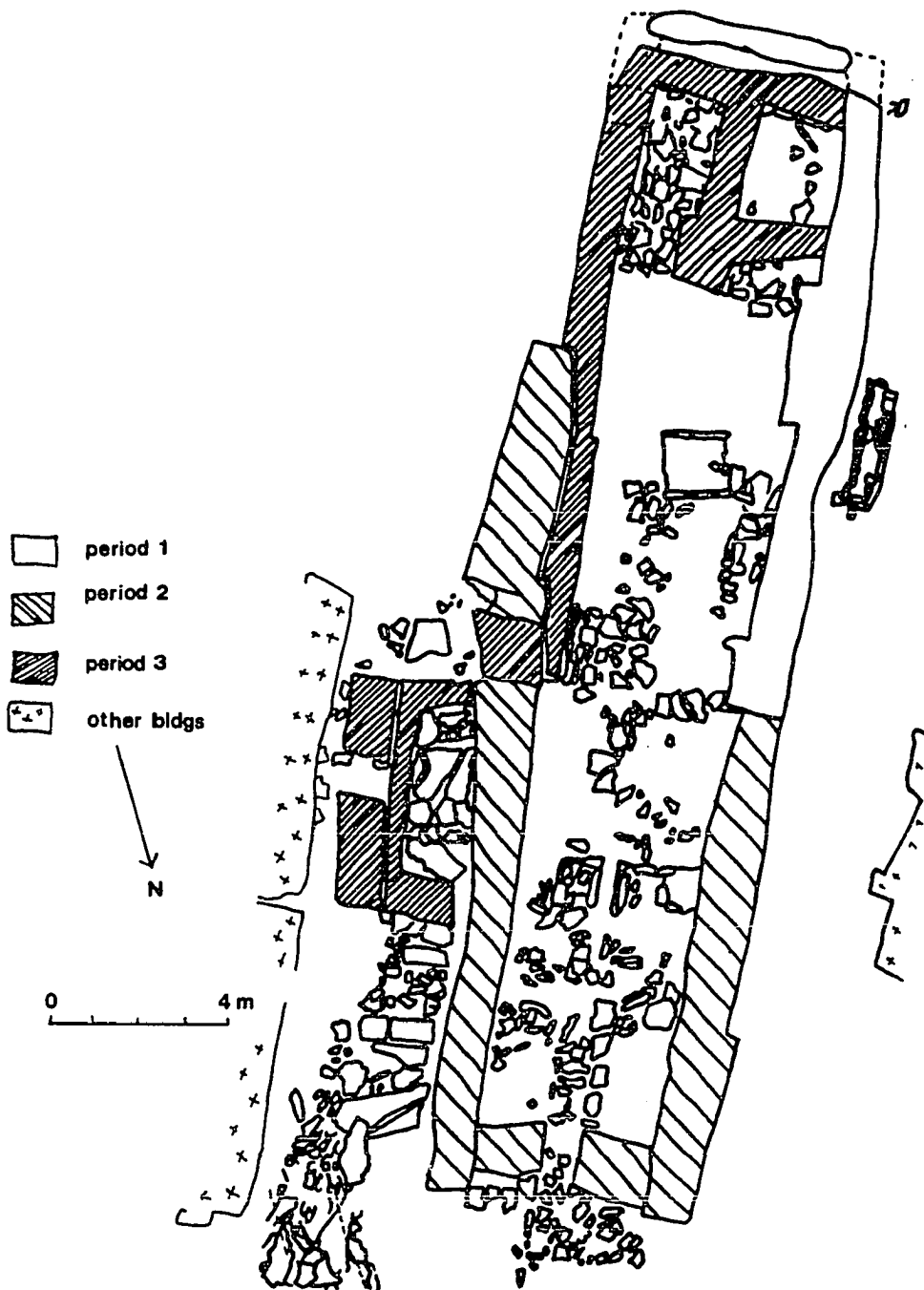


Figure 10.7: House 6, Jarlishof, redrawn after Hamilton (1956:Figure 74).

the structure toward the central paved floor. All were in the north half of the building. The first was immediately north of the entrance in the middle of the east wall. The second was 3 m to the north and the third 1.8 m to the north of that. Hamilton suggests that this extension was used to house cattle in a series of stalls. Few artifacts came from this area and the floor deposits were sterile and greasy. The living quarters in the south (upper) section of the building were also modified. Fresh paving was laid around the central hearth and the bench on the west side was renewed, but the bench on the east side was apparently removed. It is possible that this part of the house still had two rooms. The living room with the hearth may have been extended a bit to the south to make up for the loss of space from the new east entrance on the line of the former gable. Other features could not be determined because of later rebuilding.

In Phase 7 the southern section of House 6 underwent considerable rebuilding. The gable was moved almost 1 m inward and the new gable wall was a rather flimsy construction. The door in the east wall was blocked, but a new entrance was apparently built in the end of this wall near the south gable. This was also eventually blocked. Finally, there was a rather strange construction in the southwest corner of House 6. This consisted of two transverse walls, one running from the middle of the south gable and one from the west long wall, which formed a space approximately 2.4 by 1.8 m. There was no visible entrance to this area. Hamilton suggests that it may have been a storeroom, but Bigelow (1987: 26) suggests that it may have been an end dais. The space between this area and the east long wall was roughly cobbled. A small outhouse or annex was built along the north half of the east wall. It measured 3.7 m by 1.2 m and had an entrance from the alley between Houses 6 and 5. According to Hamilton it was probably shortlived.

House 7 was also built in Phase 5. It was 2.4 m west of House 6 and parallel to it and, once again, the remains were fragmentary because of later rebuilding. However, House 7 seems to have been 13.7 m by 4.6 m or approximately the same size as House 6 (Figure 10.8). There was an entrance in the north gable and there were traces of a central hearth (a layer of red peat ash). There were also indications of benches on each side of the hearth, but no post holes were found and the original internal features had been cleared when the floor was later paved. There was a possible entrance in the south gable and a tumble of stones on the line of the south side of a later entrance in the west wall may indicate the presence of a partition or cross wall in the original building. This would have divided the house into two rooms measuring 4.6 m and 9.1 m respectively. Hamilton does not show this on the idealized plan of Phase 5, however.

