Between the real and ideal

Ordering, controlling and utilising space in power negotiations – Hall buildings in Scandinavia, 250-1050 CE

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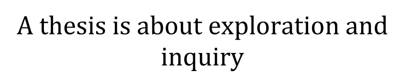
Til minne om mamma, som gikk bort

mens denne oppgaven ble til

Front page illustration:

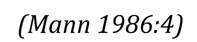
Reconstructed hall, Borg in Lofoten. Photo: the author. Arrangement: Runar Hilleren Lie



A thesis is about exploration and inquiry

(Charmane 2007)

Societies are much *messier* than our theories of them



(Mann 1986:4)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Anders Andrén and Bjørnar Olsen have both written that archaeology, in contrast to history, may be used to lend a voice to the voiceless. My one regret of this thesis is that I instead of lending my voice to the people in the shadows have been enthralled by the fascinating narrative of power and élite in the Scandinavian Iron Age. However, I believe that I am contributing to demonstrate how the upper strata of society are able to legitimise their real and symbolic power over others – so that is something. Ever since I was required to give a presentation on the Gamla Uppsala halls during a study visit in 2007, I knew that I had to write about these marvellous, multi-functional and eclectic buildings. Writing this thesis has been one of the best experiences of my life, in despite of everything.

When I have now reached the end of the road, there are a number of people I would like to thank. First and foremost, I want to thank my supervisor Per Ditlef Fredriksen, who always believed in me, challenged me, and pushed me further. I would also like to thank Julie Lund for inspirational supervision during the project description. *Lofotr* museum provided financial support during my trip to Borg in October 2009, and Lars Erik Narmo gave enthusiastic help and input. Maria Spitalen Valum, Silje Lillevik and Karianne Françoise Aamdal Lundgaard have generously taken the time to read and comment the text. I am especially grateful to Erik Johannessen, who revised my English. Furthermore, a big thank you goes to my closest family and friends for their encouragement and support. All fellow members of *Nicolay* also deserve thanks. I would furthermore like express my gratitude to my wonderful fellow students, with special regard to Silje Lillevik, for the early morning coffee and late night beers we have shared in happiness and frustration. I'll never forget the lunches in the sun, wild dancing at parties, quiz at the pub – or those crazy girl nights.

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Oslo, 5th May 2010

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Abbreviations

CE – Common Era (neutral equivalent to AD, used by for instance the Smithsonian Institution)

ON – Old Norse

OE – Old English

PART I: *THE HIGH HALL* -
BACKGROUND AND FRAMEWORK

1. INTRODUCTION

Briskly the men went
marching together, making out at last
the ample eaves adorned with gold:
to earth's men the most glorious
of houses under heaven, the home of the king;
its radiance lighted the lands of the world
(*Beowulf* 306-311)

The Scandinavian hall building was a constructional and social innovation which emerged sometime in the Early Iron Age; most scholars agree that it occurred in the second half of the Roman Period (Herschend 1993:179-182; Norr 1996:160-1, for a different opinion see Løken 2001). The inspiration for the hall buildings has been suggested to have come from the Roman Empire's use of open spaces in the basilicas, or from the Greek *megaron* known from Homer (Thompson 1995). Others believe the architectural and cultural innovation sprang directly from the north-European longhouse tradition (Herschend 1993). No matter the inspiration, the division of the home and farm from one multifunctional long house to several differentiated spaces was the result of surplus production in a politically laden environment with increasing societal stratification. Thus the development of the hall buildings from the Roman Iron Age throughout the Viking Age can be said to be intertwined with – and may stand as an excellent metaphor for – the transition from chiefdom to statehood in Scandinavia.

The aim of this thesis is to examine the power relations of the Scandinavian Iron Age society as expressed through the hall buildings and their placement in a both genuine and cognitive landscape. I will explore how the buildings' construction, the finds related to the buildings, and the mythological ideas of the buildings relate to power struggle and power negotiations in the Iron Age societies. The halls are viewed as expressions of *ideology* in a post-Marxist sense. Ideology is herein understood as a set of thoughts, expressions and ideas used to legitimise, explain and to some degree conceal a world order where certain groups have control over others (Bourdieu 1977:188; 1996:42-43; Hedeager 1992:40; Kristoffersen 2000:18). It is important to note that the function, perception and symbolism of the halls were not static through the c. 800 years being examined in this thesis. There likely were regional, cultural and chronological differences which are now difficult to determine. In addition, the halls were complex social entities with a number of meanings, not all related to power.

However, to generate a new perspective it is necessary to generalise to a certain degree. It is assumed that from the beginning the halls were instruments to display real or pretended power through actions such as feasting and cult, and through communication in a cognitive landscape. This work also supports the view that Iron Age Scandinavia was part of an overarching cultural sphere with many common traits (Fabech and Ringtved 1991; Herschend 1995:225; Norr 1996:161), although considering geographical and topographical differences.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The main problem of this thesis is:

How has the hall – as a building, social space and mythological idea – been used to differentiate people and exercise power in space, place and in the mythological-religious (symbolic) realm?

The underlying research questions will be: (1) How did the idea of the hall materialise over chronological and geographical divides? (2) Is the development of the hall based on continuity or breaks? (3) What insights may we gain by applying a *biographical* perspective on the hall? (4) What was the connection between the mythological/idealised hall (e.g. *Valhǫll)* and the socio-religious *praxis* of the aristocracy?

DEFINING THE HALL

'Hall', ON *hǫll*, is most likely a loan from OE or Germanic, and was not used in ON before after 1000 AD (Brink 1996:240-2). Philologist Stefan Brink has suggested that ON *salr* was used regarding the hall in the Late Iron Age; cf. *Gamla Uppsala* or *Skiringssal*. Brink connects the halls with central places, aristocracy and power. However, the question of what constitutes a hall remains unanswered. The most frequently cited definition is provided by Frands Herschend, who is arguably the scholar who has conducted the most research on Scandinavian halls (Herschend 1993,1994,1995,1997,1998). He argues that the building must meet one or more of the following criteria:

(1) They belong to big farms
(2) Originally they consisted of one room with a minimum of posts
(3) They are singled out by their position on the farm
(4) Their hearths were not used for cooking or for handicraft
(5) The artefacts found in the houses are different from those found in the dwelling part of the main house on the farm (Herschend 1998:16)

A second definition is offered by Michael Thompson, who has worked with Anglo-Saxon and continental halls:

> The main characteristics of a medieval hall have been established: it is not a communal building but belongs to an individual with authority and may be used for a variety of purposes, principally feasting or entertaining and to meet any other needs that may arise. It is not normally inhabited but can be pressed into service as sleeping accommodation as occasion may require (Thompson 1995:4).

A challenge with both these definitions is their imprecision. It has been argued that more than 15 years after Herschend published his definition, such a large number of possible halls have been excavated that the concept is being drained for meaning (Diinhoff in prep.), or that the society was so stratified that each individual farmer needed a space that at times were used for functions connected with halls (Løken 2001:75). In the present thesis the chosen hall sites are accepted as halls by archaeological scholars in general, and a discussion of diacritical criteria falls outside the scope of this study[1]. Another issue is the confusion regarding the defining concepts of 'hall' and 'sal'. It has been suggested to refer to *hall rooms* within a multifunctional longhouse as 'hall', while in the case where feasting and cultic functions have been extracted from the economical everyday life at the farm, into *separate buildings*, they should be referred to as 'sal' (Løken 2001). In my opinion this seems to be a speculative labelling, as we do not know exactly what was meant by 'hall' and 'sal' by Iron Age people. Furthermore, I do not agree with the notion that only the hall room was important in multifunctional constructions. In this thesis the terms 'hall building' and 'hall' are used as synonyms and refer to the entire building as well as the concept with its socio-religious connotations. 'Hall room' is used where a certain area inside a building is interpreted to have special functions, while 'sal' is only used with regard to philology or place names.

STRUCTURE OF THESIS

The thesis has a threefold structure. In addition to this introduction, part I, 'background and framework', consists of a presentation of the theoretical framework and the methodological approach (ch.2 and 3), a state of art where various concepts related to hall research are discussed (ch.4), and a presentation of the archaeological material in chapter 5. The aim of part I is to lay out the stipulations and framework for the following analyses.

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[1] However, the interested reader will find a comparison between the present sites and Herschend's criteria in appendix 4.

