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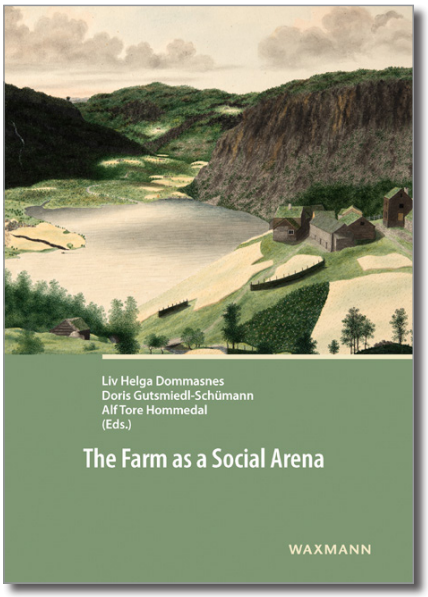
The Farm as a Social Arena

2016, 324 pages, pb, € 39,90,
ISBN 978-3-8309-3552-0

E-Book: € 35,99,
ISBN 978-3-8309-8552-5



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One thousand years of tradition and change on two West-Norwegian farms AD 200–1200

Liv Helga Dommasnes and Alf Tore Hommedal

Abstract

This paper explores the potential of applying a long-term perspective to the farm by following two neighbouring and presumably mighty farms, Hove and Hopperstad in the Vik settlement of Western Norway, over a period of almost one thousand years, from c. AD 200 to AD 1200. Starting with ten very large Roman Age burial mounds and ending with two medieval churches, the archaeological record suggests major changes in ideology and power on the two farms, affecting also the relationship between them and to the outer world. Most of all it must have affected the people of the farm, as the hegemony between the farms also seems to shift from the old chiefly Hove to the younger Hopperstad, where textile crafts developed into a flourishing industry. Finally, contacts with the outside world, ending with Christianisation, seem to have been of vital importance in this development.

Zusammenfassung

Dieser Beitrag lotet die Möglichkeiten aus, die sich aus der Betrachtung des Gehöfts in Langzeitperspektive ergeben, indem er die Entwicklung zweier benachbarter und mutmaßlich vormächtiger Höfe, Hove und Hopperstad, beide in der Kommune von Vik in Westnorwegen gelegen, über einen Zeitraum von beinahe tausend Jahren, von ca. 200–1200 n.Chr. nachzeichnet. Der archäologische Befund, der mit zehn sehr großen Grabhügeln der Römischen Kaiserzeit beginnt und mit zwei mittelalterlichen Kirchen endet, legt größere Veränderungen in der Vorstellungswelt und den Machtfaktoren auf beiden Höfen nahe, die sich auch auf die Beziehungen zwischen ihnen und mit der Außenwelt ausgewirkt haben. Dies muss vor allem die Bewohner der Gehöfte betroffen haben, da die Vormachtstellung zwischen den Höfen von dem alten Häuptlingshof Hove auf das jüngere Hopperstad übergegangen ist, wo sich das Textilhandwerk in eine Branche von entscheidender Bedeutung entwickelte. Schließlich scheinen Kontakte mit der Außenwelt, die in die Christianisierung mündeten, in dieser Entwicklung eine entscheidende Bedeutung gehabt zu haben.

Introduction

In this paper, we shall treat the farm as a social arena in a very literal sense. At one level the farm with its houses, farmyard and infields is an arena for social agency. This level we can reach indirectly only, basing our interpretations on information derived from sources primarily addressing other aspects of farm life and its participants. But the farm is also a scene where symbols of power and shifting religions and ideolo-

gies are displayed for anyone to see. The symbols in question are in our case burial mounds and churches. A third level, namely the interaction between people on the farm and the outer world – the process of becoming European – will thus be focussed on in the second half of this paper.

We will challenge the idea that all important changes have been introduced from above, simply by adopting a perspective from below. Very often we find that society is dominated by men. Including for example women or slaves would therefore also be a perspective from below, as is the chronological approach: we shall follow two farms from the 4th century AD until around 1200 AD, trying to understand the development step by step from the evidence known from each particular era and its history.

But first, let us introduce the arenas. The setting of this paper was chosen from our former knowledge of a very special rural settlement in Western Norway, namely Vik in Sogn, focussing on the farms Hopperstad and Hove (fig. 1–2). This settlement, midway into a West Norwegian fjord on its southern side, is so extraordinarily rich in archaeological remains that it has been described by two of our predecessors as *a place where time constitutes a fourth dimension* (Fett/Fett 1951, 52, our translation). The majority of the monuments date from the Norwegian Iron Age, from the beginning of the Late Roman period (c. AD 200) through the Viking Age (ending c. 1030)[1] into the Norwegian Middle Ages until c. AD 1200. All our sources are basically religious in character: burials and mounds from the first part of the period, churches from the later.

The central landscape of Vik could be described as a natural amphitheatre, with natural terraces at different heights making up most of the area suited for agricultural settlement. Both at the Hopperstad and Hove farms the locations of the monuments show very clearly that those who built them knew how to use the landscape formations to their advantage. The visual relation between monument and landscape conditions the monumentality and therefore the impact of the communication both mentally and in terms of perception. The desire to see and to be seen may express both a wish for (visual) control over the area and for acknowledgement of one's status. This approach takes as its point of departure that the environment is structured and organised through the eye. A parallel approach towards landscape may also be applied to sound. Sound will reach parts of the landscape where its source is out of sight.

The burial mounds at Hove[2] are all related to the edge of the central terrace at the top of the settlement (fig. 3) with an outstanding view towards the north where the lower terraces are situated and to the flat landscape (Flatbygdi) by the fjord. Seen

1 In Scandinavia the Migration Period is often referred to as the end of the Early Iron Age, while the Merovingian and Viking Ages are referred to as the Late Iron Age. In an European setting, this would all be early medieval times.

2 Hove here refers to the present farms of Hove and neighbouring Voll.

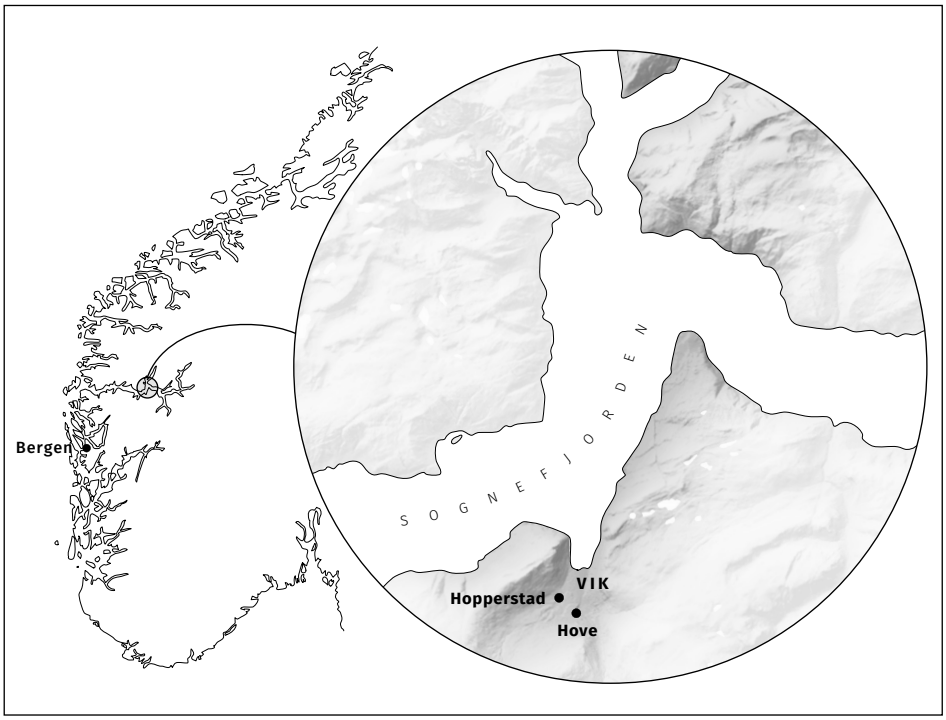

Figure 1: The southern part of Norway with the location of Vik and the relation between the farms Hopperstad and Hove. Compare to figure 2 (illustration: Per Bækken, 2016).

from below, some of the mounds seem to grow out of the terrace slope, giving them an even more impressive and monumental expression than the mounds alone could create. Likewise, the stone church at Hove, built c. 1170, has a prominent location at the top level of the terrace, but still so close to the brink that the church is well visible from parts of the lowland of the settlement and also from the largest valley (Bøadalen) ending in Flatbygdi. The two 19th century farmsteads at Hove were located close northeast and west of the church, and at least one of them must be rooted in the medieval farmstead, situated c. two km from the sea and c. 74 m above sea level.

The Hopperstad farm is situated at a lower level than Hove and at a distance of c. one km, at the outlet of Bøadalen, c. one and a half km from the sea and c. 34 m above sea level. Here the extant stave church has a special elevated position in the minor landscape due to its location on the top of a rock c. 60 m in front of the historic farmstead (fig. 8).

Quite early in the study of the Vik settlement it was made clear that the impressive mounds at Hove dated to the Roman and Migration Ages while the known remains from the younger Merovingian and Viking periods seemed quite modest. At Hopperstad, on the other hand, excavations during the late 1930s/early 1940s brought to

Figure 2: The Vik settlement and the Sognefjord seen from the south. The stave church at Hopperstad can be seen to the left and the burial mounds at Hove to the right. The church at Hove lies just outside the photo to the right (photo: Alf Tore Hommedal).

light a number of very rich Late Iron Age burials, most of them women's. As far as we can tell, they were also unmarked inhumations. Iron rivets indicate that the majority were boat burials. No older graves were located, although a cruciform brooch was found nearby, as was an early Iron Age potsherd and fragments of a Viking Age bronze bowl. Against this background, the theory was presented (Lidén 1996) that those two large farms had been rivals competing for local hegemony and that the Hopperstad farm succeeded during the Viking period. The rivalry may also be seen manifested in the Middle Ages, e. g. in the building material of the churches.