In Phase 6 House 7 was extended to the south where it was built over an old outhouse or barn. House 7 now measured 24.1 m and had two definite entrances, one in the north gable surviving from the original construction and one in the west long wall 3.7 m from the north gable. There was probably also an entrance in the south gable of the attached barn extension. The interior floor was paved except for the south end of the structure which had an earth floor with occasional flagstones. The paving was a bit higher in the north end with the two entrances. There may have been a partition wall south of the west entrance where there was a change in the alignment of the long walls. This would have formed a living room 9.1 m long with a tightly paved floor but no well-defined hearth. This cross wall is not shown on the idealized plan of the Phase 6. The 1936 excavation did find a layer of burned ash in the center of the floor which may have been the remains of a hearth. One further structural change to House 7 in this period was the addition of an outhouse at the northwest corner of the house just north of the west entrance. There may have been entrances in both the northeast and southeast

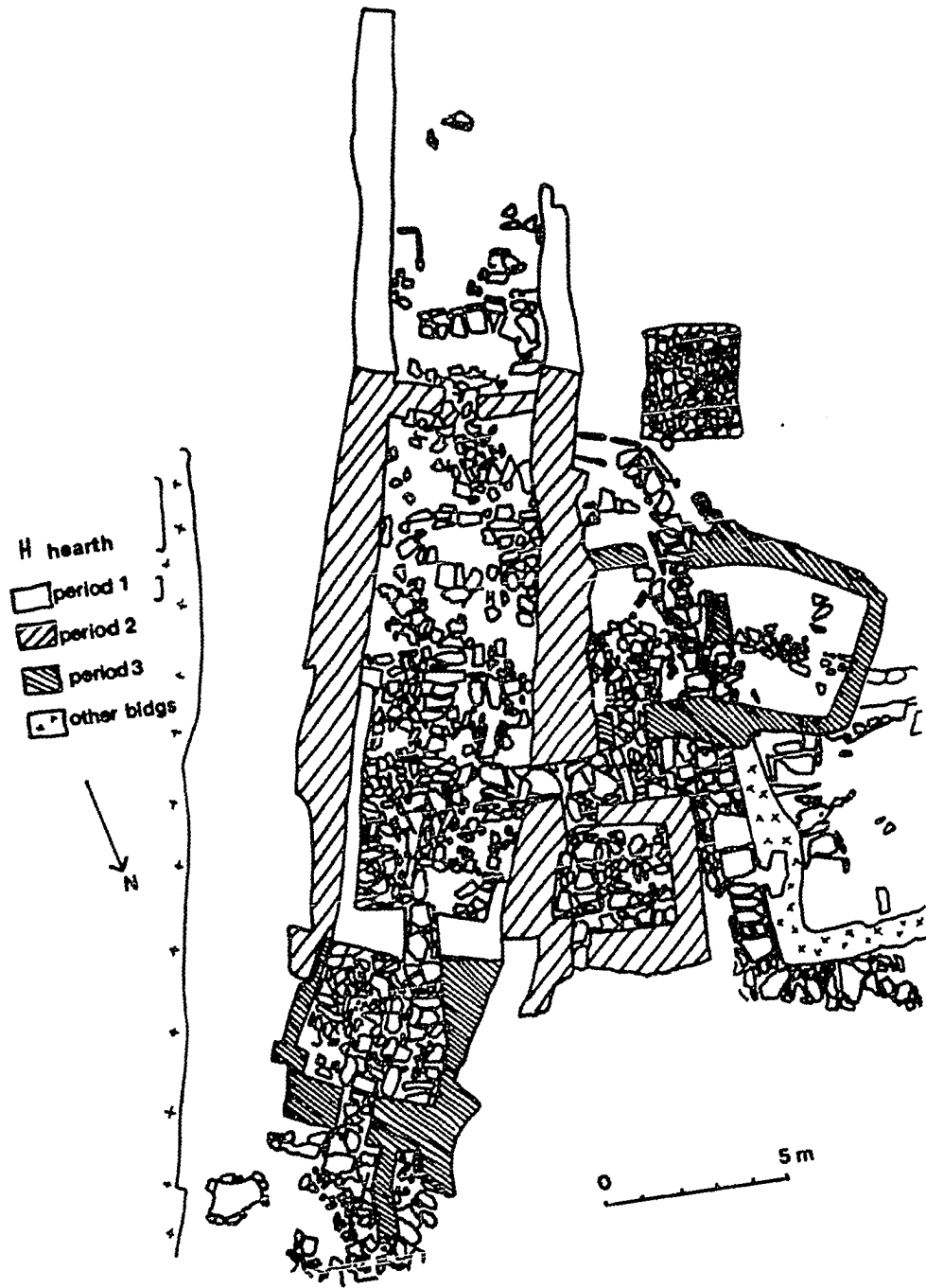


Figure 10.8: House 7, Jarlshof, redrawn after Hamilton (1956:Figure 75).

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corners of this structure right next to the long wall of the house. This outhouse was paved.

In Phase 7 the southern extension comprising the older barn was abandoned. On the north end an irregular structure Hamilton calls a porch was added with an entrance in its gable wall. Bigelow identifies this as a byre (1987: 26). It was about 3.7 m long and was paved. An outroom or annex was built on the foundations of abandoned outbuildings to the west. It was attached to the west long wall of the main building south of the main entrance and measured 7.3 m by 3.7 m. It had an entrance in its north side from the paved passage outside the west entrance of the house. Hamilton identifies this room as a byre, but on his plan Bigelow identifies it as an unspecialized outshot room (1987: 26). There was a drain through the north wall.

The final Norse house, House 5, was built in Phase 7. It was at right angles to House 1 and incorporated the northwest corner of that house into its foundation. House 5 measured 19.2 m by 4.6 m and had three entrances (Figure 10.9). One of these was in the north gable and included a paved path, one was in the east wall and led into the annex which also had an outside entrance at this point. Finally, there were traces of an entrance in the west wall opposite this east entrance. This would form a through passage across the house. There may also have been an entrance in the south gable.

The interior had three rooms separated by two cross walls which had space in the center for doorways. The north room was 5.5 m long and had a compacted earth floor. It could be entered through the north gable and probably served as a byre. The central room was 3.7 m long and could be entered through both long walls. As mentioned, the east entrance led to an annex measuring 5.9 m by 1.8 m. The floor was partly paved, especially between the two entrances and to the south, and according to Bigelow there was a drain through the north wall (1987: 26). The function of this annex is uncertain.