Part II consists of two conducted analyses. The first analysis is presented in ch.6 – the social life of halls. In this analysis the heuristic device of *social biography* is applied. Concretely this means that the selection of hall buildings is structured and analysed through five suggested life phases for the hall as a social entity. Secondly, there is an in-depth comparative analysis of the halls at Borg, Norway and Tissø, Denmark (ch.7). This analysis treats the material in detail and demonstrates differences and similarities between the sites. Throughout the analyses and discussion, textual evidence is applied when it seems contributory. The aim of using texts is to further reach the *ideal* aspects of the Iron Age hall.

Part III contains a summarising discussion where five metaphorical meanings of the hall are sketched out in order to answer the problem statement (8). Ch.9 provides a few concluding remarks.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

SOCIETY OBJECTIFIED

An unavoidable stipulation for studying material culture from a post-processual perspective, is to acknowledge that material objects are the direct products of a social world. Studying material culture can easily become a purely descriptive exercise, as the culture-historical archaeology demonstrated, with no way of penetrating the mentality behind the materiality. Anthropologist Edmund Leach (1973) argued that archaeologists could never understand symbolic and cognitive traits of human culture because of the inherent *passiveness* of material culture. But things are not just things. All things are social, all things are meaningful. Material culture may be functional and practical, but it is never only that; it constitutes the reification of society. Furthermore, material culture shapes people as much as people shape material culture.

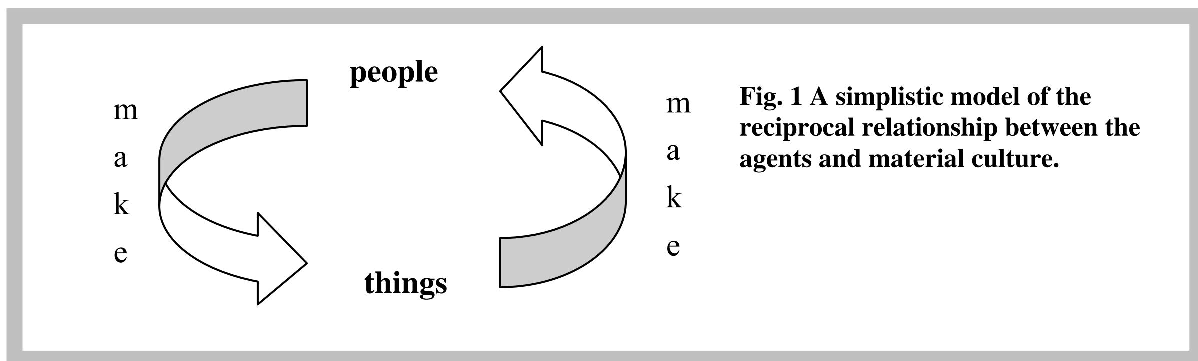


Fig. 1 A simplistic model of the reciprocal relationship between the agents and material culture.

In processual archaeology buildings were interpreted from an ecological and functionalistic point of view. They were reduced to constructions intended to shelter the inhabitants from nature, and differences in construction were either explained by different climates, changes in subsistence patterns or as different stages in a general historical process of evolution (Norr 1996:161; Olsen 1997:48-49; Trigger 1989:294-297). In the post-processual, contextual archaeology of today, the focus has widened. Material culture, whether weapons, jewellery or a built environment, is still perceived as having a *practical* objective. A cooking vessel may have the ability to heat without damage to the vessel; it may contain the content most effectively. But the vessel may also signify something else; have one or more metaphorical or cultural meanings (Hillier and Hanson 1984:1; Tilley 1999). And that meaning may be *limitless* – a cooking vessel may communicate identity or ethnicity, gender relations, or it could be a metaphor for a myth or a religious belief. It may hold individual meaning to different people, i.e. “My grandmother made that vessel” or “I never liked those decorations”.

The different layers of meaning may be conscious or unconscious; intended or unintended, have denotations and connotations. Material culture may thereby be perceived as *multi-vocal* (Andrén 1997:152-154; Hodder 1989; Tilley 1989).

The way we experience the world relies on both us and the world being what we are: *material*. Artefacts make us human in a very concrete way – one of the defining traits of the *homo* genus is the ability to manipulate the material world for its own use. Humans communicate through things, use things to transport themselves in the world, and use things as markers of identity. Without a material world to interact with, manipulate and be manipulated by we would perceive the world in a very different fashion. It has been argued that material culture (clothes, jewellery, weapons) may be perceived as an extension of the human being itself (Miller 1987:119). People and things are so intertwined (Fredriksen 2006:127-128) that we are mutually dependent, and neither could exist in their present form without each other. This leads me to suggest that archaeology as a discipline is able to aim to reach a sense of self – reach a human being really – in a past long gone. The very materiality that Leach argued made archaeology unfit for studying cognitive traits of human behaviour, is in my opinion our starting point and *forte* to understanding the past – and understanding ourselves.

BUILDINGS AS MEANINGFUL STRUCTURES

Space is often overlooked as a critical element when studying social phenomena, whether in the present or the past. The space in which humans operate is reduced to a backdrop, a lifeless platform where action is superimposed (Zieleniec 2007:xii). However, humans apply meaning to more or less all space they inhabit, as seen in the recent years' focus on landscapes (Andersson et al. 1997; Ashmore and Knapp 1999; Fabech and Ringtved 1999; Gansum et al. 1997; Lund 2009; Tilley 1994). Whether it is a modern day supermarket or a temporary Mesolithic settlement, the human mind categorises, analyses and interprets space continually. The built environment is especially ripe with symbolic content (Benjamin and Stea 1995; Eliade 2002 [1957]; Hillier and Hanson 1984; Parker Pearson and Richards 1994; Price 1995; Tilley 1994:17). As we have seen with artefacts in general, buildings have both a functional and metaphorical capacity. But buildings have a trait that artefacts do not: in addition to being functional and meaningful the built environment orders empty volumes of space into meaning and patterns (Hillier and Hanson 1984:1). Houses are cultural expressions reflecting social

organisation, and communicate, among other things, identity (Price 1995; Yates 1989). Buildings, then, can be seen as a *reflection of society*. Ethnoarchaeologist Susan Kent (1996) sees a connection between mobility and social stratification, as sedentary cultures seem to be more stratified than nomadic. The level of stratification materialises in the buildings. The more stratified and complex a society, the more portioning of the architectural and social space occurs (Kent 1996:171). And the more portioned the architectural space, the more differentiated is the social organisation. This implies that buildings are dynamic channels of communication that change and evolve with society itself (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995:39; Hillier and Hanson 1984:9).

The built environment also influences society as a structuring or forming factor (Blanton 1995:113). If accepted as valid, the meaning(s) residing in buildings constrain and structure the choices of the inhabitants. Agents and architecture interact in a reciprocal relationship where both influence the other. Last but not least, buildings frequently have cosmological connotations. Many sedentary cultures perceive the settlement as the centre of the world. Even further, the house may be perceived as a micro-cosmological model of the world order (Eliade 2002 [1957]:28-31; Nordberg 2003:171-5).

PIERRE BOURDIEU AND SYMBOLIC POWER

Social theorist Pierre Bourdieu's works have been used as the theoretical foundation for many archaeological studies over the last few decades. His work, together with Anthony Giddens' (1984), is distinguished by the effort to overcome the dichotomy between individual and structure, one of the major antinomies in social sciences and humanities. Are human beings mechanically acting as societal structures lead them to behave? Or is each individual a freely operating agent in the world? Bourdieu creates a synthesis where the reciprocal relationship between individual and structure constitutes a starting point for people's actions or *practices*. Bourdieu is perhaps most known for the concept *habitus*. Habitus constitutes the norms, mind sets, values, habits and world view internalised by an individual through her socialisation. The social structures an agent is raised within, materialises in her habitus (Bourdieu 1977:72,81). However, habitus is neither static nor completely formative of an agent's actions. Bourdieu argues that any agent will also need to use creativity and choose between various strategies to be able to act by the values and predispositions she has internalised (Bourdieu 1977:73). This implies subjective choice and action; thus constituting an epistemological break with the

individual vs. structure debate. Bourdieu's theory of practice mediates between a subjectivist and objectivist perception of human behaviour (Bourdieu 1977:73; Grenfell 2008:45-47; Maton 2008:53-54).