In a local context this is an engaging question on its own terms. To us, it also offers an opportunity to do a long-term study of the two farms as social arenas. This implies focussing on *people* rather than houses, land or food production. The farmstead, its houses and infields with mounds, burials and churches are here considered as results of people's agency and constitute, with the landscape, the physical framework conditioning people's lives.

Even though the long-term perspective is central to our discussion, we shall focus on special events and periods of activity or change at the farm, i. e. the more intense and limited periods of constructing burial mounds and arranging expensive funerals

or building churches. In our case, no evidence of the farm houses is known. The affinity between mounds and farm infields in Early Medieval times is well documented, however (Skre 1997; Dommasnes 2001), as is the relationship between the earliest churches and the farmyards (i. e. Krogh 1983; Skre 1988; Ingvaldsen 1996; Brendalsmo 2006; Sollund/Brendalsmo 2013).[3] We suspect that Vik is one place where the social scene-aspect of the farm was very much on display, in changing constellations and with changing loyalties over a period of perhaps a thousand years.

It may seem strange to start from two of the richest farms in the settlement if one wants to investigate the lives of the less privileged. However, on closer consideration it is not. First, we know that the archaeological record of the early Middle Ages in Scandinavia is heavily biased in favour of the upper classes, or more generally: those who left behind solid structures and were buried with riches. But this abundance is also what tells us that the society in question was stratified, i. e. that lower classes did in fact exist. We do find burials now and then that seem to refer to simpler lives and expectations, but these are few compared to the richer ones. It is generally assumed that most people received simple burials away from the farmyard, and left very little for archaeologists to find. So, we need the riches to be aware of the less privileged.

Several profound changes seem to have taken place in this small community during the centuries from c. 200 to c. 1200 AD. The first change to be noted by archaeologists was the above mentioned unbalance over time in the numbers and character of the archaeological remains from Hove and Hopperstad respectively, which has been taken to indicate a shift in power – and ideology? – between the farms.

Another change has also been discussed by earlier scholars (Kloster 1951; Bødal 1998; Lidén 1996; 2000), namely the coming of Christianity and building of the first churches at the Hopperstad and Hove farms.[4] We shall also investigate a possible third change, in terms of chronology first, taking place before any of the two already mentioned, namely in the Late Roman/Early Migration periods. This change, which seems to have been influenced by aristocratic Germanic cultures (Wenskus 1961; Steuer 1982) and perhaps even the Huns (Hedeager 2011), has long been acknowledged, and has greatly influenced our understanding of the top echelons of Norwegian Late Iron Age (i. e. European Early Medieval) society and their relations to the outer world (Hedeager 2011; Kristoffersen 2000). But it has, as far as we are aware, played only a modest role in the discussion of traditions and daily life at the local level in Norwegian society.

We shall try to understand developments in a long-term perspective, seen through the lenses of tradition versus change, and we shall argue that daily life on the farm

3 Several master and doctoral theses in archaeology and art history have discussed this theme, also related to Sogn e. g. Anker 2000 and Brattekværne 2006.

4 A third church was built at Tenål (Tryti 1996, 61; Buckholm 1998, 24–25; Lidén 2000, 75). This church disappeared during the Middle Ages and will not be further discussed here.

was instrumental in generating long-term changes of fundamental importance. A few central concepts – some of them have already been introduced – shall be our guides through the discussion: private and public, power (and by implication, powerlessness) and identities.

Private or public?

The distinction between private and public has been central in the social sciences. The private sphere was home and family, and is often associated with women. Activities carried on there have not been seen as important for political and structural changes in societies, or for what is sometimes termed the "big narratives" (e. g. Marshall 1994). This has affected the view of the Old Norse farm as well. The farm and its people were seen as part of the private sphere, dominated by women and lower-ranking men.

A very different aspect of prehistoric and Early Medieval farm life, especially on rich farms, or farms of importance, was ritual life. During most of the Iron Age, at Hove at least from the fourth century onwards, some burials took place on the individual farms. Since it is evident from the relatively small number of such burials that not everybody who lived at the farm was buried here in ways that we can recognise, the criteria qualifying people for farm burials have been discussed. It has been suggested that at least from the Migration Period onwards those buried on the farm infields were the owners of farms, and that the mounds were built by their successors to commemorate the former owners and give legitimacy to the new ones (Skre 1997; Solberg 2000). Such funerals would not be entirely private affairs. Any death concerns a greater part of society, and the more important the deceased, the greater the consequences for society and the need to (re)establish the social order (van Gennep [1908] 1965; Huntingdon/Metcalfe 1979). A funeral would be a public event, and the venue a public place, at least for the occasion.

Leadership and personal loyalties to warlords have come to be seen as important political strategies in Early Iron Age European societies. Gifts and feasts were vital for strengthening the loyalties between the warlord and his followers and keeping the groups together. These events also took place on farms. In Scandinavia, big "halls" excavated at some farms (Herschend 1993, 175–199; 1995, 221–228; Munch et al. 2003) have been interpreted as buildings built for such purposes. These occasions must surely have been public events in the sense that they involved large numbers of people and were of importance to people and politics far beyond the farm and its household.

Most rituals were probably religious by nature, and many rituals would be performed in a cult house – *hof* in Old Norse. This is also the term from which the farm name *Hove* is derived. We therefore have reason to believe that a *hof*, possibly identical with the hall (Olsen 1966; 1995) was situated on this farm during the later Iron Age.

Funerals, feasts, *hofs* and churches are among the symbols/activities that made the farms *public* social arenas. Thus, we find that the farm was both a private and a public place, some more public than others, both in Norse Pagan and in Christian times (Krogh 1983; Herschend 1993, 175–199; 1995; Lidén 1994).

Power

Large monuments are often seen as manifestations of power. Based on the large mounds and the churches, Hove has been characterised as a "center of power" (Myhre 1985; Ringstad 1986, 236–240; Lidén 1996). It has also been suggested (e. g. Myhre 1980; 1985; Magnus/Myhre 1986, 377) that the social structure in parts of Norway was based on small chiefdoms at least from the Late Roman/Migration period onwards.

Power thus becomes a central concept. Among other things, the world looks different from positions of power than from below (Harding 1991, 140–43; 2004, 6–7). Power can be understood as de facto and not necessarily recognised, while authority is recognised and legitimised power (Sanday 1974, 190). The sociologist Anthony Giddens (1997, 338) defines power as "the ability of individuals or groups to make their own interest or concerns count, even when others resist". In a narrower sense as governmental power, he continues, it is almost always accompanied by ideologies, in order to legitimate the use of power (ibid., 339). Authority is, again, the legitimate use of power.

The philosopher Nancy Hartsock (1998) discusses power from another point of view, namely *power as ability, or skill,* that is the potential to put something into effect. Rather than stressing the aspect of domination, her emphasis is on the relation between power and change (ibid., 63–64), and equally important: this power as something that engenders change can be available also to the less privileged. The mobilisation of power from below is well known through rebellions and revolutions, but can also find its expression as peaceful change.

Finally, power tends to be gendered. In most societies known (or reconstructed) power is seen as masculine. It is also characteristically associated with the upper ranks of society, and is quite often based on religion and religious dominance. In the latter case, religion can be used as an ideology to legitimate power. Since we are here working mainly with illiterate societies, we cannot really know whether or how power was conceptualised. But taking for granted that power was in fact in play, we shall discuss how, by whom and for what use.

Identities

Religion and culture are often closely connected. Religion has been an important element of identities, both the *forn siðr* of Norse society and Christianity. The con-

version to Christianity was not necessarily a matter of life and death in Viking Age Norway, but it could definitely be seen as a betrayal of the local customs (*siðr)*. Since the old religion had developed into a masculine ideology linked to war and fighting in the Viking Age, it is also relevant to ask if perhaps female converts were more easily tolerated than male ones. Due to this masculine ideology Christ had to be presented as strong and victorious for the Viking Age society (see e. g. Achen 1995; Mundal 1995).

Identities can be collective, as in nations, or individual. A breakthrough in the re-thinking of ethnicity, which was conceived as a collective identity, was the seminal work of social anthropologist Fredrik Barth (Barth 1969). He demonstrated that ethnicity was not necessarily given once and for all, but could be chosen and changed even individually in certain circumstances, especially if you moved into another cultural context. It is now generally accepted that ethnicity is a very complex matter with no one-to-one reference to other parts of culture (Diaz-Andreu et al. 2005).

With postmodern approaches, identities have often been considered in archaeological research not as collective identities as in "tribe", "people" or "women" but as individual and chosen identities. It has been argued, however (Insoll 2007, 3–4) that individual identities are recent constructs. In the – not too distant – past in Western societies, identities were ascribed rather than chosen. One valuable observation growing out of the postmodern concern with individual identities, is that identities are interconnecting. Sex, gender, age and ethnicity can perhaps be studied separately, but are experienced (or ascribed) as parts of a whole. One is never just a woman or a man, but a (wo)man of a certain age, occupation and social standing, in more or less unique combinations. Every identity is sexed, gendered, aged, ethnic, religious, ranked, empowered … or not.

Gender has perhaps been taken for granted even more than was ethnicity. From the 1970s onwards, an avalanche of literature has emerged relating to gender in the past and present. In this paper we shall quite simply assume that as a rule, sex and gender were interdependent. We understand gender as the social role(s) attributed to either biological sex within a given society, and are interested in what these roles were, and how they can be recognised on our two farms.

The monuments

As already mentioned, the material remains that we base our reasoning on in this case study are mostly religious in character. The pre-Christian ones are all burials, and many of these are covered by mounds. The Christian ones are burials and churches. All these monuments are primarily public arenas, and will be discussed as such.

Figure 3: Some of the old Hove mounds in their landscape. The smaller Viking Age mounds would have been situated closer to the photographer (photo: Alf Tore Hommedal).

The oldest burials

The oldest burials are found at the Hove farm, situated on the topmost central terrace in the settlement. On the brink of this terrace at least ten[5] huge burial mounds, varying in size from c. 15 to c. 35 m across and up to 4 m in height, were built. Burials known from six of the mounds indicate that these oldest monuments at Hove were built during the two centuries from c. 350 to c. 550 AD, not too many centuries after settled farming had become the rule in Western Norway (Hougen 1947; Grønnesby/Heen Pettersen 2015). The farm as we know it was therefore a relatively new construction at the time.