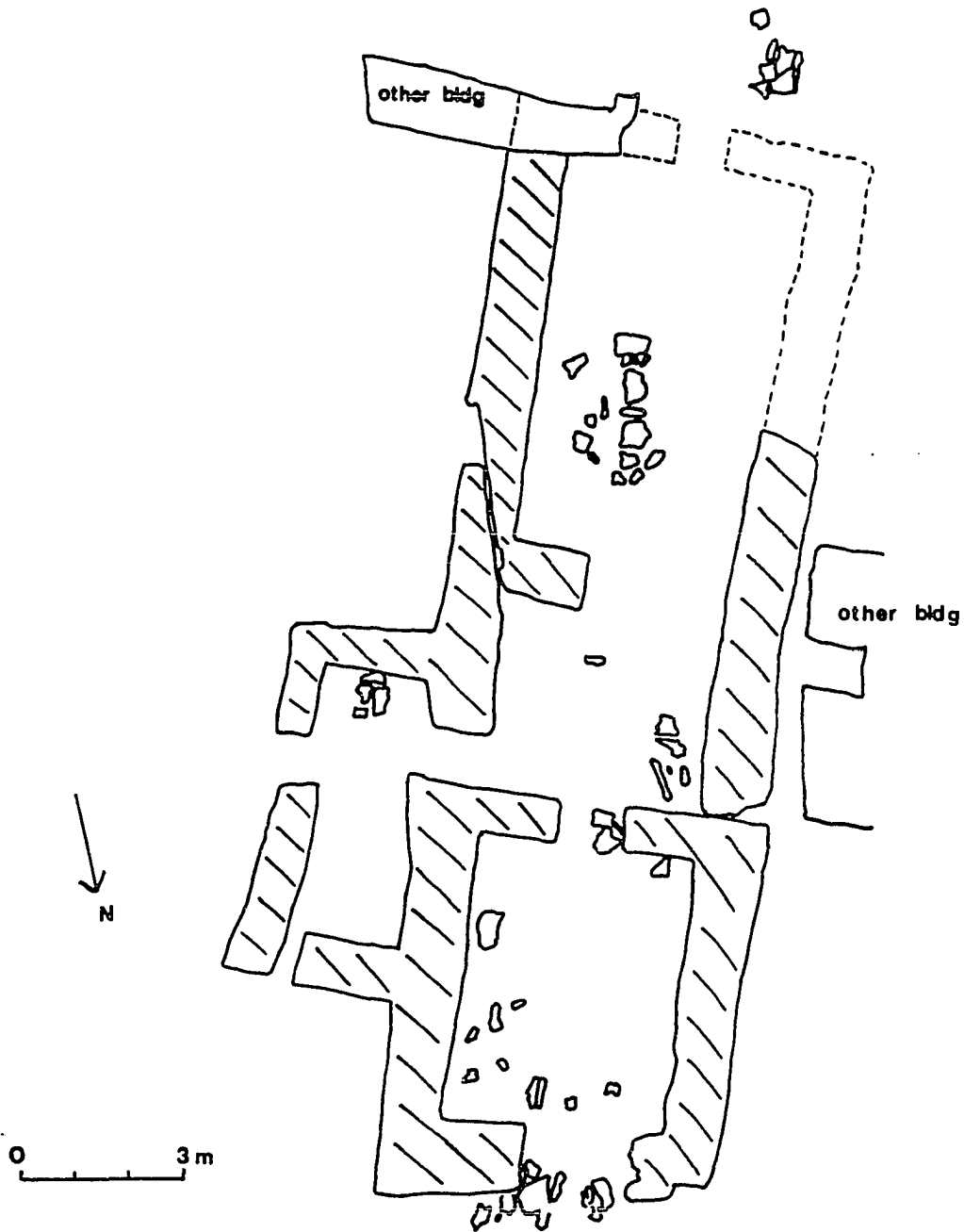


Figure 10.9: House 5, Jarlshof, redrawn after Hamilton (1956:Figure 81).

The south room measured 7.3 m and most of the finds came from this room. Close to the line of the south gable at floor level a collection of iron nails were found in 1936 embedded in wood and clay, so the superstructure may have been timber with a clay or wattle packing.

I will note very briefly some of the major changes in the artifact assemblage over time. One of the most useful groups of artifacts for dating purposes was the bone combs. Over time they changed from single-sided combs with iron rivets and hogbacks to smaller single-sided combs with keel backs and finally straight backs. The later combs had copper alloy rivets spaced more closely than the iron rivets of the earlier combs and their backs were straighter and narrower. The latest combs were small double-sided combs with bronze rivets and have parallels from the medieval town excavations in Scandinavia.

Bone pins were common in the earliest periods with axe heads, animal heads and thistle heads. The pins with cruciform pins indicate that Christianity had made its appearance by Phase 3. The pins disappeared in the later phases.

Pottery did not make its appearance until Phase 5. Before this steatite vessels were ubiquitous. In Phase 5 the form of the steatite vessels changed from rounded shapes to square sided pots. Line sinkers became more common at this time, possibly indicating increased reliance on fishing. Loom weights were common throughout the occupation of the site, but in Phase 3 beach pebble loom weights began to outnumber steatite loom weights, perhaps indicating a local shortage of steatite. Finally, in Phase 7 baking plates make their appearance on the site in the floor of House 6. These are only mentioned in passing in Hamilton and are not pictured, but in the Norwegian material they seem to be a solid indicator of a medieval date so their presence in the late phase at Jarlshof is important.

Sandwick, Unst, Shetland
(Bigelow 1985, 1987)

This site was excavated in the late 1970s as part of the Norse Shetland Economic Research Project. The house lies on the bay at Sand Wick on the southeast coast of Unst. Unlike other settlement locations in Shetland, the land around Sandwick does not have nearby peat resources. The sand on the beach is very fine with a significant shell content. There was excellent preservation of bone and carbonized seeds in the archaeological deposits. In the last century or so the sea and wind have significantly altered the coastline here along with destruction caused by rabbits.

The site investigated by Bigelow was originally found in 1936. It was a rectilinear stone ruin with an associated stone enclosure and an eroded sub-rectangular feature and was built on previously unoccupied land. There was also a pre-Norse flat square kerbed cairn adjacent to the sub-rectangular feature. As other simple cist burials have washed out of the area in the last forty years, this area may have contained a Late Iron Age cemetery.