Of special interest in this thesis is *symbolic power*. Bourdieu defines symbolic power as "... an invisible power [in society], which can only be executed by those who do not know they are under it – or do not even know they are exercising it" (Bourdieu 1996:38, my translation). *Symbolic systems* such as language, art, science and religion are seen as both structured and structuring elements in the world; e.g. they are both cause and effect of different social processes. Symbolic systems can be used as an instrument of power by specialists who want sole control over the legitimate, cultural production (Bourdieu 1996:40-41). Agents may therefore consciously or unconsciously use symbolic systems to exercise symbolic power and symbolic violence. Each individual has a position in an abstract social space or field, defined by the amounts and types of capital they possess (Glørstad 2000:189). The social space is a decisive factor for social agents, who are both limited and enabled by it. Physical space (such as hall buildings) will act as an immediate symbolisation of the social space (social organisation). The building will therefore reflect the organisation of society, but often in a euphemised form. Bourdieu argues that in illiterate societies *the inhabited space* and particularly *the house* will be the principal objectification of symbolic capital (cf. Blanton 1995:108-109; Bourdieu 1977:89-90; 1996:150). In the present context, Bourdieu's work adds the *aspect of power* to the aforementioned theories of built environments. The main aim of this thesis is, as stated above, to demonstrate how hall buildings may have been used in power negotiations in the Iron Age.

MATERIAL CULTURE AND SOCIAL BIOGRAPHIES

Another aspect of the antinomy of object-subject is the Western world's perception of nature vs. culture. This mind-set, present since the time of Descartes, has created a strong division between viewing persons as conscious and perceiving beings, and the world as a remote and unchanging platform. Artefacts are perceived as dead and silent, as opposed to people who are animated and have individual life-stories (Appadurai 1986; Kopytoff 1986:64). As a side-branch of contextual archaeology, several scholars have implemented perspectives from the social sciences where one thinks of artefacts as having a *biography* or life-story. The aim is to transcend the Cartesian divide between people as pure subjects and artefacts as pure objects.

Especially the works of Arjun Appadurai and Igor Kopytoff have inspired archaeologists to attempt to trace artefacts' social life as a travel from beginning to end through space and time (Appadurai 1986; Gosden and Marshall 1999; Kopytoff 1986). In the present thesis, I will apply the theory of social biographies as a heuristic device to grasp the social life of hall buildings. This approach is presented in ch.3.

SOME CONCEPT DEFINITIONS

A vital keyword throughout the thesis is *space*. There is no simple way of defining this concept. As discussed above, space is one of the factors which enable, influence, delimit and constrain human practice. It is meaningful, produced and inherently social. Space is culture-dependant, flexible, ideological and reciprocal – and the ordering of space reflects the ordering of relations between people (Hillier and Hanson 1984; Lefebvre 1991; Tilley 1994; Zieleniec 2007). This is why a spatial approach is fruitful when examining social differentiation.

Furthermore, in the analyses and discussion parts of this thesis (part II and III) the concepts *power strategy* and *coding* or *decoding* space, are used. These concepts may be incorrectly understood as implying conscious intent. However, as stated above, symbolic power is not inherently intentional, but may be unconsciously executed because the symbolic systems are internalised as part of a 'natural' world order (Bourdieu 1996). This means that power strategies such as giving the aristocratic residence a high placing or monumental architecture (ch.6,7,8) is not necessarily a conscious power strategy by the individual agents (cf. Olsen 1997:216-217), but is still interpreted as part of an effort to euphemise an asymmetrical social system. As for *coding space*, this is interpreted as actions which *give meaning to the space*, such as constructing borders, dividing rooms or depositing artefacts to signify differences in the use or quality of the space. *Decoding space* may be inversely understood as actions intended to change or conclude the use, meaning or quality of the space.

In the analyses and discussions of the following chapters, certain practices are described as *rituals* or *ritualistic*. Catherine Bell's practice-oriented approach of rituals as *ritualisation* is supported by the present author. Ritualisation is a process where ritualised acts are used to naturalise the production of an environment so that the environment *itself* seems to be the source of the schemes and its values, and not the ritualisation (Bell 1992:140). Her approach

is strongly related to Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic power, only her emphasis is on the *ritual practice* as a tool for dominion.

TOWARD A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter the stipulations and framework for the thesis have been presented. It has been argued that material culture and humans are mutually dependent and that their lives are *intertwined* (Fredriksen 2006). The built environment has been perceived as an important source to understand past societies because of the inherent reciprocity between people and buildings; the immanent reflection of social organising manifested in buildings; as well as the buildings’ ability to transform un-coded space into meaningful space. A short introduction to Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of practise has been reviewed, as well as his work on symbolic power. Ideas of material culture having a life-story or biography have been introduced, and important concepts in the thesis were defined. In the next chapter the methodological approach will be presented.

3. Methodological approach

Anthropologist Kirsten Hastrup states that while theory is a suggestion of coherence between the different parts of reality we study, method is the way we choose to cover the ground between empirical data and theory (Hastrup 1999:154). Archaeological method exists between a general mindset of material culture as an objectified social world, and the selection of material to be analysed. In the present study there are two types of empirical data chosen to enlighten the theoretical framework: material culture in the form of hall buildings, and texts. The socio-spatial analysis is a way of examining the concrete and *real* construction of the halls, while the textual analysis is thought to be a way to further understand the *ideal* aspects of the halls of the Viking Age. As a heuristic device the perception of hall buildings having a life-history or *biography* will be applied. This is a method of reaching the halls as social entities in the Iron Age, and thus aim to understand the connection between power structures, practice and hall buildings.

Socio-spatial analysis

There is no generally acknowledged method to analyse spatial organisation and perception. Rather, there is a required dialectic between theory and empirical data (Tilley 1994:11). In the present thesis a socio-spatial analysis is executed on the basis of room division, post positions, finds distribution, and placement of entrances and other constructional elements of the halls. An analysis of spatial distribution of constructional elements may reveal perception of space and social organising (Blanton 1995:114; Norr 1996:158). The aim of the analyses is to shed light on how the social space was ordered inside and around the hall buildings, and thereby illuminate how the hall space was controlled, organised and perceived. Iron Age peoples constructed hall buildings over several centuries. An interesting aspect of the analysis is to observe any temporal and/or geographical differences, reflecting a dynamic socio-spatial organisation changing over the centuries and between geographical areas (ch.6,7,8).

Spatial factors – the real hall	**Symbolic significance – the ideal hall**
Placement in the landscape	Monumentality, symbolism, communicating power. Connection with settlements, communication routes, graves.
Place name	Place connotations.
Placement of entrances	Access, control, the building perceived from the outside.

Location of the high seat	Social boundaries, communicating power through position, metaphor for social strata, sacral space, cosmology.
Cooking areas	Labour division, access, division of space.
Depositions and roof supporting posts	Coding/decoding space.
Distribution of finds	Production, activity areas, division of space, sacral spaces, wealth, social stratum, trade.

Table 1: Focal points in the socio-spatial analyses of ch. 6 and 7.

Challenges with socio-spatial analysis

First, the scope of the thesis does not allow an in-depth analysis of each site, and priorities have been determined. The material has been extracted from its local context and inserted into a new whole – the biographical analysis of ch.6. A second challenge is that the present author has no choice but to trust that the publications are accurate. For example, an interpreted hall room may procure a more thorough investigation than other rooms, because more artefacts are expected there. If such aspects are not stated in the publications, discrepancies will make their way into the present work. A third issue is representativity, which is challenging in any comparative work. Is the selection representative for all known hall buildings in Scandinavia? The sites chosen display both variation and similarity with regard to geographical and topographical location, construction and find distribution; and they do provide a broad picture of what a upper stratum residence could look like during the 800 years in question.

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS AND SOURCE CRITICISM

In order to further reach the ideal aspects of the hall buildings, textual sources will be included. The relevant texts are from *Eddic poetry*; the Anglo-Saxon cultural sphere represented by *Beowulf*; and Icelandic scholar and clergyman Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*. The Eddic poetry is a collection of poetry found in Icelandic documents, mainly *Codex Regius*, from the 13th and 14th century. The Eddic poetry is regarded as written versions of an earlier oral tradition stemming mainly from Norway (Holm-Olsen 1985:7; Kristjánsson 1997:26-30; Steinsland 2005:47-8). *Snorri's Edda*, which in part is based on the Eddic poetry, is a textbook on bardship traditionally attributed to Snorri Sturluson. The text provides extensive information on pre-Christian mythology (Kristjánsson 1997:175-8). *Beowulf* is an Anglo-Saxon epic poem which uses motifs and metaphors from pre-Christian Scandinavia; probably composed sometime between 700 and 1000 CE (Lönnroth 1997:31), a recent work specifying the date to 680-800 CE (Mitchell et al. 1998:12). An aim of the textual analysis is to

understand the relationship between the hall and the mythology, i.e. how agents in an aristocratic position used mythological images in power negotiations. A qualitative textual analysis has been conducted by an in depth-reading, where special notice is paid to *repeated key words*, *contrasts*, *positive* or *negative associations* and *metaphors* (Kjeldstadli 1999:186-8). The results from this reading are applied throughout the analyses and discussion.