The centuries from the mid-fourth to the mid-sixth centuries have been described as the "classical" period for building such big monuments in Western Norway (Ringstad 1986, 209). Burial monuments this size were in fact twice as common in the older Iron Age as during the Viking period (ibid., 206–207). Groups of them are more unusual, however. Based on this, the Hove farm has been considered to be the original "chieftain's" farm in the Vik settlement (Fett/Fett 1951, 52). Not only were

5 Including "Guhaugen". This mound has only been partially excavated, and the rest of it almost completely levelled with the ground. The only finds known from this mound are from the Migration period. But based on its size and its place on the brink of the terrace, we suspect that "Guhaugen" was also built in the Roman period.

the finished monuments impressive and stand out as symbols of power and authority. The same applies to the building processes. It has been estimated that the building of the largest monuments would have needed somewhere from 1000 to 2000 days of work, depending on the number of men and other circumstances (Ringstad 1986, 25–27). With perhaps one such mound built in every generation, the building processes were repeated with relatively short intervals. By placing the monuments on the brink of the terrace, the recurring building processes as well as the already existing monuments were visible to most of the people living below, and even from the Stadheim-terrace and Bøadalen higher up in the landscape, and functioned as daily demonstrations of the wealth and power of the people on the Hove terrace. One aspect of this power was obviously power to demand obedience and commandeer men and other resources, probably legitimised by chiefly status.

Six of the ten mounds have been partly excavated. We therefore know that at some time during the (early part?) of the fourth century, a huge mound was constructed at the brink of the Hove terrace. An inner cairn covered by an earth mantle held a small round grave chamber in the centre. In this chamber, the remains of a cremation burial were found: cremated bones, remains of birch bark, a comb, a spoon, needles and gaming pieces, all made of bone (Schetelig 1912, 39; fig. 4 this paper).[6]

Two other mounds seem to have been built during the same century. A glass beaker imported from the Black Sea area and a glass bead are the only remains of the earliest, fourth century, burial. In a third mound, remains from a cremation were found at the bottom: bear claws, 13 bone gaming pieces, a small iron brooch, a few potsherds, small fragments of iron and a bronze band.

As far as we know, these are the oldest burials at Hove. In the early sixth century, one or maybe two similar burials, cremations with mainly bone equipment took place in some of the mounds. These must be seen as a continuation of the 4th century tradition. None of these old-tradition burials contained weapons or other definite indications of gender that we can recognise. This does not mean that gender was not an issue, however, only that it was not expressed in ways that we understand – or that only one gender is represented in these oldest burials.

New beginnings

No later Iron Age mounds are left at Hove, but eleven small barrows are reported to have been sitting on the Hove terrace in the area close to the older monuments discussed above. The finds, although much disturbed, indicate that these smaller mounds have held Viking Age burials, at least five male and one female. So the tradition of building mounds continued.

6 Information regarding all artefacts/museum pieces mentioned in this paper is available in the museum files/web pages of the University Museum of Bergen.

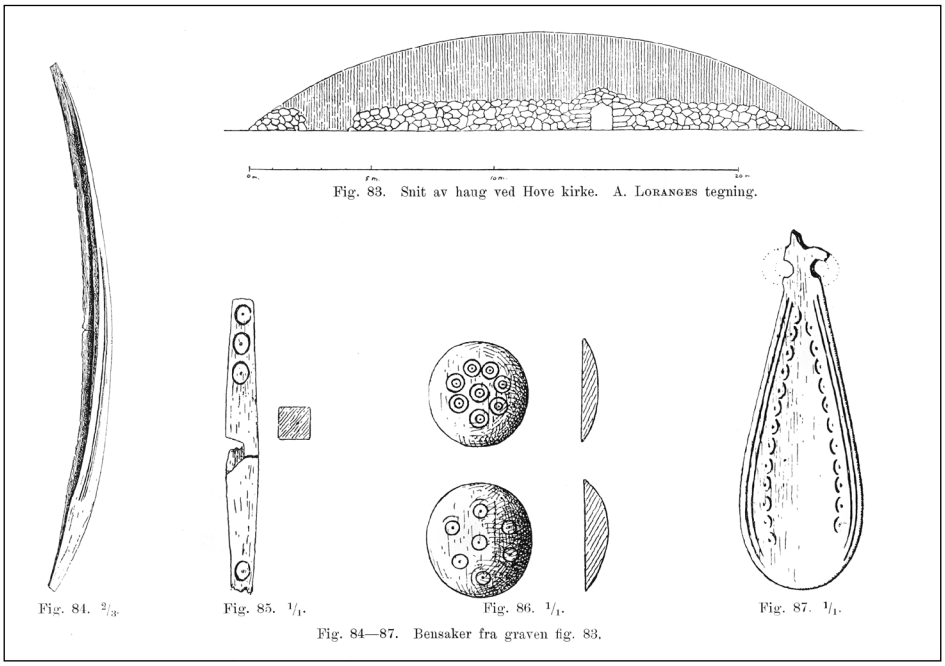

Figure 4: Grave gifts from one of the old Hove mounds. From left to right: a needle, two kinds of gaming pieces and a spoon, all made of bone. The mound with an inner cairn and a stone-built chamber is shown at the top (drawing by A. Lorange in Schetelig 1912).

But the burial gifts and presumably some of the rites changed: During the 4th century a weapon burial (possible two) took place in one of the large, older Hove mounds, and around 550 AD, a woman was buried in another. She was inhumed in a stone-built cist, fully dressed, with a small relief brooch of gilt silver, four or more other bronze brooches, pearls, a set of keys etc. More or less at the same time, a man was buried in yet another large mound some distance to the east. The man was cremated, but his weapons, untouched by fire, followed him into the grave: a sword with bronze ornaments, a spear and a shield. His rank was demonstrated by a big cruciform brooch and a richly ornamented belt. These three burials, the female grave a well-equipped inhumation, and the weapon graves, one of which definitely was a cremation, represent rites that were to become commonly known from the Migration period onwards in Western Norway. The defining element of the new rites is the grave gifts, and at Hove the first ones seem to have been placed secondarily in older mounds. In the cultural context established by the large Hove mounds these burials look foreign.

The last secondary burial was placed in one of the older mounds during the 10th century, a Viking boat burial with weapons and tools. By this time, we must assume that the smaller barrows had become the standard burial place at Hove. Although

only partially preserved, what is left of the assemblages from these less impressive Viking Age monuments indicates well equipped burials with weapons, jewellery, horse equipment and tools varying from a smith's equipment (now lost) to textile implements. A mount for a drinking horn testifies to connections with Ireland. Against this background, it is reasonable to assume that the Hove household was still a powerful force during the Viking Age.

Now there was competition, however. On the Hopperstad farm, several Merovingian and Viking Age burials have come to light, while only a piece of pottery and a cruciform brooch, both in uncertain contexts, are known from older periods.

With two exceptions, all the Hopperstad burials were unmarked. It is also interesting to note that out of the nine burials found in this small burial ground, six are the burials of women, dating from the mid-eighth century to the tenth. Three of the burials are from the 8th century, a period which is generally sparsely represented in the archaeological record of western Norway. Six or seven were also boat burials.

In this context, we shall concentrate on the richly equipped female graves. The fact that they outnumber the male graves is unusual by itself. Secondly, they present evidence of close contacts between Hopperstad and the world outside, from the Merovingian through the Viking period. The back side is that the contexts were in most cases disturbed before archaeologists reached the place, so much information has been lost. Even so, what we have is intriguing.

In the second half of the Merovingian period, a woman was buried (inhumed) in a boat. She had evidently been dressed in the housewife's best. Instead of the regular set of oval brooches normally used in Norway at this time, she wore two rectangular brooches of a type which is known from South Scandinavia, including Gotland (Jørgensen/Jørgensen 1997, 43–44; Ørsnes 1966, 136–143), but without ornamentation, and an oval brooch (also plain), a necklace of beads of glass, bronze, amber and talk, a set of three keys, weaving and spinning tools and a sickle.

Approximately one hundred years later, another two women were buried here. Both of them wore oval brooches, and were equipped with kitchenware and textile implements. One of the graves is special in that it contains a boat-building tool, indicating perhaps that this woman built, or was responsible for, the building of boats. Another remarkable element in this grave is a loom-weight marked with a cross. The find also included a third brooch, more than a hundred pearls, a casket and keys.

Finally, in the early 10th century, two more women were buried in the same small burial ground. Both graves held the traditional female equipment referring to food, drink and textiles, and both have Irish imports. In the one case this is an Irish mount, probably for a book, made into a brooch. The last burial to be mentioned here contained, in addition to a number of other artefacts, a full set of tableware: two small glasses, three large bronze cauldrons and a wooden bucket with bronze mounts, a sieve, a scale weight, and numerous other artefacts. The tableware and weight are all Irish work. The composition of the tableware in this last find is not unlike the one

Figure 5: Norwegian Viking Age women of high rank wore oval brooches, like these from the burial of the Hopperstad woman whose grave also contained a loom-weight with a cross (photo: Svein Skare, University Museum of Bergen, 2015).

you might have found in an aristocratic grave from the older Iron Age. In our local Viking Age, however, it is rather unusual. Were one or both of these women even Irish born (cf. p. 138)?

New monuments

It is reasonable to assume that a woman born and bred in Ireland in the late 9th/early 10th century must have been a Christian. Could the last burials mentioned above be early indications of a *siðaskipti*, the religious change from Norse heathendom to Christendom in Vik? If so, did the Irish-borne women also practice their religion, perhaps in their own small church?

About one century after the death of the last Hopperstad matron that we know of, we have the first material indications that the people at Hopperstad had accepted Christianity: a wooden church seems to have been built at the farm in the middle of the 11th century, to be replaced by the present-day stave church in the 1130s.

Likewise, at Hove some features in the extant stone church, built c. 1170, indicate, although less clearly than at Hopperstad, that an earlier church could have been standing at the same site during the 11th century. It thus seems to us that there may have been altogether five churches built on the two farms, three at Hopperstad and two at Hove.

Indeed it should not be surprising that the people in Vik had accepted the official *siðaskipti* before the middle of the 11th century, taking into consideration that the first Christian laws of the Gulathing law area, i. e. Western Norway, were sanctioned in the early 1020s AD (Helle 2001, 177). Christianity seems to have been generally accepted in Norway in the 1030s at its latest.