There is actually a written reference to Sandwick dating from 1360. This records a land transaction between Markus Gudbrandson and his wife and Lady Herdis Thorvaldsdatter of Papa Stour. This house is probably not the *lopt* (two-story house) referred to in the document as the site of the transaction, but according to Bigelow the two were probably contemporary.

As is the case for other Norse structures in the North Atlantic, the house at Sandwick was constructed of stone and was rectilinear. It did not have bowed walls. The walls had interior and exterior faces of stone with a core in the middle consisting of mixed rubble and soil. The walls varied in width from 1 to 1.5 m. However, the concentration of stone in the walls was higher than on sites in Iceland and Greenland where turf and earth also formed part of the insulating wall.

The house at Sandwick was built in at least two phases. In the first phase, dating to the twelfth century, the house measured approximately 17.5 by 4 m internally (Figure 10.10) (Bigelow 1987: 27). Several post holes were found associated with this phase along the center line of the house, but some of these were overlaid by later floors so the roofing system appears to have changed in the later period. Bigelow (1987: 27) attributes this flexibility to the shortage of wood, but it should not be forgotten that a roofing system which did not require internal supports would result in a more open living space and therefore could have important consequences for the organization of space. This, in turn, *could* have had social consequences.

Bigelow describes the house as being divided into four architectural zones through raised platforms on the floors. He does not use the word 'room', presumably because actual partitions were not found, but since I have referred to such divisions in the Norwegian houses as rooms I will continue to do so here. In any case, there appear to have been four rooms, a cow byre, a dwelling area used for food preparation, a cross passage and a main dwelling room.

There were also two outshot rooms or annexes along the west long wall which also appear to be primary features. The cross passage ran through the house here from the east long wall through the west long wall and the wall of the annex. This passage was located in the middle of the house. This annex had a trench along one wall which drained out through a hole in an adjacent wall. Annexes are also seen in the late phase at Jarlishof. Such annexes have been variously interpreted as byres or stables, cold storage rooms and indoor privies. At Sandwick it is unlikely that the drained room was a stable since there was a large wall hearth built into the paved floor. Such rooms may have been multifunctional and perhaps were used for food storage. There were few finds from these rooms, so it is difficult to suggest their function with any certainty.

In the main occupation phase at Sandwick (AD 1200-1400) the house was shortened with a new south gable built about 2 m inside the original wall (Figure 10.11). This blocked the southwest door of the original structure. There were also major changes in the internal arrangement of the house in the Late Norse Period. The central longfire or possibly two central fires were replaced in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century by a box-like hearth in the northeast corner of the room. A bench along the south gable wall was also built at this time, a feature identical to one at Underhoull although there it was interpreted as a byre (Bigelow 1987: 29). The building of annexes or outshot rooms is also a later feature in Norse North Atlantic architecture.

The finds from Sandwick were not as numerous or varied as those from Jarlshof. Diagnostically early types are missing from the Sandwick assemblage, but there is much more correspondence in the Late Norse Period. According to Bigelow, only two of the six artifact classes particularly characteristic of Viking Age Jarlshof were present at Sandwick--loom weights and small round bowls--and both were made of steatite. There were local outcroppings of soapstone on Unst, one of them just a mile and a half from Sandwick. This may explain why beach pebble loom weights were never adopted on this site.

In the later period, however, coarse pottery in the form of square vessels was present as were round vessels with everted rims and barrel-shaped pots with simple incurved rims. There were also some examples of imported wheel-thrown pottery, although it was not as common as the native wares. In addition there were square steatite vessels, steatite and schist baking plates and small lamps with handles pierced for suspension.

These types of artifacts at Jarlshof were dated based on a series of single and double-sided combs with copper alloy rivets found in the later levels. These have close

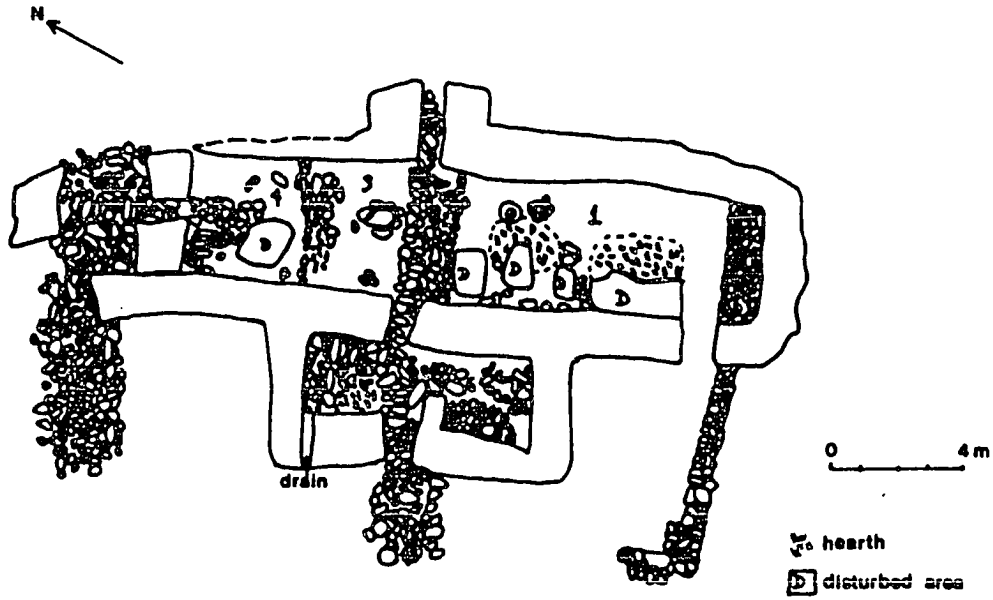


Figure 10.10: Sandwich Phase 1, redrawn after Bigelow (1987:Figure 4).