Challenges with textual analysis

There are clearly challenges when using written sources from a different time and different cultural context than the past we wish to examine. All of the textual sources analysed in the present work date from after the end of the Iron Age. They are written in societies that have changed in both religion and state form since the Late Iron Age; transitions which represent major breaks and discontinuity. The texts are also written outside of Scandinavia. These aspects imply that we cannot read the texts as factual, neutral statements but have to take the text's cultural and social *environs*, the author's horizon and agenda and philological problems, into consideration (Kjeldstadli 1999:175-181). Does this mean we cannot use the texts as sources to ON mythology at all? More and more scholars are arguing that we cannot disregard written sources completely because of their dating. Philologist Preben M. Sørensen argued in favour of the use of Eddic poetry as a source to Viking Age religion and mentality, as it is not the poem in its 13th century form that constitutes his source, but the content. For example, *Skírnismál* may well be a poem from the Middle Ages, but this does not automatically mean the myth of Freyr and Gerðr is too (Sørensen 1995:218-222). Lars Lönnroth makes a similar point based on poetic formulations and motifs, which he argues dates the content back to the Viking Age (Lönnroth 1997:32,37), (cf. Hedeager 1999b:11).

HEURISTIC DEVICE: THE HALLS' LIFE-STORIES

While the main aim is to analyse the ordered space in and around the halls, a way of understanding the actions and practices of the agents in the hall milieu is to focus on the different phases of the hall buildings' lifespan. In ch.2 the perspective of material culture and human life being *intertwined* was presented. It is the agents' actions, thoughts and practices that give meaning to the hall buildings, while the buildings reciprocally influence the agents. By examining the *interaction* between the hall and the agents through the different phases of the buildings' social lifespan, we may attempt to grasp the ways of exercising symbolic power

used in the upper strata of society. The comparative socio-spatial analysis presented in ch.6 will therefore be structured by these phases of their lifespan:

- Before construction (‘conception’)
- Construction (‘birth’)
- Use and rebuilding (‘life’)
- Deconstruction (‘death’)
- After deconstruction (’burial’)

In this chapter the archaeological methods of socio-spatial analysis, the textual sources and the heuristic device of the halls’ *biography* have been presented. These methods and approaches will be applied in part II of the present thesis.

4. STATE OF ART

Early Iron Age			*Late Iron Age*	
Early Roman Iron Age	**Late Roman Iron Age**	**Migration Period**	**Merovingian Period**[2]	**Viking Age**
0-200 CE	200-400 CE	400-560 CE	560-750 CE	750-1050 CE

Table 2 Chronological periods from 0 CE, based on Solberg's comparative tables (2003) and for the Viking Age: Myhre (1993a:57).

To place the present work in a research-historical context this chapter gives an overview of several concepts vital to the discussion of hall buildings. The hall has been a focal point of research for the last 15-20 years, and it has been examined in several works and from different perspectives. A few central concepts are presented below:

THE RESIDENCE OF POWER

Early scholars traced power relations and the geography of power in Iron Age society mainly through graves and grave monuments (Callmer 1997:12; Solberg 2003:30). However, the methodological approach so commonly used today – settlement excavations beneath cultivated land – was not yet developed in the early days of modern archaeology (Løken et al. 1996). The *new archaeology* of the 1970's generated new research regarding centres and hierarchies (i.e. Service 1971), but these were affected by the aspiration of universal regularities for human behaviour (Trigger 1989:292). During the 1980's, however, the (post-processual) ball started rolling, with Gudme-Lundeborg as a central project. Some scholars treat this site as the uttermost example of early halls (Løken 2001), while others argue that its early dating separates it from all other Scandinavian halls (Callmer 1997:13). No matter the perspective on Gudme, it was one of the first excavations of what we today refer to as hall buildings, and the site is central when discussing the first generation of Iron Age central places. As mentioned in the introduction, Frands Herschend is the scholar who has had the most influence on research on hall buildings in modern day archaeology. Herschend places the hall buildings in the absolute centre of the aristocratic world: ”Therefore everything, like moral, faith and power struggles shall be expressed here: political murders as well as goodness; humanity as well as divinity; life as well as death” (Herschend 1997:7, my translation). Herschend (1997:51-59) argues that halls are structurally divided between private

[2] Sweden: Vendel Period, Denmark: Late Germanic Iron Age.

and collective spheres. He also sees a metaphorical connection between hall buildings and ships which is briefly discussed in ch.8.

While the notion of *power* lies implicit and inherent in many, if not most, works regarding the Iron Age hall, the concept of the hall as an *instrument for power* has, as far as I know, not explicitly been used in earlier research. As stated in the introduction this is a recurring topic of the present thesis.

CENTRAL PLACES

Simultaneously as hall buildings and the development of aristocracy became 'in vogue' in the archaeological discourse, more focus fell on the concept of *central place*. Archaeological scholars started asking questions on what, how and why so-called central places were central. The concept central place is closely tied to questions of settlement history, the formation of kingdoms and statehood, and development of proto-cities (Brink 1996; Larsson and Hårdh 1998; Näsman 1998; Skre 2001,2007). All the while, the term central place is used for sites with diverse social functions: judicial, production, trade or bartering, and cultic sites, among others (Söderberg 2005:11).

Central places have also been studied from a cultic or religious perspective. Charlotte Fabech has suggested that a shift in the public religious cult took place in southern Scandinavia around the 6th century CE (Fabech 1994). In the previous periods wetlands, lakes and other natural phenomena in the landscape seem to have been the focus of the public cultic activity (Kaliff 2006:130). Around 500 CE, however, what Fabech calls "new religious manifestations" start appearing – the figural gold foils (see below). These miniscule human representations are almost exclusively found on dry land in connection with significant settlements (Fabech 1994:170). The finds were part of a strategic, cognitive landscape, argues Fabech. By combining archaeological finds, place names and historical sources she argues that around 500 CE the official cult shift from a public practice around wetlands in open air, to a cult centred on the new aristocratic class' life inside the halls, which was much less accessible to a general public (Fabech 1994: 169-174). Fabech's hypothesis has received criticism (Lund 2004; Sundqvist 1996; Zachrisson 1998). However, the main point of the halls being both political and sacral buildings controlled by the élite from c. 500 CE remains largely unchallenged (Hedeager 1999a:232,241; Solberg 2003:172-175; Sundqvist 1996:82).

The present author's point of view is that parts of Fabech's model is applicable, but that there were several competing and even contradicting religious beliefs that continued to live side by side in Iron Age society after 500 CE (Steinsland 2005:31-34). The line Fabech draws in *time* between wetland sacrifice on one hand and cultic activity in the halls on the other, may rather be replaced by a line in *space* (both physical and social) where different (or overlapping) social groups perform different rituals in different places. It is also important to note that Fabech's model is developed for southern Scandinavia, and is not necessarily applicable to other areas.

Dagfinn Skre (2001) has worked with settlement history and social development in Norway through a case study from Romerike. He argues that settlement expansions occurred in two main waves; the first in the Late Roman Period and the second in the Viking Age. Both expansions are thought to have occurred when the aristocracy, who wanted control over land, set both free and enthralled men to cultivate new areas. Skre briefly touches upon the role of the hall building in the aristocratic life. He presents a model where the hall and the battlefield are the most important political areas in the Migration period, but in the Viking Age the *thing* has inherited the role as a central political arena – cf. ch.7 (Skre 2001:12). He argues that a growing class of free men would have been increasingly important in society through raids and power negotiations. In summary, we may say that central place is an eclectic concept but is tied to the political development and social changes during the Iron Age.