When churches were built on the Hopperstad and Hove farms a new kind of monument and qualitatively new ways of thinking were introduced in the Vik community. At least the 12th century churches would be as impressive and outstanding symbols of power and authority as were the burial mounds in earlier periods. The same applies to the building processes which, at least in the case of the stone church, must have taken years – even decades (see below pp. 143–144).

The dedication of the churches is not known, nor is anything about the pre-1200 furnishings.

Hopperstad

The 11th century church at Hopperstad is indicated by two fragments of decorated posts or staves from a stave building, found during restoration of the extant church in the 1880s. The wood carvings (fig. 6) are in the "Urnes-style", the latest Viking Age animal style (Blix 1885–91; Hohler 1999, Vol. I, 172). The fragments are, in connection with the present research project, dendrocronologically dated to the 11th century, one of them to within the period 1031–1070 and probably to AD 1050 (Stornes et al. 2013b; Stornes/Thun 2015, 10). We therefore suggest that the building was erected in the 1050s. If built then or later, it is not conceivable that the fragments relate to a pagan cult building. They must therefore come from another type of large, representative building, i. e. a secular hall or a church. The fragments have previously been interpreted as from a church at Hopperstad (Hauglid 1976, 231; Hohler 1999, VoI. I, 172; Lidén 2000, 71; Krogh 2011, 206–207). We will here presume that the two stave fragments relate to an older church at the site where the present one still stands.

In Norway, layouts of at least ten 11th century churches have been archaeologically documented by postholes revealing their foundations, and excavated inside extant medieval churches (Christie 1983; Magnell 2009; Jensenius 2001, 121–171; 2010; 2015).[7]

7 A posthole was in 1982 archaeologically documented within the extant Hopperstad church, in the church's northern gallery «Ved en reparasjon i nordre korsval i 1982, ble det avdekket et stolpehull i den utgravde profilen.» (Jørgen Jensenius, http://www.stavkirke.info/

Figure 6:
The fragments of two pine corner staves, 90 cm and 86 cm high, from an older church at Hopperstad. The decoration on the fragment to the left has been interpreted as a shoulder and a front leg of a large animal in the Urnes style (Bergendahl Hohler 1999, Vol. II, 172) (photo: Svein Skare, University Museum of Bergen, 2015).

One of these sites is situated inside the extant stave church at Urnes, also in Sogn (Christie 1983, 98). The situation at Urnes is exceptional considering that the still standing church incorporates several carved elements of an older church, dated by dendrochronology to after 1069/1070 and possibly the 1080s (Christie 1983; 2009; Krogh 2011, 211–214). This older Urnes church, now preserved in fragments, seems to us then to have been built a few years after its parallel at Hopperstad.

The Urnes fragments are large enough to allow attempts of a reconstruction of the church, indicating that it was 10–12 m long with a west gable rising 8.5–9.0 m above ground level, making this Urnes church[8] an average among the documented 11th century Norwegian churches (Krogh 2011, 169; Christie 1983, 98–100; Magnell 2009). The contemporary church at Hopperstad may have been of approximately the same size, but this can only be an estimate. Even if a little smaller, the Hopperstad church would still have been impressive, due to its location and its height of probably at least c. 6 m to the church's gable.

stavkirker/hopperstad/). No more details are given on the posthole, which can therefore not be definitely related to an earlier church.

8 The archaeologically excavated church seems in its layout to indicate a slightly smaller building (Christie 1983, 98) than Krogh's interpretations of the preserved building fragments, and it has therefore been suggested that two churches were consecutively standing at Urnes before the present one was erected (Jensenius 2001, 121–126).

The extant church at Hopperstad seems to have been a rather large stave church, c. 14.5 m long[9] with a c. 13.5 m high[10] lofty construction and richly decorated portals (Bjerknes 1947; Kloster 1951; Hauglid 1976, plate 6–9; Hohler 1999, Vol. I, 168–172; Anker 2000, 129–137). The dating is based on dendrochronology, indicating that the church was erected after the winter AD 1131–32 (Stornes et al. 2013a, 241). This new church was then probably built in the 1130s or around AD 1140. Three 12th century gravestones are preserved from the Hopperstad graveyard (Bendixen 1916, 34).

Hove

The evidence of an 11th century church at Hove is not as reliable as that of Hopperstad, but some features in the masonry of the stone church seem to indicate that an older church was standing at the site when the construction of the extant church started c. AD 1170 (Lidén 1981; Anker 2000, 139). The marked plinth, i. e. the lowest visible part of the church walls on ground level, is completed only in the chancel and not in the nave, and the character of the masonry changes where the plinth stops, especially on the nave's north side (Hommedal 1996). Similar features are archaeologically documented in the 12th century stone church at Bø in Eastern Norway, where they have been related to the building process, with an older wooden church still standing and in function at the site when the chancel of the new stone church was erected (Skre 1986, 11–17). If this was the situation also at Hove, one would expect an older Hove church to have been built in the last part of the 11th century, based on the normal time-span (c. one century) for posts in the early stave churches to last before they were ruined by rotting (Christie 1983; Lidén 1993, 53; Magnell 2009; Jensenius 2010a, 163–164; Jensenius 2015). Another indication of such a 11th century church at Hove may be found in the beehive-shaped bell, still in place in the stone church in the 1880s but now lost (Blix 1885–91). The shape dates these bells to the 11th and 12th centuries (Magnússon 1997). If older than the stone church (c. AD 1170), the bell may originate from an older church at Hove.

The building of the still standing, c. 22 m long, stone church started some decades after the completion of the new and noble church at Hopperstad in the AD 1130s. The masonry of the apse and chancel at Hove, in soapstone, is of very high quality in terms of handicraft, and the character and Anglo-Norman style links the building to the royal and ecclesiastical masons' lodge in Bergen (see pp. 143–144). This relation to the Bergen workshop indicates that the building process may have started in the

9 The present, restored church is c. 17.5 m long, but neither the apse nor the pentacle seem to be original parts of the 12th century church (Bjerknes 1947, 14–20).

10 The 19th century, external and restored belfry and vane not included.

AD 1160s at its earliest, when the style was introduced in Bergen (Lidén 1981, 56; 1996; Anker 2000, 139–141).[11]

Church building

The building processes of the churches must have characterised the two farms and their social life for years, at Hopperstad in the middle of the 11th century and again in the 1130s, at Hove presumably in the 11th century and definitely in the 1160s and 1170s. When building a stave church, the planning and preparation, creating and adjusting all individual parts of the construction would take longer than the actual process of erecting the church, which could probably be done relatively quickly (Christie 1974, 70–72; 2009; Lidén 1993; Anker 2000, 41–49; Jensenius 2010a; 2010b). Doing the masonry work on the stone church, however, would be a long-lasting process on the site, shaping and stationing every single stone. Due to the long and cold Norwegian winters with temperatures far below zero, such work with mortar could only be done during a few months every year. The process of building the stone church at Hove would therefore last for years and probably decades while the church would grow gradually, year by year, into a new and totally unknown kind of building (Lidén 1974; Ekroll 1993; Binding 1993; Anker 2000, 36–41; Brendalsmo 2006, 227–238).

The building workshops, or lodges, for wood and stone, consisted of skilled craftsmen, such as carpenters, wood carvers, masons of different skills including stone carvers, blacksmiths, and unskilled (local?) helpers, transporting material of timber and stones etc. on sledges during snow-covered winter conditions, and working on the building site in summer time. The skilled craftsmen would live at the farm and probably be a part of the farm's household for shorter or longer periods.

Since building stave churches was a well-known process at the time, with numerous churches being raised in Norway, it seems clear that the building teams of these churches consisted of Norwegian professionals. We suggest that the master builders and their permanent teams, both in the 11th and 12th centuries, had a regional anchoring in Sogn (Lidén 1993, 58; Hohler 1999, Vol. II, 39–53). It has even been suggested that this building milieu developed the more lofty type of stave churches like the 12th century church at Hopperstad (Lidén 1993, 58).

The master builder and the skilled masons and stone carvers at Hove, however, must have come from Bergen, probably also the blacksmiths trained for working on the special equipment needed for masonry work. Most of the craftsmen coming to Hove periodically would probably have been Norwegians. Since the Anglo-Norman

11 The western part of the Hove church, however, is of inferior quality in its masonry, which has led to the thought that the church was not completed until after 1184 when funding may have been suspended/shortened. See footnote 16.

style was rather new to Bergen (introduced c. 1160) some English professionals, if they were in Bergen, may also have been at Hove c. 1170.

Becoming European

Returning to the Late Roman period: To our modern eyes, there is a discrepancy between the expenditure invested in the building of the huge Roman Age monuments at Hove and their seemingly simple contents. The equipment belonging to these burials may look modest to us, but this does not necessarily mean that they were considered cheap and unimportant to those involved, something that is also contradicted by the size of the monuments in which they were placed. In fact, we must assume that they were exactly "right" to those who knew their symbolic value, meaningful and therefore important and indispensable, referring to basic values and roles in society. Weapons and other sharp implements are absent from the graves, indicating that violence and warfare were not valued in this setting.

The grave gifts consist of bone implements: bone combs, needles, spoons, gaming pieces and bear claws – or originally: bear hides for the deceased to rest on. The idea of bringing worldly riches to the realm of the dead seems to have been foreign. The archaeologist Per Fett (1944, 157) has suggested that the bone artefacts found in such graves were probably sacral of character, and almost never combined with iron. Bone itself is in some cultures considered to be the seat of the life forces (Sverdrup 1933, 126). According to the Old Norse poem *Vǫluspá,*[12] gaming pieces were one of the few things that survived the *ragnarok* (end of the world) (Steinsland 2005, 127), and they thus constitute a link between past and present, the old and the new worlds. Some of the bone artefacts may therefore have to do with the deceased's safe journey into the next existence. A glass vessel in one of the burials may have symbolised bonds and perhaps loyalties to men (and women?) of equal standing in distant parts. Such early contacts would have been paving the way for the changes that were to come.