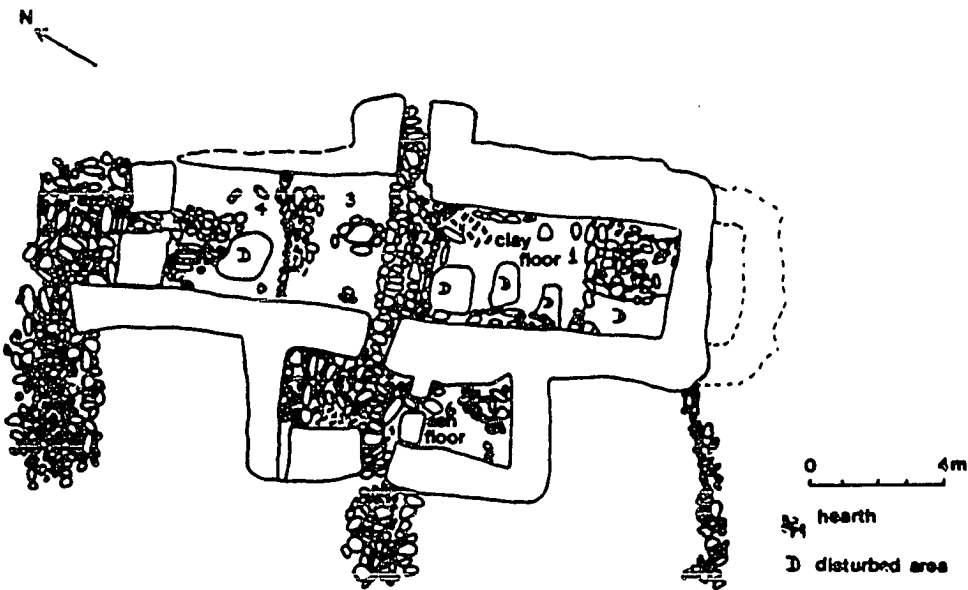


Figure 10.11: Sandwich Phase 2, redrawn after Bigelow (1987:Figure 5). secondary walls not marked.

parallels from twelfth to fourteenth century Norwegian town sites. The combs from Sandwick were also of these types, but included types not represented at Jarlshof. In addition there was an hourglass shaped soapstone lamp, not found at Jarlshof, which has parallels from Norwegian towns dating to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as well as one example from Papa Stour.

But for Sandwick we are not entirely dependent on the artifact assemblage in order to date the site. The six radiocarbon dates from the site all fall between c. AD 1100 and 1550, i.e. well within the Late Norse Period. The occupation seems to have begun in the twelfth century, peaked in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries lasting possibly into the fifteenth century.

Underhoull, Unst, Shetland (Small 1966)

This site is located on Unst, the northernmost island of Shetland and was excavated in the 1960s by Alan Small. It lies on the eastern shore of Burga Sand, a sandy bay on the southwest part of the island. It lies on a gently sloping hill about 41 m inland, but this hill is much steeper from the site up to Underhoull Broch at the top of the hill. The structure here was not visible on the surface, but there were more stones in the area than in the adjacent fields.

After four seasons of excavation the stratigraphy indicated that there were three distinct period of occupation. This was supported by a number of small finds. The oldest occupation on the site was datable to the Early Iron Age and included a hut floor with attached souterrain. This was followed by another hut floor and workshop with broch period artifacts. The final occupation was associated with what was interpreted as a Viking farmstead built on the ruins of the earlier settlement. Small suggests that the Viking settlement here began in the ninth century and blossomed in the tenth. He notes that it is one of the best examples of Viking construction in Scotland. This meant that

the earlier Iron Age structures could not be fully excavated since it was deemed necessary to preserve the Viking ruins.

The broch period occupation was separated from the Viking occupation by 5-7 inches of sterile soil which had washed down the hill from the broch. According to Small, the fact that the Vikings located their long house on the same site as the earlier Iron Age structures "confirms the judgment of Iron Age settlers in establishing their homesteads in relation to, but without sacrificing, good arable land while maintaining close proximity to the other main sources of food" (1966: 235). The Iron Age ruins also provided building stone; a broken trough quern was used in the primary Viking kerbed pathway and was probably recovered from the Early Iron Age ruins on the site.

The Viking/Norse structure was much larger than the previous ones--approximately 17 m long by 4.5 m wide internally in its first phase (Figure 10.12). The gable walls had an almost semicircular appearance, but the structure was rectilinear. The north long wall may be slightly bowed, but the south wall was straight. In order to have enough level ground on which to build it was necessary to dig down to bedrock in the hillside at the east end of the north side. On the south side the natural bench the house stood on was built up artificially to extend beyond the Iron Age midden.

According to Small this boat shape is characteristic of Phase 1 (AD 800-850) at Jarlshof (but see discussion in Chapter 5), while straight walls were used from Phase 2 on. The building technique was also dry stone at least a meter in width. The interior was smooth stone and the exterior consisted of alternate courses of stone and turf, providing more protection against the wind. Rebuilding was necessary where the turf rotted away and soapstone sherds were found in the rebuilt sections where they were used as packing.

Only two post holes were discovered and they lay along the center line of the house, not in the two parallel rows we are accustomed to from Norway. Small suggests that these posts supported a large *mønsds* and goes on to say this would be a valuable technique in treeless Shetland since it requires less timber to support the roof if one large beam is available. According to Small the eastern post hole actually contained two thin posts, possibly strapped together, and this also supports the idea that there was a timber shortage in Shetland. But he also points out that the width of the house did not require a second row of posts. There was also a slab covered drainage ditch along the north side

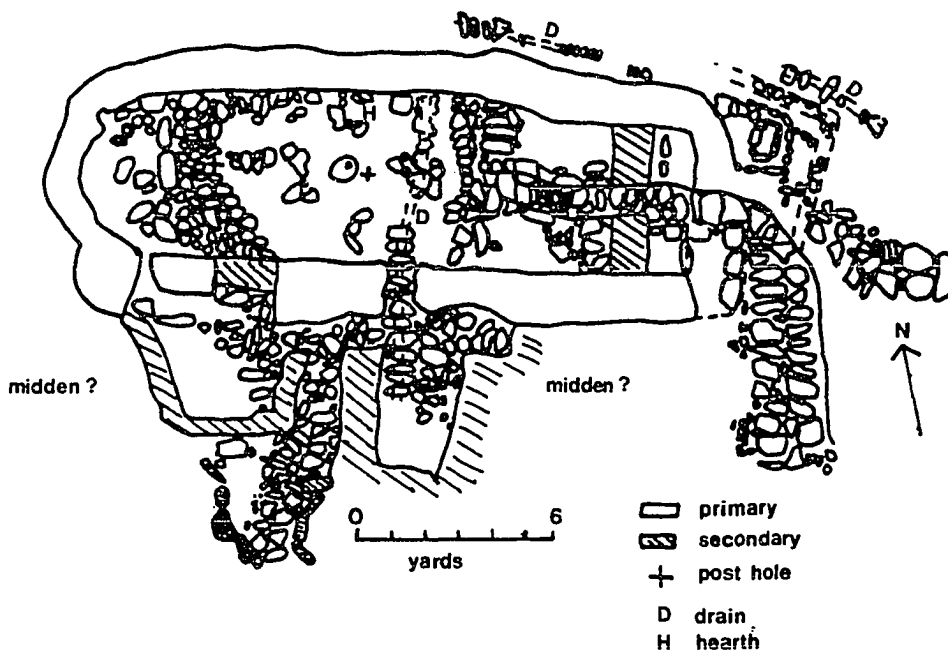


Figure 10.12: Underhoull, redrawn after Small (1966:Figure 10).

of the house along with a small drain inside the house running from the north wall straight across the house and out through the front door.