Hov

A central work in the research of the halls is archaeologist and historian Olaf Olsen's dissertation *Hørg, hov og kirke* (Olsen 1966). In early research, the continuity from the "pagan temples" (ON *hof,* modern Scandinavian *hov*) and the Christian church was strongly emphasised. The expression *hov* was known from written sources, and was understood as a separate, sacral building within a fully developed religio-administrative system (McNicol 1997:29). Olsen applied a critical perspective to the earlier research on the pagan temples and thus broke with the postulate of a direct connection between the *hov* and the first churches. He argued that in Viking Age society there was no clear distinction between the sacral and the profane. There would be no need for separate buildings with special functions, like in Christianity. His suggestion was that the word *hov* referred to an aspect of the long house or hall buildings. His definition of a *hov* was "...a farm, where regular cultic assemblages are

being held for a larger group than just the inhabitants on the farm" (Olsen 1966:94, my translation). Olsen only reluctantly accepted that separate cult buildings could exist. Within the limited frame of this thesis I can only refer to the extensive debate on this subject (McNicol 1997). However, the recent years' discoveries of special sacral buildings in Uppåkra, Borg, Tissø and Järrestad shuffled the board yet again on this topic (below).

COMITATUS, GIFTS AND ALLIANCES

A key concept and premise for our understanding of the power relations of Iron Age aristocracy and thereby the halls, is the reciprocal system of chieftain and retainers; *comitatus*. This system is mentioned as early as in Tacitus' *Germania* (14,15). Bjørn Myhre (1993b) and Lotte Hedeager (1992) are among those who have developed the concept in Scandinavian archaeology. Social organisation is thought to alter during the Late Roman Period or Early Migration Period. An increased focus on war and strife, increased social differentiation and the establishment of petty kingdoms or chiefdoms seems to be present in Denmark, Sweden and at least southern Norway in the Migration Period (Hedeager 1992; Myhre 1987,1993b; Ramqvist 1991). The power of the chieftain or king is thought to be based on his ability to gain military support from a warrior aristocracy, as well as his role as a religious or cultic leader (Jakobsson 2003:109-115; Steinsland 2000). This subsequently means that there would have been constant power negotiation and a constant need to legitimise the current power relations. Redistribution of wealth and control over prestigious goods to be distributed and used in alliances is also central in this system (Myhre 1993b:46). Closely related to this idea is Marcel Mauss' work *The Gift* (1954) in which he explores the reciprocity of gift exchange. According to this work, a leader's prestige is closely related to the gifts he distributes and the debt he is owed. *Blót* and *veizla* – two types of feasts presumed to take place in the hall – are examples of ritual gifts disguised as communion meals (Dietler 2001:73-75). Other forms of ritualised gift giving were also central in this honour-based society. Alliances were deepened and consolidated by exchange of prestigious goods, or could be strengthened by kinship through marriage (Hedeager 1992:91-93; Myhre 1993b:46). Subsequently power structures were unstable and relied heavily on personal ties and alliances (Skre 2001:2-3; Steuer 1989:100). It has been suggested that during 6th century, a development from inherited power to personal ability providing high social status, took place (Evans 1997:45-47; Kristoffersen 2000:41). The personal abilities of the warrior became more – or as – important as his kin. When lineage became less important, there was more room for social mobility (Kristoffersen

2000:40). One method of increasing symbolic capital was proving courage and procuring luxury items through warfare and pillage.

COSMOLOGY AND LANDSCAPE

It has been suggested that the world order and cognitive landscape of Iron Age Scandinavia was divided into binary opposites (Gurevič 1985:46-47; Steinsland:98-99,107-108). This model, clearly influenced by structuralism, is based on several written sources and indicates that the Iron Age peoples pictured the world with *Ásgarðr*, the home of the gods, in the centre. Outside it was *Miðgarðr*, the home of humans, while the outer rim was represented by *Útgarðr*, the home of the giants. In the physical world the long house came to represent Miðgarðr, with the fields around the long house (*innangarðs*) as a safe zone. Outside of the regulated pastures and fields, however, was the *útangarðs*, which was outside human control.

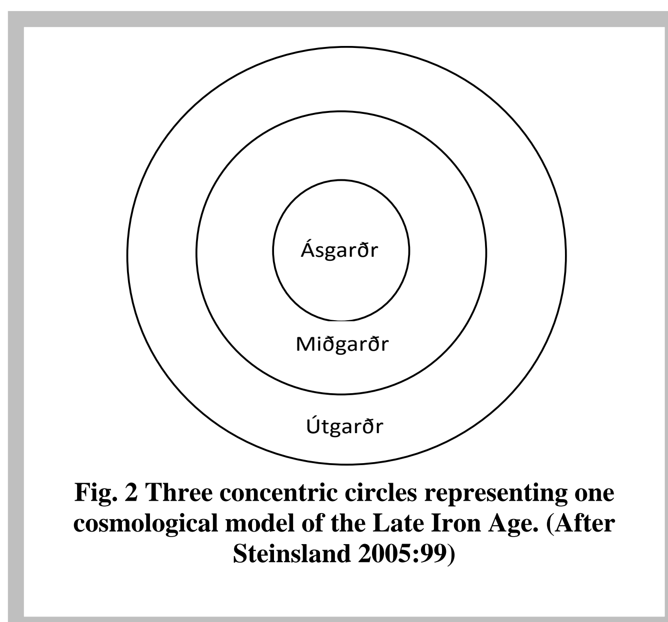


Fig. 2 Three concentric circles representing one cosmological model of the Late Iron Age. (After Steinsland 2005:99)

The opposites *innangarðs – útangarðs* had many binary concepts attached: order-chaos, tamed-wild, safe-dangerous. The long house represents the centre of the tamed, ordered world. The model has been criticised for being too naïve in the interpretation of written sources, and for being too static and too "ordered" for a society that had many divergent ideas of the world order (for a summary of the discussion, see Lund 2009:59-63). A cosmological model cannot capture the contradicting and diverging variants of a culture's cosmology. But it seems reasonable that a cognitive landscape, which had been structured around natural phenomena such as hilltops or groves, was altered parallel with increasing number of settlements and increasing stratification. Cognitive landscapes are socially constructed, and may therefore act as pawns in negotiations of power (Bender 1993; Lund 2009:8, 50-59; Tilley 1994:204; Zieleniec 2007:158-160). Control over the perception of the landscape is closely related to dominant ideology, as explained in the introduction. The model of concentric circles seems to capture one of what were probably many contested cognitive landscapes in the Late Iron Age.

OLD NORSE RELIGION, RITUALS AND *BLÓT*

The concept of religion is a modern, Western idea and cannot be uncritically applied to prehistoric societies. There was no word for religion in the Late Iron Age, as one spoke of *siðr*, which means custom or tradition. Religious studies use a main division between *ethnic religions* on one hand, and *universal religions* or *salvation religions* on the other. By archaeologists these have been referred to as *cosmogonist* vs. *transcendental* religions, the cosmogonist religions characterised by the mutual dependence between the gods and the people (Kristoffersen and Østigård 2006:128; Trigger 2003:473). The ethnic/cosmogonist religions, such as the ON, are anchored in cult, not faith; are an integrated part of culture and tradition; the individual is born into a cultic community; the religion is tied to territory; it is non-dogmatic; polytheistic; and is anchored in *this* world, and in ritual practise (Steinsland 2005:31-34).

The ON noun *blót* n. stems from the verb *blóta,* "to sacrifice". The etymological meaning is uncertain. It may have been "to stench, squirt", understood as the blood of the sacrifice being cast or squirted over an icon or altar (Steinsland 2005:276), or there may be a connection with proto-Germanic **blhe*, "to swell" (Näsström 2001:23). The *blót* was one of the feasts celebrated in the hall buildings, and according to written sources there were a springtime *blót*, an autumn *blót* and a midwinter *blót*, called *jól.* Olsen envisioned the cultic activities in the ON society divided into two types of *blót*, a private *blót* at each farm, and a public one in the halls for larger groups in society (McNicol 1997:163). This division between public and private cult is still accepted today, albeit it is sometimes called central and local cult (Steinsland 2005:265). Both *blót* and *veizla*, the communion meal of the *comitatus*, are interpreted as integrating both the ritual sacrifice of animals, and the devouring of meat and alcoholic beverages. Horse meat seems to be the preferred ritual food in the pre-Christian religion, as it is frequently mentioned in written sources. The horse seems to inhabit a special and sacral role in society throughout the Iron Age (Oma 2004), (cf. *Germania* 10). Horse bones are found archaeologically in graves and wetland areas in Early Iron Age; but are connected to house foundations at central places the Late Iron Age (Lund 2009:242). It has been suggested that devouring horse meat may have been a transcendental practice as the horse connected the worlds of the dead and the living in ON mythology (Mansrud 2004:96-98; Oma 2004:74-75).