The character of stratified societies and their foundations has been discussed by (social) anthropologist Mary Helms (1998): Aristocrats are associated with ancestors and represent a link between the present and the past. As such they belong to a qualitatively different order of beings from other members of society (ibid., 5) and are the founders of social order (ibid., 66). The burials of aristocrats therefore become "… a central focus point for the conservation of dynastic, aristocratic power […] a celebration of the relations between the ancestors and the living" (Carstens 2005, 59). Based on this way of thinking, we suggest that the older burials at Hove represent the upper ranks in a society of settled farmers.

Norwegian society in this relatively early period of settled farming has been understood as developing from a tribal society into chiefdoms where power was found-

12 *Vǫluspá* probably dates from the late 10th century (Holm-Olsen [1975] 1985, 310).

ed on ownership of land and control of resources combined with religious/juridical roles (e. g. Myhre 1980; 1985). Claiming the permanent right to one special – and large – piece of land may have been a relatively new idea when the first mounds were built at Hove. By interring the owners after death in monuments built of materials from their land, a presumably unbreakable link was established, conveying to the following generations a message of belonging and continued fertility, thereby creating a class of land-owners, or aristocrats.

In other words, we consider these Roman Age mounds to be early examples of *óðalshaugr* (e. g. Skre 1997). *Óðal (odel)* is a term meaning right to land, and was in Viking society restricted mainly but not exclusively to male descendants in a given order. How this may have been in earlier centuries we cannot know, but if our above interpretation is correct, land would probably have been kept within the family. Ownership of land and control of resources would have been the bases of power and rank, as for example religious positions as cult leaders, celebrating the link to the ancestors which was their legitimation of power at the farm, and probably also in the small society of which it was a part. The sizes of the mounds signal control over resources, among them people who could be commandeered to work, maybe slaves.

Until the first known weapon burial was inserted in an older mound sometime in the 4th century, weapons, as well as women's golden brooches decorated in animal styles, were foreign to burials at Hove. As far as we know, the mounds were all originally built over "bone burials",[13] while the weapon/jewellery burials, inhumations and cremations, were inserted later. Translated into narratives of the people of the farm, this suggests to us that during the end of Roman times/the Migration period, the Hove family got involved with Europe and the development of European Germanic society. Since the family burial sites were used, it must be assumed that the first "new" burials were also those of members of the old family. These new rites were now being introduced all along the western coast of Norway from south to north and soon became the new norm for the upper ranks of society, indicating that this region was becoming part of the war-band culture that was emerging on the European continent.

Alliances by marriage were important in order to secure loyalties and/or access to land. In the mid-6th century a woman wearing a relief brooch was inhumed in a stone-built coffin with a bone comb, knife, scissors and a keyring with keys – the equipment of an aristocratic housewife. It has been suggested that she came from the district of Jæren further south in Norway, where the brooch seems to have been made (Kristoffersen 2000, 163). Probably she came to Vik as part of an alliance by marriage, which helps explain why her traditional burial rites (we must assume) were respected, even though they differ from local customs at the time. She was probably

13 As some mounds have not been excavated, and the rest mostly by amateurs during the 19th and early 20th centuries, our information is both limited and inadequate.

not the last one, but unfortunately the younger burials from Hove are incomplete, and give no detailed information on later Hove women.

This is different at Hopperstad. One of the first women buried here, in the 8th century, was wearing two undecorated, rectangular bronze brooches. The rectangular brooches are South Scandinavian, unique in our setting, cf. p. 138 above. They belong to a type known from South Scandinavia and Gotland (Jørgensen/Jørgensen 1997; Ørsnes 1966), so we think of this woman as a foreigner, perhaps coming to Hopperstad as a bride.

Sometime towards the end of the 9th/beginning of the 10th century yet another foreign woman arrived. When she was buried, she was equipped with richly decorated tableware, a scale weight, kitchenware, glasses, textile tools, a casket, and a bridle bit, among other things. The metalwork in the tableware, casket and scale with weights clearly indicate Irish origin. It has therefore been suggested (Bødal 1998, 105–108; 2000, 51–52) that these were part of a dowry, indicating that the bride was Irish. Or could she have been a woman owning the farm in her own right (Helle 2001, 141–143)? We ought to remember that the Vikings were master boat-builders and sailors, and that water, even the North Sea, was connecting people rather than separating them. In the 10th century, Vikings were settled in numerous places on the Atlantic islands, from Iceland and Greenland in the north to the British Isles in the south. There is no reason why they should not inherit land in their old homeland, however. So an alternative interpretation could be that this woman inherited the farm, and when she came to take over, she brought her fine tableware and also a scale-weight with Irish weights, useful for trade. A similar biography may tentatively be construed for another of the Hopperstad women who was buried with an Irish mount made into a brooch (see pp. 138–139).

The woman with the "dowry" and the scale-weight could alternatively have been a widow. Widows were the most self-dependent of all women in Norse society (Helle 2001, 143–144), and would as a rule be in the position to take full responsibility for the managing of their farms. This status is definitely a possibility in the case of a 9th/10th century woman's grave with a boat-builder's tool, indicating that she had been responsible for this masculine (as attested by other Viking Age burials) activity. Her grave also had a loom-weight marked with a cross, which could indicate that she was a Christian. Again, this is an indication that she may have been Irish.

Two of the women's burials had whalebone plaques. One interpretation of such plaques is that they were symbols of the mighty Håløyg-family, rulers of Northern Norway (Storli 2006, 176–178). It thus seems that the Hopperstad women over time were well connected in many different directions.

Within war-band culture, the ranks and loyalty to its leader seem to have been the bases of identities signalled by men's grave gifts. During the first couple of centuries their equipment would mostly consist of weapons, while jewellery, magnificent brooches decorated in Germanic animal styles identified women. Basically these

Figure 7: Irish scale-weight and tableware, probably for use during formal feasts, from the burial of the Hopperstad bride/heiress/widow (photo: Svein Skare, University Museum of Bergen, 2016).

burial customs continued into the Later Iron Age, developing along the way. In the Norwegian Viking Age especially, tools and other kinds of equipment were added to jewellery and weapons as grave gifts, so that burials seem to reflect the knowledge, skills and responsibilities of the social persona as well as the rank. These later mounds were not necessarily very large, but the burials were richly equipped. In some cases fortunes must have been spent on grave goods.

This sometimes conspicuous consumption of grave gifts at both farms[14] should probably be seen in connection with the ritual feasting associated with Germanic war-band culture. Sumptuous feasting now was more prestigious than even large monuments. It was connected to the group of allies more than to land, as were the warriors themselves. Unlike farmers, war-groups, or warrior communities, are by definition transient and rootless, existing in the present, not the past or the future.

The identities marked in these rich burials in Western Norway over the centuries were clearly normative roles for people of a certain rank. It is also interesting to note that they refer both to war-band identities and to land. The landowner was still buried in a barrow (*óðalshaugr*) on the farm infields, but now equipped with his weapons. His wife acquired her power and authority from her role as housewife and manager of a large household.

These should be thought of as partly public roles, and they are relevant to our understanding of the importance of family (farm) and war-band loyalties respectively in the Early Medieval societies in Norway. Warlords needed resources, and this was what a family property might help to supply. Traditional family/land ideologies and

14 Although little is preserved at Hove.

war-band ideologies met at the farm in the centuries leading up to the Viking Age. As recently pointed out (Grønnesby/Heen-Petersen 2015, 172–173.) the two ideologies represent different conceptions of status and rank, the first one ascribed at birth, the second one achieved by bravery and skill. This must surely have resulted in some interesting tensions concerning rights, inheritance and the further development of society …

As argued above, the 11th century church at Hopperstad may have been built in the 1050s. This was no more than a century after the 10th century housewives were buried. Within this century the s*iðaskipti* must formally have taken place at Hopperstad. Taking into consideration the close relationship with Ireland, it should not be considered a sensation if Christianity was accepted at Hopperstad and in Vik before the 1050s.

A perspective from above has until recently dominated the discussion about the introduction of Christianity in Norway (e. g. Lidén 1995). It is often suggested that the Christianisation originally had an aristocratic touch and this "corresponds with the assumption that the Christianisation of Norway took place on royal command, therefore as a process forced onto society from above" and which "in the early period in reality only concerned a chosen (upper part) of the population" (Lidén 1995, 135, our translation).[15] A perspective from above is an important element even in more recent literature on the change of religion (e. g. Skre 1998, Gräslund 2001, Winroth 2012) where the emphasis is on the political advantages of good relations between the Norse aristocracy and their Christian peers on the continent.

The point, however, is that this is not the whole story. As pointed out (e. g. Garipzanov 2014, 2) the two ways of promoting Christianity – from above or below – should not be seen as mutually exclusive. Perhaps it would be more fruitful to see them as parallel roads. Focussing on the farm as a social arena allows us to discuss the change of religion on the micro level, in this case at Hopperstad as an individual farm. While the aristocrats may have acted from opportunism, others may have acted from faith. By studying an individual farm, we come closer both to the people and their backgrounds. In the following, we will sketch how the process of Christianisation can also be viewed from below, allowing for the influence of single individuals of different origins and ranks.

A housewife was a person of great influence in the community that was the farm. It has already been noted that some elements in the 10th century women's graves at Hopperstad may indicate that they were Christians. In view of the inclusive nature of the Norse religion, we must therefore consider the possibility that a Christian housewife at Hopperstad in the 10th century would have been able to practice her religion

15 «En slik tanke stemmer egentlig godt overens med det faktum at kristningen skjedde på kongebud, altså som en prosess som ble tvunget inn på samfunnet ovenfra» (og) «i første omgang egentlig bare angikk dette (øvre) skiktet» (Lidén 1995, 135).

(e. g. Steinsland 1995, 13). It is even not totally unlikely that captured Christian slaves, some of them perhaps priests or monks, were allowed to practice their faith to a certain degree. Or at least: Their master could take away their freedom – but he could not take away their belief, which would give them strength and hope in their misery – even if they were in heathen Vik! In such cases probably also the non-Christian members of the household would gradually become acquainted with Christian beliefs. Such a scenario is difficult to verify today, but one indication might be found in the possibility that thralls or released thralls (*leysingar*) could also be priests (Iversen 1994, 309–318; Mundal 2016, 277). If slaves were, to a certain extent, allowed not only to influence, but to be in charge of religious life and practice on the farms, we should definitely keep our minds open to the idea that the personal beliefs of lower ranking people could prepare the ground for the formal conversion that was to come from above, and is in our case materialised in the churches at Hove and Hopperstad.