The primary Norse house was a true longhouse containing both byre and dwelling area. According to Small, the central and eastern parts of the house were the dwelling area and the entrance to this part of the house was through a doorway in the south wall. It was impossible to determine if there was an entrance in the east gable wall at this stage. There may have been benches along the walls in the east end of the house supported by large stones set on edge. West of the doorway was the central living area and fragments of a stone bench survived along the north wall on either side of a hearth. Small interprets this deviation from the normal central position for the hearth as a necessity resulting from the central position of the roof supports and the fire danger which would be present if the hearth were kept in its central position. I do not find this argument convincing since there was still room to have the hearth along the midline and it would probably have been possible to position the posts to allow for the hearth. The house at Sandwick had central posts in its early phase, but also had a central fire(s) (Bigelow 1987: 27). The floor in the dwelling part of the house was hard packed earth, a good conductor of heat from the fire as Small points out.

According to Small, the west end of the house contained the byre (but again see discussion in Chapter 5). There was a wide entrance from the courtyard in the south wall. This part of the house was roughly paved and was raised above the level of the rest of the house. A similar feature at Sandwick has been interpreted as a gable bench. There was paving outside the south wall where the area was leveled, possibly to give a reasonable slope for the animals to negotiate. This area was subject to subsidence and had been paved several times. However, Small does not discuss the artifact distribution

in this part of the structure, so it is difficult to come to certain conclusions about the location of a byre.

At a subsequent date two annexes were added. According to Small, both of these may have been used for animals and were irregularly shaped. At the same time the house itself was shortened. A new cross wall was built at the east end, but was not bonded to the long walls, and there was a new doorway in this wall with a paved path leading to the south immediately outside the house. The wide entrance in the west end was blocked and this fact, along with the shortening of the house in the east end by approximately 2 m, suggests that the animals were no longer being kept in the house itself. Thus in this stage the structure ceased to be a true longhouse. Small notes that fishing and weaving related artifacts were recovered from the upper layers of the 'byre' floor.

There was also a secondary structure outside at the northeast corner of the house, a central hearth surrounded by a narrow channel with sides of upright slabs partly covered with flat stones. Another channel seems to link this to the outside north wall of the house. This would provide a considerable draft for the hearth. Small suggests that this was a drying hearth for grain.

A reconsideration of this site indicates that Small's original interpretation was flawed. A comparison of the Underhoull plan with the plans of the late structures from Jarlshof and the house at Sandwick shows it that it was very similar to all of these. Bigelow (1984:138-141) has shown that the internal arrangement of the house was probably the opposite of the plan argued by Small.¹ That is, the byre was probably located in the east end and the living area in the central area and west end. The raised area in the west end, interpreted by Small as a byre, is more likely to be an end-dais and,

¹I am grateful to Gerry Bigelow for clarifying these points for me.

in fact, Small himself reports the recovery of artifacts associated with fishing and weaving from this raised platform (1966:245). They may therefore have been in the east end where there was a narrow sunken path running down the middle between two rows of stalls. If the stones standing on edge had supported sleeping platforms, as suggested by Small, there would have been no room in the middle of the room for the hearth. Finally, there may have been a side bench along part of the north wall west of the wall hearth.

Artifacts recovered from the site indicate reliance on agriculture and fishing. Two rotary querns were recovered along with the broken stone points of ploughshares, and there were also fishing weights or line sinkers. There were also two vessels which were identified as being used for rendering down fish livers. In addition, there was a small naust in Burga Bay below the site, although this could not be dated.

Like Norway, Shetland has considerable soapstone resources and soapstone replaced pottery in the Early Norse period. The soapstone vessels showed some variety with large round vessels 10 to 100 cm in diameter with curving sides and small flat bottoms to square pots with rounded corners, flat bottoms and steep sides. Some were roughly worked and others more smoothly finished. This may indicate that farmers produced some of their own vessels while professional craftsmen produced the finer ware. Other finds from the site include spindle whorls and loom weights, whetstones, toy querns, fragments of baking plates (slightly grooved soapstone), small lamps, and fragments of gaming boards and gaming pieces. Metal and bone tools were not found, probably because of the preservation conditions on the site.

The architectural features of this house (end dais, annexes, true longhouse) suggest a date in the twelfth century. However, no Norse or imported medieval pottery was recognized on the site, although baking plates and square soapstone vessels were

found. Therefore Bigelow suggested that Underhoull might represent a transition phase between Viking and Norse in the eleventh century (1984:140-141).

Appendix 3

Norwegian Kings, c. 900-1559

- before 900-931 *Harald Hårfagre*, son of Halvdan Svarte of Vestfold
- 931-933 *Eirik Bloodaxe*, son of Harald Hårfagre
- 933-959 *Håkon Adalsteinfostre*, the Good, a younger son of Harald Hårfagre, fostered in England.
- 959-974 *Harald Gråfell*, and his brothers, sons of Eirik.
- 974-994 *Håkon Sigurdsson Ladejarl*, earl under the Danish king Harald Gormsson Bluetooth.
- 994-999 *Olav Tryggvason*, supposedly a descendant of Harald Hårfagre, son of Tryggve Olavsson, a chieftain in Viken or Oppland.
- 999-1015 *Earls Svein and Eirik*, sons of Earl Håkon, ruled as earls under the Danish kings Svein Forkbeard and Knut the Great.
- 1015-1028 *Olav Haraldsson*, supposedly a descendant of Harald Hårfagre, son of Harald Grenske from Vestfold and Åsta Gudbrandsdatter, later married to Sigurd Syr in West Oppland. Fled the land in 1028, returned to Norway and fell at the Battle of Stiklestad in 1030. After his death he was worshipped as a saint.
- 1028-1035 *Knut the Great*, the Danish king, *hyllet* (was paid homage to) at the Øreting and others in 1028, made Earl Eirik's son Håkon his earl over all of Norway. Håkon died in 1029 and Knut left the governing of Norway to his mistress' son Svein with his mother Alfiva as regent. Knut died in 1035.
- 1035-1047 *Magnus Olavsson*, the Good, son of Olav Haraldsson. Returned to Norway from Novgorod by Einar Tambarskjelve and Kalv Arnesson in 1035/1036. Died in 1047.
- 1047-1066 *Harald Sigurdsson Hardråde*, half brother to Olav Haraldsson and son of Sigurd Syr. Ruled together with Magnus until Magnus' death in 1047, then alone. Died at Stamford Bridge.