As far as drinking rituals are concerned, these are well known through both written and archaeological sources. Beer and mead was not an everyday-drink in the Iron Age, but closely connected with rituals and feasts (Rydving 1996: 257). Several runic inscriptions with the proto-Germanic *alu*, 'beer', occur on gold bracteates, grave stones and other artefacts in the period 200-700 CE (Spurkland 2001:56-57). From written sources we know toasts such as ON *full*, a toast to Óðinn, Njǫrd and Freyr, ON *minni*, in memory of the forefathers, and ON *bragafull*, a ritual heroic toast where one promised to do brave deeds in the future (Steinsland 2005:278). Beer or mead has also been interpreted as being connected with the dead (Rydving 1996:158), and has been sacrificed to grave mounds up to modern times (Steinsland 2005:344). Alcohol and intoxication is closely associated with the practices in the hall.

FIGURAL GOLD FOILS

Figural gold foils are an exclusively Scandinavian find category connected with central places. The miniscule figures depict a single person or a man and a woman facing each other. Almost 3000 figural gold foils have been found throughout Scandinavia (Watt 1999), and they belong almost exclusively at house foundations (Munch 2003a:256). Unlike most other find categories which are found both at settlements and in graves, gold foils seem to be taboo in grave contexts. Their function has been widely discussed, and the hypotheses range from temple money to items connected with fertility cult (Lamm 2004; Watt 1999:140). Since Gro Steinsland published her doctoral thesis in 1991, a general consensus has been that the gold foils are connected with the ideology of the ruler and his divine forefathers. Steinsland connects the figures with the Eddic poem *Skírnismál*, where there is a *hieros gamos* – a 'holy wedding'– between the giantess Gerðr and the Norse god Freyr. The result between the unlikely union of gods and giants is the son Fjolner, who is the mythical forefather of the Yngling royal line. Steinsland argues that the figural gold foils depict the meeting of Freyr and Gerðr, and are placed in connection with the high seat in the halls to legitimise the ruler's sacral lineage. The three objects used by Freyr (in Skírnir's depiction) to persuade Gerðr is an apple, a ring and a wooden staff, interpreted by Steinsland to symbolise the globe, ring and sceptre of the royal enthronisation. The son Fjolner, the first ruler, is the product of two cosmological counterparts; it is this inheritance that sets him apart from other men. Similarly, the Ladejarl family of northern Norway traced their genealogy back to Óðinn and the giantess Skade. This particular motif is by Steinsland interpreted to be a metaphor for the ruler, Óðinn, obtaining or conquering the land, Skade (Steinsland 1991:308).

SEPARATE CULTIC BUILDINGS

Recent archaeological excavations have unearthed new types of sacral buildings. The most renowned is arguably from Uppåkra, in the Scania region of southern Sweden. This building, discovered in 2000, is interpreted as a separate, pagan temple. The building demonstrated long continuity, as it was erected c. 200 CE and taken down during the 9th century, all the while with the exact same layout and construction principles. In the postholes and wall trenches, over 100 figural gold foils were found, along with other, rich finds of drinking vessels and gold (Larsson 2007). Separate cultic buildings have been found in connection with the halls at Tissø (Jørgensen 1998), Järrestad (Söderberg 2003c), and perhaps at Lejre (Christensen 1997:50); Borg in Östergötland (Lindeblad 1996) and Hov in Oppland (Solberg 2003:263). When it comes to the expression *hov*, it is perhaps a bit risky to state a building from c. 200 being identical with a concept known from written sources almost 1000 years later. But the finds and characteristics of the buildings do point to them being separate, cultic buildings within larger settlements.

500 CE – A CENTURY OF STRUCTURAL CHANGE?

The religious shift in the 6th century postulated by Fabech was mentioned earlier. Other changes occurred at this time as well. From c. 500 to 700 CE the Scandinavian language underwent major changes. It transformed from proto-Germanic to ON, a transformation described as no less profound than the shift from ON to modern Scandinavian (Torp and Vikør 2003:33-35). Bourdieu (1996:39-42) argues that language is a symbolic system, e.g. both a cause and product of society. The language transformation from proto-Germanic to ON may well be connected with social changes (Torp and Vikør 2003:35). Simultaneously, archaeological material implies changes in settlement patterns, agriculture and a decreasing number of graves (Hedeager 1992:166-168, 181; Solberg 2003:185-188, 197-198). Other aspects of the archaeological record underwent profound changes as well, for instance the animal ornamentation (Hedeager 1999b:59-62) – the transition to Style II defining the beginning of the Merovingian Period. Personal adornment seems to have become more focused on the *individual* in burials dating to the end of the 5th century, which has been associated with the emergence of the *comitatus* structure (Kristoffersen 2000:43-45). The shift in technology used to manufacture bucket-shaped pots c. 475 CE has similarly been connected with social changes and the emergence of a warrior élite at this time (Fredriksen

2006:133). Simultaneously, it has been suggested that the fertility gods withdrew to the background, while Óðinn, the god of aristocracy, warriors and skaldic poetry gained a more prominent role, at least in the official cult (Hedeager 1999b:61; Jensen 2004:98-99; Steinsland 2005:193). In total the cultic, linguistic, archaeological, and religious changes strongly imply profound structural changes in parts of Scandinavia during the 6th century CE. These profound changes have been attributed to the emergence of a new élite, and subsequent power consolidation and decreased competition (Hedeager 1992:204-206). We shall return to these structural changes in ch.6 and 8.

SUMMARY STATE OF ART

In this chapter several vital concepts for contextualising the hall as a social entity have been presented. Hall research has been a focal point of multi-disciplined Iron Age research during the last 15-20 years. It has been connected with theories of central places, the *hov* known from later, written sources and is intimately connected with the comitatus-system. A cosmological model of the settled world as a universal centre has been discussed, as well as the nature of ON religion as a non-dogmatic, cult-centred religion. The discovery of separate cultic buildings has been mentioned; as well as archaeological and linguistic material pointing to major structural changes taking place during the 6th century CE. We will now continue to an overview of the archaeological sites constituting the basis of the analyses.

5. PRESENTATION OF MATERIAL

This chapter will present the archaeological material. First, I would like to clarify the selection criteria. The present sites are chosen because they are (1) relatively well published, and the publications are the basis of the analyses. (2) Halls outside of Scandinavia have not been included to limit the scope of the inquiry. Furthermore, (3) all three Scandinavian countries are represented, with an unavoidable overweight of South Scandinavian sites – by far the most excavated halls have been discovered in South Scandinavia. I have also chosen halls with differentiated layouts, find categories and assumed social standing (4), to ensure that a broad spectre of hall environments is presented.

Borg in Lofoten, Norway and Tissø, Zealand, Denmark are chosen for an in-depth comparative analysis because they are found in each end of Scandinavia; they are relatively well published, contemporary, and the buildings represent two different hall 'types'. Tissø is interpreted to be the home of absolute aristocracy (Jørgensen 1998), while the Borg hall, though the largest Late Iron Age building in all of Scandinavia, is interpreted as a hybrid between the traditional long house and the aristocratic house type emerging from south Scandinavia (Herschend and Mikkelsen 2003:69-70).

Hall	*Country*	*Dating (c.) CE*	*No. of hall buildings*	*Size (maximum)*	*Publications*
Gudme	Denmark	250-450	6	47×10 (house I)	(Henriksen and Michaelsen 1995; Nielsen et al. 1994; Sørensen 1994)
Högom III	Sweden	400-500	1	50×7.5	(Ramqvist 1992)
Borg in Lofoten	Norway	400/500-1000	2	83×9 (1:Ia)	(Munch et al. 2003)
Järrestad	Sweden	550-1050	3	37×9 (phase 2)	(Söderberg 2003a,2003c,2005,2006)
Tissø	Denmark	600-1000	4	48×12.5 (phase 4)	(Jørgensen 1998,2002)
Gamla Uppsala	Sweden	600-800	1-2	40×10	(Duczko 1993,1996a)
Gl. Lejre	Denmark	650-900	3	48,5×11.5 (house IVab)	(Christensen 1994,2007,2007 [1991]; Herschend 1994; Niles et al. 2007)
Helgö	Sweden	700-800?	1	23×? (uncertain)	(Herschend 1995; Holmqvist 1961; Holmqvist and Granath 1969)
Slöinge	Sweden	700–800	2	30×8.5	(Lundqvist 1996; Lundqvist and Arcini 2003)

Table 3 Overview of hall sites, sorted by time of initial construction.

Fig. 3 Overview map of Scandinavia with sites. Illustration: Google Earth/the author.