At Hopperstad we have postulated the existence of two consecutive churches; the still standing church and its 11th century predecessor, most likely on the same site. We ought also, as already mentioned (pp. 139–140), to be open to the possibility of an even earlier predecessor – perhaps a small church building related to a Christian housewife arriving from the islands in the west, as known from the Saga of Eiríkr rauði (Eirik the Red). Eiríkr's wife Þjóðhildr was in the last decades of the 10th century allowed to build a church for private worship at their farm on Greenland, and it seems reasonable to believe that this could be the situation in other places as well (Sigurdsson 2008, 152).

Since this would have been prior to the formal conversion of Vik, such a church may have had a less prominent location than the later ones. Even a small church would, on this location, have signalled the new religion for other areas in Vik. Another possibility would have been that the first Christian Hopperstad matrons had a Celtic inspired cross, in wood or most probably stone, raised at the farm, like the early Christian crosses known from Western Norway in this period (Holme Gabrielsen 2002).

With the formal conversion and the unification of Norway into one kingdom, life changed at many levels, and the churches became symbols of the institutions that had brought on the changes. One such change was the celebration of masses at regular intervals and many other rules for Christian lives (Kristjánsdóttir 2015). Priests were needed to celebrate masses and lead the congregation and their communication with God, which had to be in this strange language called Latin and with a new way of singing (Gregorian chant). The priest was also expected to preach and teach the Christians in the Norse language. If the priest was himself a slave, captured by Vikings, this would surely make it easier for the aristocratic farmer to accept that he also took care of other slaves' religious needs. Where there were churches, there may also have been resident clergy. But at least in the beginning, and in the case of

Figure 8: The 12th century church in front of the Hopperstad farmstead. The church exterior was extensively altered during restoration in the 1880s, but the medieval interior is rather well preserved (photo: Alf Tore Hommedal).

private churches, the priests would have lived at one of the privately owned farms, and been part of its household.

The building of churches in Vik must have characterised parts of the 11th and 12th centuries, like the construction of the burial mounds did in the 4th to the 6th centuries. From the 1130s onwards, the stately Hopperstad church would dominate the landscape and symbolise both ideology and power in Vik, whether there was a small stave church or no church at all at Hove. When the stone church at Hove was built 30–40 years later, however, things changed. This church was constructed in the new, and in the local context, totally unknown and exclusive European tradition of masonry (i. e. stones in mortar), introduced to Norway through Christendom and the Church. The new stone church thus signaled that the people at Hove and Vik had now truly become European.

When initiating the building of the stone church c. 1170, we have reason to believe that this chieftain at Hove was a *lend maðr*, i. e. belonged to the top echelons of society and had close relations to the king (cf. Helle 2001, 149).[16] The exclusivity of

16 No *lend maðr* status for the Hove chief is documented in written sources, and the theory has not been widely discussed by scholars. It is a possibility that he lost his status after the

Figure 9: The 12th century church at Hove with its location at the Hove terrace. The upper part of the tower was built during the 19th century restoration. The 19th century farmsteads were located close to the church (photo: Alf Tore Hommedal).

this church at Hove would, compared to Hopperstad and all Sogn, primarily lie in its material and in the high quality of its masonry. When building this first stone church in the region,[17] the chieftain at Hove thus neglected the rich stave-building tradition in Sogn, used by all his fellow chieftains in the region. Through erecting a stone church with such a high quality of architecture and handicraft inspired by the royal and ecclesiastical mason's lodges in Bergen, he chose instead to signal his connections to the top ranks of society in Norway. The church at Hove thus allowed the chieftain to signal his position towards all of Sogn and even further away.

battle of Fimreite in Sogn in AD 1184, when he and probably most of his equals in Sogn supported the losing part (Lidén 1996, 57).

17 Hove is the only extant 12th century stone church in Sogn. We know that central farms as Kvåle in Sogndal and Njøs in Leikanger also had stone churches, maybe from the 12th century. There is no indication that these were built earlier than the church at Hove (Buckholm 1998, 33).

Tradition, change and bases of power

In this section we will address demonstrations of power and rank under changing circumstances, ideologies, allies, the impact of foreign brides – housewives to be, cultural meetings and their potential for influencing farm life, cultic activities and religious change. We shall also discuss the fact that Hove seems to have been the main site for pagan cult in Vik during the Iron Age, that churches were built at both of our two farms, that most of the Hopperstad burials were for women, evidence of economic specialisation at Hopperstad and indications that this may have had profound consequences for the settlement as such.

From the Migration period onwards, contacts with the European continent became more regular and also more personal. There are at least three – interconnected – reasons for this. First, the practice of serving in European war-bands under a leader of one's choice, as discussed in connection with the burial rites. Second, marriage alliances. We have tentatively identified several such cases, discussed above, at Hove in the 6th century, at Hopperstad from the 8th to the 10th centuries. A third way of establishing loyalties was through the institution of fostering. The sagas tell of well-born young boys sent across the sea for fostering with foreign allies or in a monastery. Some probably came to Sogn as well (Bødal 1998, 118; cf. Snorre 1964, 43), bringing influences from foreign societies, including Christian ones. This reminds us that the farm also functioned as an institution of education. Girls moved along other paths in the landscape – they were married at a young age and moved permanently to the homes of their husbands.

All these, and other, encounters of people from different places and cultures were opportunities for everybody to learn and widen one's horizons. A large farm like Hove or a busy one like Hopperstad was a small *community*, and single individuals could exert great influence. Although the foreign wives would probably all be part of the Germanic aristocracy, and thus shared a common ideology, there would be much to learn – and to teach. They would have different languages or dialects from the locals, their specialised skills and acquaintance with available resources were adapted to different natural environments, and perhaps even social ones. In Bourdieu's (1977) terms their *habitus* had been formed elsewhere, something that would be part of their beings for the rest of their lives. The same goes for the retinue of servants and slaves who undoubtedly accompanied the brides. They too came with new skills and different insights, and some of them would be in position to change aspects of farm life, based on their own skills and experience.

From the Gulathing law, we learn that thralls were expected to do the heavy and dirty jobs. Some slaves could be both well-born and educated/skilled, however, and thus a resource within many fields. For example, certain kinds of work, like goldsmith's work, wood carving, embroidery and fine weaving, needed young, sharp eyes. We have no doubts that if a slave turned out to be skilled in one of these fields, her/his

expertise would be put to use, even if they would not always be rewarded for their efforts. We must however also assume that skilled slaves would be appreciated and got some sort of status because of their skills. A thrall could even become free (*leysingr*) (Helle 2001, 125–132; Snorre 1964, 216).

Women in charge at Hopperstad?

Life at the Hopperstad farm seems in some ways to have differed from that at Hove. For one thing, at Hopperstad there is very little to indicate local farm traditions going far back in time. The three oldest burials known, two male and one female, are from the Merovingian period. That is one third of the later Iron Age burials at the farm, which is most unusual in Western Norway. Then followed five female burials from the 8th to the 10th centuries and one possible male burial. Several were also boat-burials. With one exception, all the female burials were extremely well-equipped, many with imported objects. Almost all these graves were unmarked above ground. Unmarked burials have been read as an indicator of Christians (see e. g. Skipstad 2009).

Other aspects of the burials are equally interesting: all the female burials contain textile implements. Together these cover the whole range of textile-related working processes, particularly work related to wool, from wool combs and spindles (spindle whorls), weaving battens and sewing needles perhaps used for embroidery.

It has already been suggested (Bødal 1998; 2000) that Vik must have had a rich production in textiles in the later Iron Age, probably under leadership from the Hopperstad farm. Fine textiles of a type known from the Birka marketplace in Sweden and the royal graves of Oseberg (c. AD 834) and Gokstad (c. AD 900) in Norway have been found in two of the Hopperstad burials. These textiles may have been produced in Western Norway (Bender Jørgensen 1986, 173–75), perhaps at Hopperstad?

The code of honor in early Medieval society made strict divisions between the roles and agency of women and men respectively, and textile work was definitely within the female sphere. Old Norse poems (*Hǫfuđlausn* AD 1023, *Hávamál*) and other texts as well as the testimony of funerary equipment from the Migration period onwards point towards women as the textile workers of the time.

During the Late Iron Age sails were taken into use (Christensen 1982a, 126; 1982b), and for sails one needed wool. Vik has been pointed out as one of the areas where grazing conditions were best suited for sheep, and as one of the areas with many textile implements in graves (Bødal 1998; 2000; Rabben 2002 with references). The archaeologist Anders M. Rabben (2002) has argued that women were not necessarily in charge of textile production on such a grand scale as sail-making implies. With the invention of sails probably in the 8th century and consequently the need for woolen sails, the managing of the increasing trade in textiles fell to men, he claims.

Rabben further argues that the code of honour and the female expertise in textile work did not apply in the case of sail-making. In his opinion, the production of sails entailed "a form of organisation that women could not be in charge of" (ibid., 68, 103, our translation). Instead he claims that there must have existed a group of men who operated outside the rules constituting the norm for male/female work in Viking society. These men may have been queers or simply older men no longer bound by the warrior code (ibid., 72–69). He finds evidence of such a group of men in a small number of burials containing both weapons and textile implements. These graves, he argues, represent men functioning as entrepreneurs organising the growing textile industry.

This reasoning is not very convincing, however, as few of the finds he appeals to seem to be from closed contexts, or are probably double burials. It is also still an indisputable fact that the overwhelming majority of textile tools in general are found in women's graves, from the Migration period onwards. These are normally interpreted as symbols referring both to the practical work, its organisation and the roles of women spinning/weaving in Old Norse mythology. Against this background, the claim that large-scale organisation of textile work required male intervention seems to lack a factual basis.