- 1066-1093 *Magnus and Olav (Kyrre) Haraldsson*, sons of Harald Hardråde, ruled together until Magnus' death in 1069. Olav then ruled alone until his death in 1093.
- 1093-1103 *Magnus Barfot*, son of Olav Kyrre, ruled together with *Håkon Toresfostre*, son of Magnus Haraldsson until Håkon's death in 1194, then ruled alone.
- 1103-1130 *Sigurd, Øystein and Olav*, sons of Magnus Barfot, were taken as joint kings. Olav died in 1115, Øystein in 1123, and Sigurd Jorsalfare then ruled alone until his death in 1130.
- 1130-1135 *Magnus Sigurdsson*, son of Sigurd Jorsalfare. Ruled together with *Harald Gille* until open conflict broke out between them in 1134. In 1135 Magnus was taken prisoner by Harald in Bergen, blinded and put in a monastery. Magnus was taken out of the monastery by Sigurd Slembe in 1137 and was killed at the battle of Holmenrå in 1139.
- 1130-1136 *Harald Gille*, brother of Sigurd Jorsalfare and supposedly son of Magnus Barfot. Ruled with Magnus Sigurdsson until 1134, alone from 1135 to 1136 when he was killed by Sigurd Slembe in Bergen.
- 1136-1161 *Sons of Harald Gille* taken as kings after their father's death in 1136, *Inge Krokrygg* at the Borgarting and *Sigurd Munn* at the Øreting. *Øystein* came to Norway and was taken as joint king at the Øreting in 1142. After Sigurd Slembe and Magnus Blinde were killed in 1139 there was peace among the kings until 1155 when Sigurd Munn was killed by Inge's men in Bergen. After Øystein was killed by Inge's men in Båhuslen in 1157 Inge ruled alone until 1159 when Håkon Herdebrei was taken as king in opposition. Inge Krokrygg was killed in a battle near Oslo against Håkon's men in 1161.
- 1159-1162 *Håkon Herdebrei*, supposedly son of Sigurd Munn, taken as king at the Øreting in 1159, killed by Erling Skakke's men in battle at Sekken in Romsdal in 1162.
- 1161-1184 *Magnus Erlingsson*, son of Kristin, daughter of Sigurd Jorsalfare, and Erling Skakke of the noble family from Etne in Sunnhordland. Taken as king in Bergen in 1161 when he was 5 years old, *hyllet* in Nidaros after Håkon's death in 1162, crowned by archbishop Øystein at the *riksmøte* in Bergen 1163/64. In 1163/64 Sigurd Markusfostre, supposedly son of Sigurd Munn, was taken as king at the Øreting but was soon captured and

killed by Erling Skakke's men in Bergen. Erling Skakke ruled for Magnus as long as he lived. In 1170 he had to recognize the Danish king Valdemar's supremacy in Viken and became the king's earl. In 1174 a faction rallied around Øystein Møyla, supposedly son of Øystein Haraldsson, in Marker. Øystein was *hyllet* at the Øreting in 1176 and killed by Magnus Erlingsson's men at Re by Tønsberg in 1177. The Birkebeiners under Sverre's leadership killed Erling Skakke in battle at Kalvskinnet by Nidaros in 1179, and Magnus Erlingsson in battle at Fimreite in Sogn in 1184.

1177-1202

Sverre, supposedly son of Sigurd Munn. After Øystein Møyla's death Sverre was *hyllet* as the new king at the Øreting in 1177. After the birkebeiners (his followers) defeated Magnus' forces in 1184, Sverre faced Jon Kuvlung (supposedly son of Inge Krokrygg) and his followers. Jon was *hyllet* at the Haugating in 1185 and ruled in Viken until he fell in battle against the birkebeiners in Bergen in 1188. There were three smaller revolts in Østlandet in the years 1189-91, but these were beaten by the farmers and townsmen in Viken. The øyskeggene took over Viken in 1193 and their candidate for the throne (Sigurd, supposedly son of Magnus Erlingsson) was *hyllet* at the Haugating. The øyskeggene were defeated in the battle at Florvåg near Bergen in 1194 and Sigurd was killed. The same year Sverre was anointed and crowned in Bergen by bishop Nikolas. In 1196 Inge, candidate of the baglers and supposedly son of Magnus Erlingsson, was *hyllet* at the Borgarting. Sverre died in Bergen in 1202, the same year Inge was killed by the farmers on Helgøya in Mjøsa.

1202-1204

Håkon Sverresson, son of king Sverre.

1204

Guttorm Sigurdsson, grandson of Sverre. *Hylllet* as king by the birkebeiners in Nidaros in 1204 at the age of 4 and died the same year.

1204-1207

Erling Steinvegg, supposedly son of Magnus Erlingsson, *hyllet* at the Haugating and Borgarting in 1204 by the baglers. In conflict with the birkebeiners until his death in 1207.

1204-1217

Inge Bårdsson, son of Cecilia, Sverre's sister, and Sverre's lendmann Bård Guttormsson at Rein. *Hylllet* as king of the birkebeiners at the Øreting in 1204. After the peace with the bagler party in 1208 he was formally king alone, but the country was really divided between the two groups. Inge shared the throne with his half brother Earl

Håkon until his death in 1214, then ruled alone in Trondheim-Vestlandet until his death in 1217.

1207-1217

Filippus Simonsson, son of bishop Nikolas' sister, taken as king of the baglers at the Borgarting in 1207, de facto king over Østlandet after 1208 until his death in 1217.