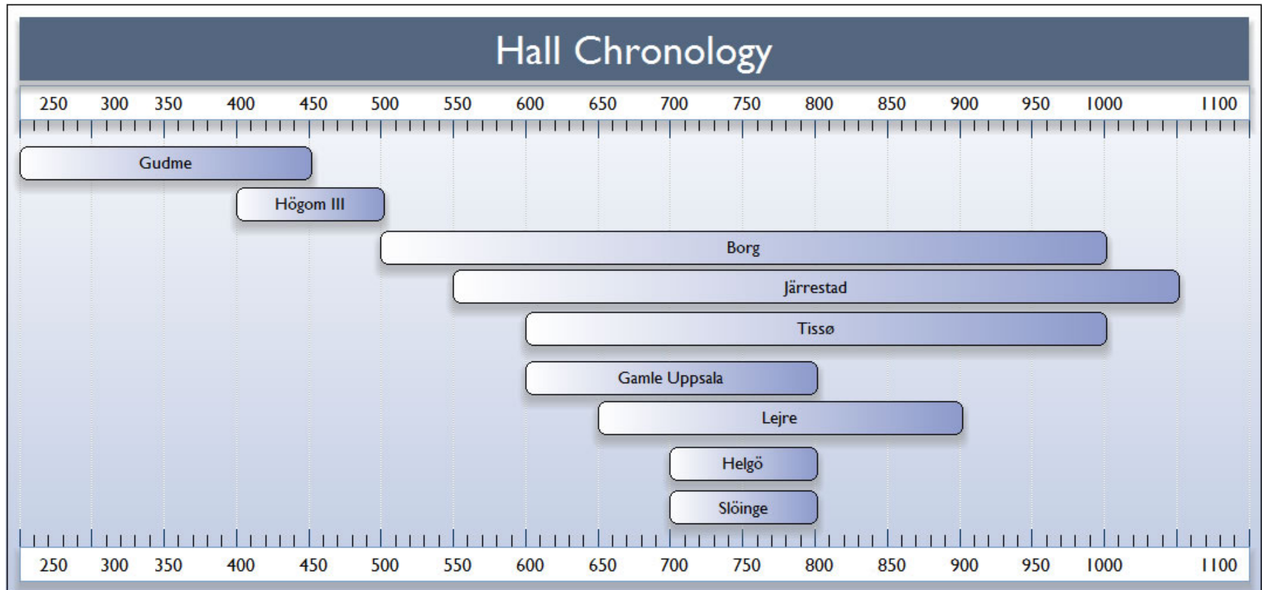


Fig. 5 Overview of hall chronology.

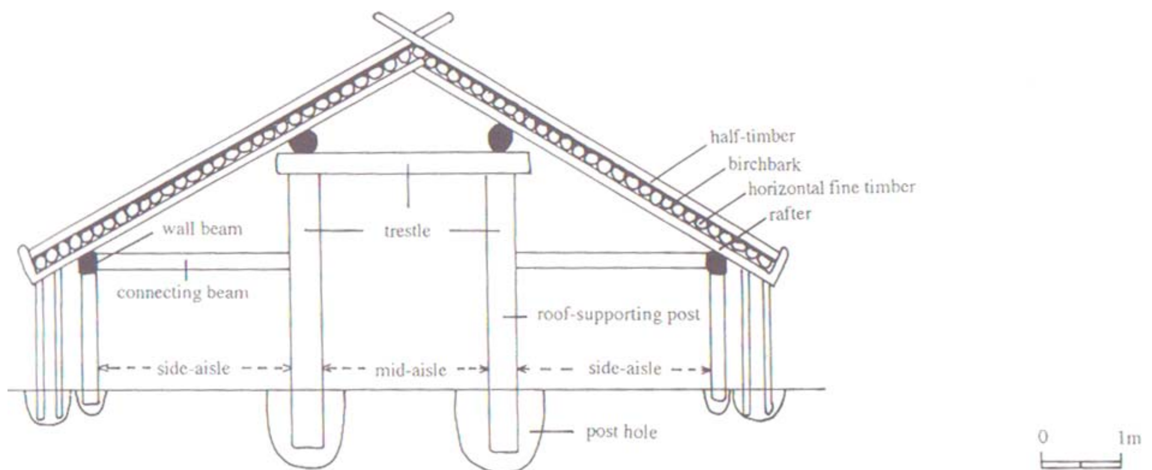


Fig. 4 Constructional principle of the trestle built long house. (After Ramqvist 1992: appendix)

GUDME, FUNEN, DENMARK

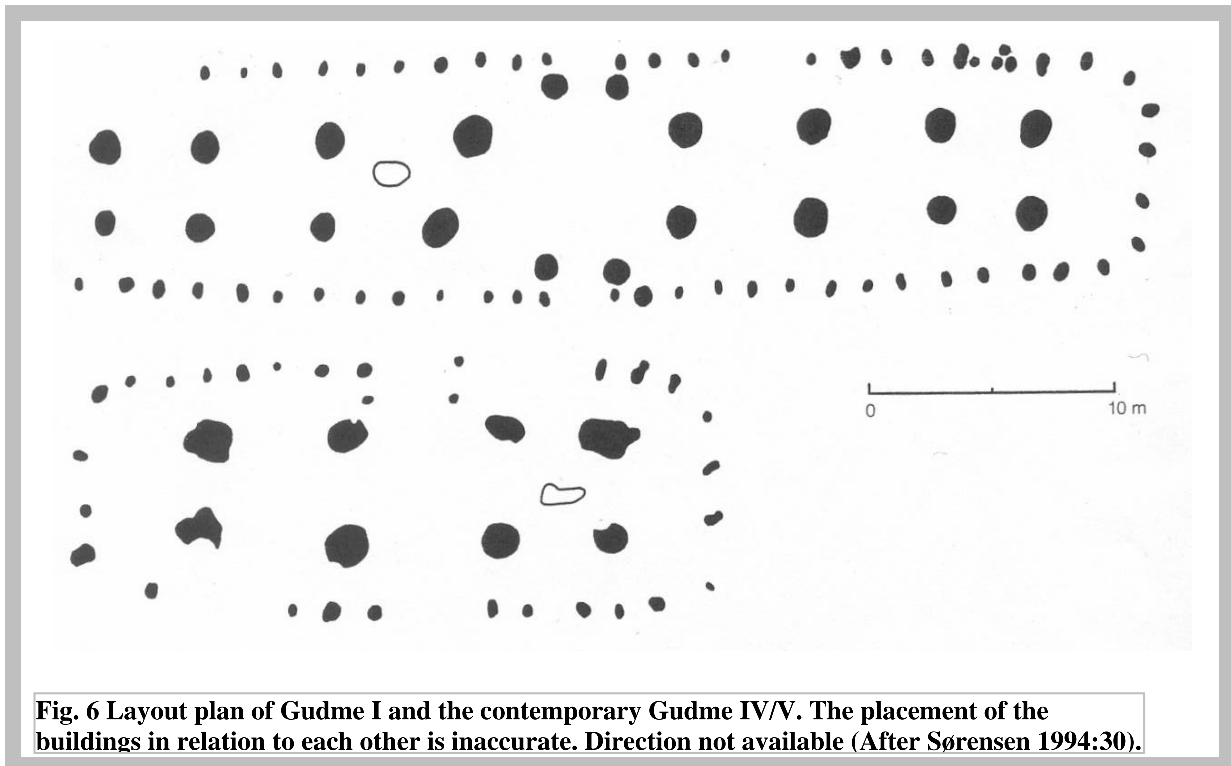


Fig. 6 Layout plan of Gudme I and the contemporary Gudme IV/V. The placement of the buildings in relation to each other is inaccurate. Direction not available (After Sørensen 1994:30).

In 1993 a sequence of six interpreted hall buildings was discovered at the central place Gudme on Funen. The complex is dated from 200-600 CE, the buildings from c.250-450 CE (Sørensen 1994:33). The Gudme/Lundeborg site includes a trading post, a harbour, production sites, and a large settlement from the Late Roman Iron Age/Migration Period (Nielsen et al. 1994). The economic basis for the central place seems to be control over trade with Roman imports, various local handicrafts, and possible control over agriculture and taxation in the area (Nielsen et al. 1994:63). Hedeager has argued that Gudme was a sacral-cosmological centre in the Iron Age society, and even constituted the prime 'residence' of the pre-Christian god(s) in the cognitive landscape (Hedeager 2002:7). The hall buildings were placed c. 600m from the lake, in mostly flat terrain. There are a number of graves in the area, including the very large grave field Møllegårdsparken (Thrane 1998). The main farm was surrounded by up to 50 contemporary smaller farms (Nielsen et al. 1994:63). Several cultic place names are connected with the central place; Gudme 'home of the gods', Gudbjerg 'hill of the god/gods', Albjerg 'hill of the shrine' and Galbjerg, which may be interpreted as 'hill of sacrifice' (Hedeager 2002:5). The place names, connected with finds of bracteates which may display Óðinn, have lead to the suggestion that there was an Óðinn-cult in Gudme (Hauck 1994). The settlements are placed between lake Gudme and the grave field, while the grave fields are situated central in the settlement. The port and market place at Lundeborg is understood as Gudme's power base and link to the external world.