We will anchor our further discussion in the women's burials at the Hopperstad farm. Seven out of nine weaving battens found in the Vik settlement are found at Hopperstad, as is the majority of other textile-related tools. If grave equipment counts as clues to work and responsibilities, textile work, from combing the wool through the whole process to finished product had evidently been women's work for centuries in Western Norway, and its local management part of the housewife's responsibility. This again would mean that women – not men – were socialised into all the relevant work processes. Knowing the process is a fundamental condition for organising it on a grand scale. We shall join Bender Jørgensen (2015) in referring to philosopher Gilbert Ryle (1949) regarding the distinction between "knowing how" and "knowing that". Ryle's agenda here was to discuss the process of learning and the relationship between body and mind: "We learn *how* by practice, …, … often quite unaided by any lessons in the theory" … "Understanding is part of knowing *how*. The knowledge that is required for understanding intelligent performances of a specific kind is some degree of competence in performances of that kind" (ibid., 41, 53).

In other words, *knowing how* is based on practical, bodily experience. In the early Medieval period, and as far as our sources inform us, experience related to the processes of textile work belonged to the women's sphere. In addition to intimate knowledge of textile work, organising and long-term planning were also part of the housewife's main task: she was responsible for the household, its well-being and sometimes its survival. She needed to keep track of the resources, take steps if they were running out and keep count of her "staff", the mouths she had to feed and what

was going on in general. No doubt the aristocratic women buried at Hopperstad all came from big households and had been trained for such tasks from childhood on.

As already mentioned, their burials were also equipped with several textile tools. One of the women, the Irish/Norse bride/heiress/widow who was buried in the 10th century, also had a scale-weight. Scale-weights are not uncommon in female graves. In fact, 17% of such weights found in Norway are from women's graves (Stalsberg 1996 based on Jondell 1974). The numbers from the Viking Age Birka trading town in Sweden is 32% for women, 28% men's, 3% couples and 37 unidentified as to gender (Arbman 1943; Stalsberg 1996). In Rus, the Scandinavian burials containing weighing equipment are distributed with 22% female burials, 30% couples and 48% men's (Stalsberg 1996). These numbers indicate that taking part in trade was not at all in conflict with the female code of honor. It was in fact quite common.

So, it seems very probable that the women of Hopperstad saw an opportunity in applying their expertise in textile work when the demand increased. These well-connected housewives had the know-how and the connections needed for large-scale textile production. As for the sail-making, they did not necessarily do the hands-on work themselves. Weaving large sails must have been very heavy work. In Viking Age society, there would be workers and slaves for this, and it seems reasonable to assume that slaves – maybe men – were involved at certain stages of the production. The codes of honor were primarily for the upper classes, and did not apply to thralls. In this case, the women seem to have been the ones pulling the strings.

During an excavation in 2013 a pit-house was found at the Sæbø farm to the north of Hopperstad and closer to the fjord (Åstveit/Melvær 2014). Five weaving-weights, several spinning whorls, two glass beads and some fragments of iron were found on the floor. Pit-houses are associated with weaving, and it is tempting to suggest that the people working here did so in collaboration with the entrepreneur women of Hopperstad.

In sum, we think the available evidence makes a convincing case for suggesting that the strong position of the Hopperstad people during the Late Iron Age was due to the textile expertise of the women of the farm. They definitely mastered the art of making fine textiles as well as sails – as already mentioned, some of the textiles from Vik were of a type that is known from Scandinavian and North German ports of trade and from royal graves in south-east Norway (Bender Jørgensen 1986; Bødal 1998; 2000). A majority of the Hopperstad burials – male and female – were boat burials, and one of the 10th century women was equipped with a boat-building tool. If we are right in thinking that textile industry, including sail-making, brought wealth and influence to the Hopperstad people, it makes even more sense to find that they were buried in boats like the ones needed to carry their goods to their destinations. Such a high percentage of boat-burials on one single farm is highly unusual. Could it be that the men specialised in boat-building, so that they could carry their merchandise on their own keel?

Meeting of religions?

In this discussion we shall follow the distinction between "Christianisation" and "conversion" as defined by Winroth (2012). Christianisation refers to the kind of influence that results from contacts and interaction when new ideas and ways of life seem to be seeping in all by themselves. The term "conversion" is reserved for the process of Christianising the institutions of society, kingship among them, and the establishment of Church institutions. These two concepts need to be contrasted with two others, namely *siðr* (the Norse term that comes closest to "religion") and *faith*, or *belief*. As the latest burials discussed here are from the 10th century, most of the discussion will relate to the Christianisation phase.

We are here studying two farms whose contacts with Europe seem to have been direct and long-lasting. When trying to evaluate how this interaction with Christian areas has influenced people at our two Vik farms in terms of religion, several factors need to be taken into consideration. For one thing, the two master families and the rest of the household would have had different backgrounds and therefore responded in different ways. If a new *hof* was built at Hove during the Late Iron Age (Olsen 1966), *and* caused a change of the farm name (Fett/Fett 1951, 63–67), we must assume that this was also the site for an active, heathen cult involving the owners and the head of the family during this period.

During the Late Iron Age, missionaries were sent to Scandinavia. 10th century Norway even had a "missionary king", Hákon Aðalsteinsfóstri, fostered in Christian England and spending much of his energy as king in Western Norway. In this part of the country a number of large stone-crosses, often referred to as "Christening crosses", were raised, presumably during the (late) Viking Age (Holme Gabrielsen 2002; Nordeide 2011). It has also been pointed out that the number of non-Christian burials diminished in parts of coastal Norway during the 10th century, while they continued in Trøndelag and the inland of Eastern Norway (Gellein 1997; 1998, 22–23; Skre 1998, 8–9). The same development is seen along the Sognefjord, where the number of burials shrinks to less than half from the 9th to the 10th century (Dommasnes 1976, 39; Skipstad 2009, 43). In sum, this has been seen as some degree of Christian influence.

Hopperstad has very little documented history before Merovingian times, but all the more from then on, especially through contacts with the British Isles, including alliances with (probably) Christian families through marriages. If our analysis of these women and their trade is close to the reality, they would also be interested in good relations, not only in Norway, but with allies and trading partners overseas as well.

It is problematic to present definitive "proof" of Christian converts in the Nordic Early Medieval societies. In some Norse skaldic poems, however, we get a glimpse of this process. Christ was originally described as someone you knew about but did not identify with ("*ramr konungr Róms*"/"Rome's mighty king"), he was someone else's

strong leader, later to be described as the leader of all the world ("*heimsins hersir*"), king over everything ("*als drottin*") and consequently also of the Norse society (Mundal 1995).

As archaeologists we tend to look to burials for indications of religious change. Recent research has shown that in some places, graves with Christian burial rites have been placed on heathen graveyards, as for example in Uppsala, Sweden (Tesch 2015). Likewise, both mounds and grave gifts are also known from Christian burials (ibid.). There is a growing recognition that burials with grave gifts may be Christian (Later 2012). One well known Norwegian example is the burial of the Christian king Hákon Aðalsteinsfóstri (c. AD 961). According to the Sagas he was buried with his weapons in a large mound (Snorre 1964, 101).

It is evident that before the first churches and graveyards, there must have been Christians. In areas far away from the centers of Christian mission, like the Sognefjord area, farm burials were still the custom and probably the only alternative even for those with Christian sympathies. Before the official acceptance of Christianity (in the 1020s or in the 1030s at its latest), there would have been no formal requirements for Christian burials generally known in Norway. Even on the European continent the teaching of the Church in such (and other) matters was still work in progress, and if the results were communicated to Norwegian shores, it would be through intermediaries, probably unlearned. Normally, people who wanted to mark their Christian belief would have to rely on what they had learnt from neighbours, or from foreign contacts, or maybe from enslaved nuns or monks still allowed to conduct some of their rituals related to the Divine Office? According to the Gulathing law (part 15), slaves could be priests in the first Christian period in Western Norway (Iversen 1994, 314–315). In Iceland, the early laws also tell that enslaved men could be priests (Mundal 2016). Where there was no Christian burial place, individual graves could be consecrated – if there was someone available to do the consecration (Tveito 2011, 26).

In the medieval sagas, the early relationship between Christianity and heathendom is often described as antagonistic and incompatible. It may have been, from a Christian point of view. But it has also been pointed out that the Norse heathendom was an open system, which could relatively easily accommodate an extra god or a symbol (Steinsland 1995). Two moulds for both a Christian cross and a Þór's (Thor's) hammer found in Jutland (Haithabu and Tvergården respectively), Denmark, are often referred to as indication of a rather pragmatic attitude (Pedersen 2009, 297; Price 2014, fig. 33). A loom weight, perhaps secondarily used as a mould, recently found in Vik during the above mentioned (p. 155) excavation, is even more ambiguous in that it is not immediately clear whether the intention was to make a cross or a Þór's hammer – the interpretation depends on the position from which it is viewed (fig. 10).

We would like to suggest that such an ambiguity may have been convenient in relation to burial rites as well. Before the formal conversion, anyone who wanted to fit in within Old Norse society was probably expected to follow the *forn siðr,* if not

Figure 10:
Loom-weight, secondarily used as a mould, found in a pit-house at Sæbø, Vik (photo: Svein Skare, University Museum of Bergen, 2015).

in belief, then in rites and behaviour as a part of the Norse identity. The boat burial rite had been established at Hopperstad as early as the 8th century. It could be seen to refer to the participation in the textile trade or a transport to the realm of the dead. It has also been suggested that boats were associated with a fertility cult in the Iron Age through Frey and/or Freya (e. g. Müller-Wille 1970, 149; Ingstad 1992; Steinsland 2005, 152–158). A link between paganism and early Christianity has been suggested by Crumlin-Pedersen (1995, 98) who refers to the typological thinking of early Christianity, where older texts, including heathen myths, were seen as "forecasts of the events described in the New Testament". So, Freyr was seen as the forecast (praefiguratio) of Christ, and the ship with its mast a forecast of the cross.

Whichever way we choose to look at it, depictions of ships seem to have been multivocal. In the end the content would be what was in the mind of the sender and those who received the message respectively. To the 9th – 10th century matrons of Hopperstad, some of whom in our opinion probably had Christian sympathies, and the families who buried them, a boat burial might have been a compromise: the local community as well as the trade partners and allies to the east, south, west or north could read their own meanings into the burials. Good relations were secured and business could flourish.