1217-1263

Håkon Håkonsson, supposedly grandson of Sverre. *Hyllet* as birkebeiner king at the Øreting and in Bergen in 1217 with Skule Bårdsson as regent and earl with one third of the realm under him. After Filippus died Håkon was also *hyllet* in the eastern part of the country. After the final settlement between the birkebeiners and the baglers the bagler followers were disbanded in Bergen in 1218. At the *riksmøte* in 1218 the division of the country between Håkon and Skule was renewed. In 1217 and 1219 there were uprisings against Håkon, but in 1223 at the *riksmøte* in Bergen Håkon was recognized as the true heir to the throne before all others. In 1236 Skule became a duke without any land to govern and in 1239 he took the title king, but was killed in 1240. After his death Håkon ruled alone until his death in 1263 in Orkney.

1239-1240

Skule Bårdsson, half brother of Inge Bårdsson, took the title of king at the Øreting in 1239 and was in open conflict with Håkon until he was killed by Håkon's men outside Elgeseter monastery in Nidaros in 1240.

1263-1280

Magnus Lagabøte, son of Håkon Håkonsson, *hyllet* as king in 1257 and crowned in 1261. Reigning monarch after his father's death in 1263. Died in 1280.

1280-1299

Eirik Magnusson, son of Magnus Lagabøte, crowned in Bergen in 1280 at the age of 12. Regency governed by barons and retainers until he was of age, probably in 1282. Died in 1299.

1299-1319

Håkon V Magnusson, son of Magnus Lagabøte, *hyllet* and crowned in 1299 as the closest heir after his brother Eirik died without sons. On his deathbed in 1319 he appointed his closest advisors as regents for his daughter's son Magnus Eriksson.

1319-1374

Magnus Eriksson, son of Ingebjørg, daughter of Håkon V, and Duke Erik, brother of the Swedish king Birger Magnusson. Inherited the Norwegian throne after his grandfather in 1319, elected as king of Sweden the same year. Mother acted as regent until the Swedish *riksråd* (council of the realm) set her aside in 1322, the

Norwegian in 1323. The Norwegian *riksråd* ruled for Magnus until he came of age in 1331. Håkon Magnusson taken as king in Norway in 1343, but Magnus retained responsibility for governing in Norway at least until 1350. When Håkon took over in 1355, Magnus kept part of the country for himself. Magnus was replaced as king of Sweden in 1363 and died in 1374.

1343-1380

Håkon VI Magnusson, son of Magnus Eriksson, taken as king in Norway in 1343 by the *riksråd* instead of his elder brother Erik. They governed for him until he took over in 1355. Håkon was elected king in Sweden after his father in 1363, but was ousted the same year by his cousin Albrecht of Mecklenburg. Died in 1380.

1380-1387

Olav Håkonsson, son of Håkon VI and Margrete Valdemarsdaughter. Elected as king of Denmark in 1375 with his mother as guardian. When Håkon VI died in 1380, Olav inherited the Norwegian crown and was *hyllet* in Nidaros in 1383 at the age of 11 with the Norwegian *riksrådet* acting as official guardians. This began the joint Danish-Norwegian crown which basically lasted until 1814.

1387-1388

Interregnum

1388-1389

Margrete, daughter of the Danish king Valdemar Atterdag, married to Håkon VI. After her son Olav's death in 1387 Margrete was elected as *riksstyrer* in Denmark and in 1388 in Norway in place of the Mecklenburgers who were actually closer in descent. Later the same year the Swedish *riksråd* aristocracy accepted Margrete as ruler in place of Albrecht of Mecklenburg., who was killed by her forces in 1389. Erik of Pomerania became king in Norway in 1389, but Margrete continued as de facto regent until her death in 1412.

1389-1440

Erik of Pomerania, Margrete's sister's daughter's son, *hyllet* as Norwegian king in 1389, elected as king in Denmark in 1395-96 and in Sweden in 1396. Crowned as king of the Union in Kalmar in 1397. Took over governing after Margrete's death in 1412. In 1434 there was open opposition to Erik in Sweden with the Engelbrekt uprising which the Swedish *riksråd* followed and manipulated for its own interests. Erik was put aside by the Danish *riksråd* in summer 1439 and by the Swedish one in the same fall. The Norwegian *riksråd* elected Kristoffer of Bayern as the new king in summer 1442.

- 1441-1442 *Interregnum*
- 1442-1443 *Kristoffer of Bayern*, son of Erik's sister. Elected as king in Denmark in 1440, in Sweden in 1441 and in Norway in 1442. Died in 1448.
- 1448-1449 *Interregnum*
- 1449 *Karl Knutsson*, elected as king in Sweden 1448, competed for the Norwegian throne along with Kristian I of Denmark. Crowned king of Norway in Nidaros in 1449, but had to give up the throne the same year after conflict with Kristian.
- 1450-1481 *Kristian I* of Oldenburg, elected as king in Denmark in 1448. Crowned as king of Norway in Nidaros in 1450. A union treaty between Norway and Denmark was signed in Bergen the same year with formal equality between the two realms. He died in 1481.
- 1481-1483 *Interregnum*
- 1483-1513 *Hans*, son of Kristian I. He was also king of Sweden 1497-1501.
- 1513-1523 *Kristian II*, son of Hans, *hyllet* as king in Denmark and Norway at the Danish-Norwegian *riksråd* meeting in Copenhagen in 1513, crowned in Copenhagen and Oslo in 1514. Driven from Denmark in 1523 in favor of his uncle, Duke Fredrik. Won support from the Church in Norway and parts of the Norwegian *riksråd* led by archbishop Olav Engelbrektsson when he tried to win back his power, but was captured in 1532 and imprisoned. He died in 1559.
- 1523-1524 *Interregnum*
- 1524-1533 *Fredrik I*, son of Kristian I, taken as king in Denmark after they got rid of Kristian II in 1523. Recognized as king of Norway in 1524, died in 1533.
- 1533-1536 *Interregnum*
- 1536-1559 *Kristian III*, son of Fredrik I. In his Danish coronation charter of 1536 it said that Norway would no longer be an independent realm but part of Denmark. Archbishop Olav Engelbrektsson fled Norway in 1537 and Kristian III was crowned in Copenhagen later the same year.

(Taken from Mykland 1980: 169-173, 204-207)

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Abbreviations:

- KHLNM* *Kulturhistoriskt Leksikon för nordisk Medeltid*, edited by John Granlund, Allhems Förlag.

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