Church organisation and graveyards

The formal conversion of Norway took place less than one century after the last known burial following pagan rites at Hopperstad. A general acceptance of Christianity seems to have followed the battle of Stiklestad in AD 1030, where the Christian king Óláfr Haraldsson was killed and soon after became a Christian symbol as St.

Óláfr. In the course of the 11th and 12th centuries Norway gradually became an integrated part of the international church organisation. The establishment of dioceses took place in the 11th and 12th centuries and the development of a parish system during the 12th and 13th centuries, all mainly building on older, jurisdictional territorial divisions (Tryti 2006, 84; Skre 1988, 10–11; 1995; Anker 2000, 24–27).

The church at Hopperstad is, in 14th century written sources, documented not only as a parish church but even with the status of one of four regional main churches (*fjórđungskirkja*) in the Sogn region. This status as main church in the western region of Sogn most probably goes back to the earliest church organisation, and underlines Hopperstad's status and power in the 10th and 11th centuries, paving the way for the status of a regional main church. An early function as such a *fjórđungskirkja* also indicates that the first church at Hopperstad had pastoral functions for the Vik settlement, with a graveyard (cf. Lidén 1995; Tveito 2011), later to become an ordinary parish church. Even though the graveyard at Hopperstad is only documented from the 12th century onwards (see p. 142), the Christian cemetery at Hopperstad probably goes further back and possibly to the Conversion period (cf. Tveito 2011). With an early pastoral function for the Vik settlement, it is also a possibility that the Hopperstad churches may have been built in cooperation between several farmers (*fellesbyggeri*, cf. e. g. Skre 1988; Ingvaldsen 1996, 108–111). When these decisions on the location and function of the church were made, it may have been a point in favour of Hopperstad that there had already been Christians for a couple of generations, with a wide network, while the Hove chiefs appear to have continued their heathen cult far into the Viking Age.

The Hove church seems to have been a private church (*hægendiskirkja*), without a parish, throughout the Middle Ages (Robberstad 1951; Tryti 1996, 61; Lidén 1996, 57; Helle 2001, 202–203), built by the chieftain at Hove.[18] The status as a private church seems to be confirmed in the 14th century, when the priest at Hove seems not to have had a separate household, but was included in the household of the farm (Robberstad 1951, 48), which indicates that this also was the situation in earlier centuries (Iversen 1994, 313–314). Since the stone church was functioning as a private church, this surely also would have been the status of our postulated 11th century stave church at Hove. A private church would normally not have a cemetery (Tveito 2011), and there are no indications of a medieval graveyard at Hove. However, we cannot exclude the existence of a graveyard, e. g. one reserved for the chieftain and his family.

18 The church at Hove may have become a parish church when the Tenål church, mentioned as a parish church in the 14th century, disappeared, probably in the 15th century (Tryti 1996, 61; Buckholm 1998, 24–25, 64; Lidén 2000, 75). It has also been suggested that the church at Hove may have been a combination of a private church and a parish church (Lidén 1995, 139).

The different ecclesiastical statuses of the churches at Hopperstad and Hove probably go back to the earliest church organisation in Vik, perhaps to the first part of the 12th century (Tryti 1996, 60–61; 2006, 67–68) or even to an 11th century division in a regional main church (*fjórđungskirkja)* at Hopperstad and a private church (*hægendiskirkja*) at Hove.

In connection with the formal conversion, a fundamental and extensive change in burial customs was introduced with the decree by law that everybody, high and low, was to be buried in Christian cemeteries (e. g. Tveito 2011; Sollund/Brendalsmo 2013). The burial places for the whole settlement were concentrated to fewer farms than before, and (normally) connected to (parish) churches. As mentioned above, the Hopperstad church would probably have been the Christian burial place from the Conversion period onwards, even before the parish organisation was established. In the end, therefore, this was the church that everybody must rely on for their eternal salvation.

Moving the burial place from the farm to a common burial ground must have been a disturbing change to the conservative part of the population. With this change, the aspects of ancestor cult that may have remained into the Viking Age lost its foothold, and the links between land and family were no longer materially manifested. Maybe this could be one of the reasons why the chieftain at Hove built his own, private church: wanting to keep the contact with the earlier burial tradition (Sollund/Brendalsmo 2013) and still be allowed to bury the central family members at the farm?

No doubt moving the burial place from the farms must have involved a serious mental readjustment. The concentration of churchyards to fewer, selected farms made these farms even more important in the public mind than they had ever been in pre-Christian times. Having the burial place almost on their doorstep may have created a new basis of (mental) power for the Hopperstad people, lacking for the Hove people. The three large, 12th century flat gravestones from Hopperstad are in soap stone. One has carved ridges and one has a carved cross (Bendixen 1916, 34), and at least one of the gravestones has, judging from the stone material, been transported from a long distance.[19] These gravestones were surely costly and made for persons from the upper part of society, maybe for one of the Hopperstad masters or mistresses?

In Norwegian archaeological research the visibility of churches has often been discussed (i. e. Brattekværne 2006; Skeiseid 2007). Both the Hove and Hopperstad churches were impressive in their own way, and very much visible from the rest of the settlement. But they were also audible through the ringing of the bells, and the people of Vik would repeatedly be reminded of the church's existence, its religious function and its location, even if the church itself was not visible.

Bells seem to have been established as a general liturgical rite, and a part of the furniture of a church already before the 10th century mission period in Norway

19 Personal information from the geologist Øystein Jansen.

(Holmbäck 1980, 503–510). In Norway and Iceland the use of bells is documented in old Norse written sources from the beginning of the 11th century, e. g. the bell *Gladr* (bright/glad) in Nidaros in the AD 1020s (Snorre 1964, 479). We must therefore assume that bells were provided at an early stage after the building of the first churches in Vik, as the already mentioned beehive-shaped bell from Hove also indicates (see p. 142). The effect of the sound must have been, when introduced, a powerful symbol of the new religion. A bell would be a daily reminder of liturgical life at the farm in question. The sound of the bell was a radically new element to be associated with the new religion alone, a signal of the power of the church and the roles of the two farms in upholding this power. In the early period, being backed up by the church organisation may have given extra authority to the Hopperstad bell.

Some conclusions

The thousand years of tradition and change have taken us from ancestral cult to Old Norse heathendom to inclusion in the European Roman Catholic church, from local chiefdom to national kingdom, participation on the international scene and an incipient money economy. – To return to our original question regarding the relationship between the Hove and Hopperstad farms, it seems that perhaps the suggestion that Hopperstad passed the old Hove farm in power and influence was not totally wrong, although the original argument was different from that on which we shall base our conclusion.

For one thing, it seems clear from the little that has been preserved from the Viking Age that the Hove farm was still influential and had wide-reaching contacts, which were continued into the later Middle Ages. This is also the farm that goes the farthest back in history of the two. It is worth noting, however, that Hove was not the only farm in Vik that had contacts with the European continent during the Roman/Migration periods. In terms of valuable artefacts of foreign origin Hove is perhaps not even the most prominent. But as far as we know, no other farm in the area had as many large Early Iron Age mounds as Hove. In modern terms, the period of building huge burial mounds can be seen as a conscious effort of demonstrating power and establishing hegemony in the settlement, based on age old traditions rather than foreign ideas. Ancestor worship can be both a religion and an ideological basis of secular power. Or rather, there was no such distinction, and the power became mental as well as practical.

Hopperstad, on the other hand, emerged "from nowhere" in the 8th century, a period in history when activity seems to have been at a low ebb in Western Norway and Scandinavia in general, and it is possible that the new development at Hove during the Migration period was a response to what was perceived as a challenge from Hopperstad.

The women of Hopperstad seem to have been well connected from the beginning, and expert weavers over generations, making them and the farm they represented influential and well known. Undoubtedly their network expanded over time, which would definitely be an advantage when venturing into new kinds of enterprises. It is worth noting, however, that the expertise cannot have been restricted to the housewives. All the textile workers must have been well gifted/educated in their special areas of competence.

The housewives were, by virtue of their positions, the leaders of all indoors work on the farm. This was their formal basis of power and authority, normally restricted to the farm itself, and aimed at keeping the daily work of the household going. But this position alone was not sufficient to create such a success as sketched, nor was the traditional power over people and resources, which anyway was less for women than for men of the same rank. The main source of power for these women was their expertise and skills, achieved through practice and exercised in discussion and co-operation with their co-workers, together with the ability to act and the will to make changes. This kind of power, as discussed by Hartsock (1998), could be held by lower-ranking workers as well, because valuable insights often bring authority.

We also find reason to believe that at least the 10th century housewives at Hopperstad may have been Christians, and that they practiced their religion. An early church or cross may have been raised at the farm in the 10th century even before the official conversion, and been replaced by a more official church in the 1050s. The third, present stave church may have been ready when the church organisation with parishes was formally implemented in the 12th century.

The Hove master and family, on the other hand, based their power on tradition old and new, perhaps a bit rigidly? They may not have felt the same need to move with the times that evidently characterised Hopperstad, and became over-confident? But does this mean that they lost in competition?

Basing our argument on the theory that the name Hove refers to the term for the heathen *hof* and is supposed to go back no longer than the later Iron Age, we will assume that Hove was still the center of heathendom (in Vik) when the first Christians lived at Hopperstad. The standing stone church goes back to c. 1170, and there are indications that a smaller stave church may have preceded it. Again, it seems that Hove had tried to answer a challenge from Hopperstad. When building their radically different and in this setting impressive stone church, they mobilised once again allies and expertise from the very top echelons of society. This was their basis of power, slow-moving and laden with history. In the end it could not – at this level of society – match the energy and opportunism of Hopperstad, which created openings for individuals and their skills even if they were not necessarily of noble birth.

A basic difference between the two farms from the Merovingian periods onwards thus seems to have been the character of their power. The Hove power was founded in the distant past and in ideas of innate differences between people. Aristocrats had

power over people and resources. The Hopperstad people seem not to have been bothered with ancient history. Insofar as they had power over people, it was founded in their achievements and skills. This empowerment through skills is also what we can see symbolised more generally through tools and equipment in the Viking Age burials. Equally important, this kind of power was within reach of a much larger group of people. It encouraged social change on a scale previously unknown and it was compatible with the teachings of the church, which may even have been interpreted as signaling its approval by making the Hopperstad church part of official church organisation. The Hopperstad people were in tune with the times.

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