‘The large hall’ I and the contemporary smaller building IV/V are most thoroughly discussed in the publication (Sørensen 1994). House I was a 47×10m building built with eight pairs of roof supporting posts, and with a peculiar wall structure where the wall was built with broad planks lain horizontally between standing wall planks. Contemporarily, there was a smaller building of c. 25×10.5m (house IV/V). This building is placed S of and parallel with Gudme I, has the same enormous roof supporting post holes, and the same unusual wall structure. There is a wide entrance on the northern long wall of house V facing the S entrance of house I (fig.6); thus the monumental entrances are facing each other and there is clearly a strong connection between the two buildings. Both houses are deconstructed c.350 CE, when the posts are removed. Three additional buildings are sequentially built in the area until they are replaced with a ‘normal’ long house farm unit c. 500 CE (Sørensen 1994:29-33). The Gudme complex is entirely unparalleled in Scandinavia with regards to the variety and value of finds from the Roman Iron Age (Thrane 1998:257). C. 875 coins of various types and provenience are found in the Gudme area (Sørensen 1994:34), while 102 figural gold foils were found at Lundeborg, close to the river Tange Å (Thrane 1998:253). Several Roman imports, hack gold and silver and weights were found in a ploughing layer (Sørensen 1994:34). The artefacts from the post holes of house I are dated to 250-400 CE. One of the post holes (18) contained charcoal and bones, and probably represent floor layers accumulated through the lifespan of the hall, c. 110 years (Rasmussen et al. 1995:56-57). Furthermore, several finds have been deposited in the post holes after the posts were removed, among them gold and silver jewellery, Roman silver denarii (1st and 2nd century), fragments of imported drinking vessels, a gilded silver neck ring and locally produced ceramics (Sørensen 1994:31-34).

HÖGOM, MEDELPAD, SWEDEN

It has been suggested that Högom was the seat of the leading political dynasty in central Norrland c.450-550 (Ramqvist 1992:22). Högom is renowned for its monumental grave mounds, four of which are closer to 40m in diameter. Less known, perhaps, is a Migration Period settlement found underneath the mounds, with an interpreted hall, Högom III, dated to the 5th century CE. The economic basis for the settlement is thought to be cultivation, fishing and sea mammal hunting, and a possible connection with an iron production site in Jämtland. The mounds and the building were placed high in the landscape, on a ridge sloping down to the river Selångersån. There were two communication routes nearby: the river connected to an

inland lake and river system, while the main roads lead to both the coast and to the iron production site (Ramqvist 1992:25)

The building at Högom has some special characteristics that need to be addressed. First of all, the house burnt down and two females possibly burned to death within the building. A bone arrow was found stuck in the wattle wall, perhaps indicating that the house was lit on fire as a hostile act (Ramqvist 1992:189). Secondly, after the fire some of the posts were removed, and shortly after a monumental grave mound with an empty cairn, possibly a cenotaph, was constructed over the remains of the house – thus creating a "house of the dead". Based on the topography and the ^{14}C dating of mound 2, mounds 4 and 2 may have already been constructed at this time (Ramqvist 1992:224). Two hearths or cooking pits were constructed after the fire, but before the construction of the mound. Based on bone material the hearths may have been used to prepare a funeral feast of calf (Ramqvist 1992:190). The building lacks pairs of roof supporting posts, making the construction very special (Ramqvist 1992:162). A number of post holes in a transverse row divided the rooms. These posts either represent an extremely well-built partitioning wall, or a form of furniture attached to a normal partitioning wall (bench, high seat). The feature *v1* (see fig.7) is probably the remains of a bench or bed attached to the wall (Ramqvist 1992:168).

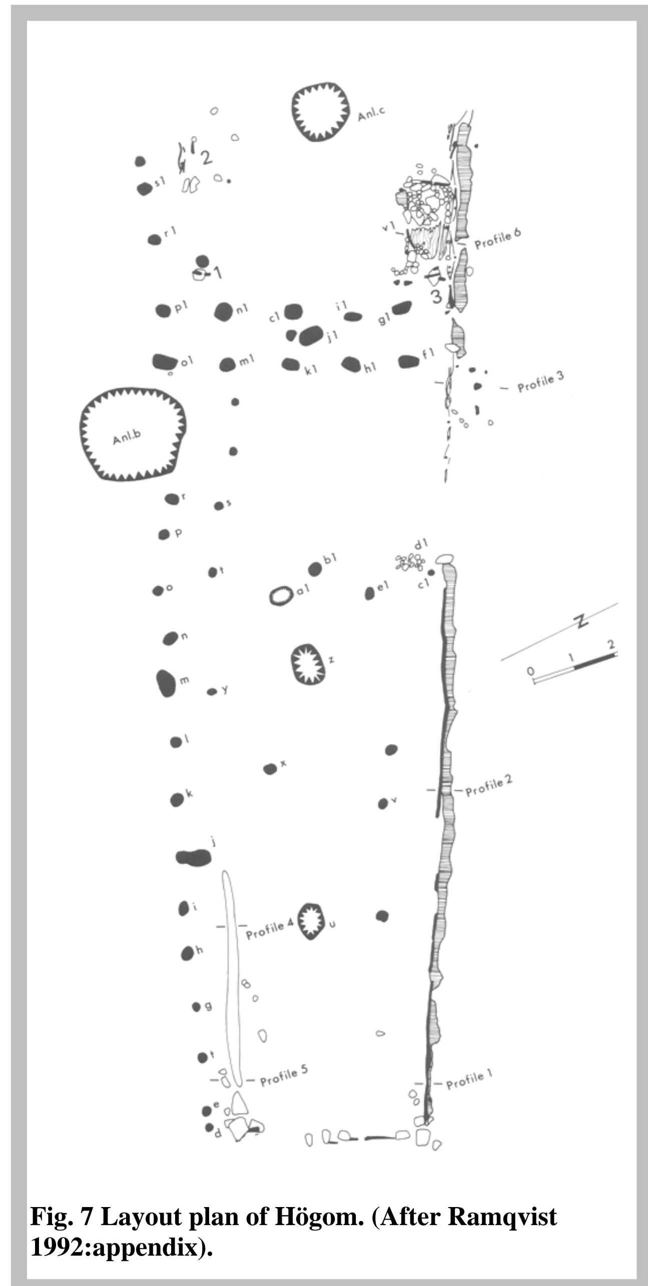


Fig. 7 Layout plan of Högom. (After Ramqvist 1992:appendix).

Several finds associated with textile production were found close to the E gable. The largest concentration of finds is situated in the central room, the interpreted hall, just inside the entrance, where the remains of a crucible, three hairpins, several bone combs, and three needle cases were found. The find concentrations are thought to represent the two females burnt to death within the building – however, no certain human bones were found. A necklace of 235 beads, whereof 83 of gold foil, was found a few meters east. This necklace is unparalleled in Scandinavia in its period (Ramqvist 1992:185). An interesting find is horse bones and teeth, predominantly in connection with the two long walls. Horse meat is, as we saw in ch.4, connected with cultic meals in ON religion. Finds from both the mound filling and the building indicate bronze, and perhaps also gold and silver forging on the site.

BORG, NORDLAND, NORWAY

A short introduction is here given to Borg, while a more extensive presentation with plan of the site is given in ch.7. Borg is situated on Vestvågøy, the largest of the Lofoten islands off the coast of northern Norway. In prehistory this region was in the utmost periphery of the European continent. The area has a distinct topography of tall mountains steeping into the ocean, and deep, green valleys in the interior. The name Lofoten (ON *Lófotr*) accordingly means "the field at the foot [of the mountain]". Considering the region, conditions for agriculture are good on Vestvågøy, especially for grazing in the hills (Johansen and Munch 2003b:11). However, both today and in the past the connection to and resources from the sea has profoundly influenced the way of life. From at least early medieval times, cod fishing and export of dried fish has been a cornerstone of the Lofoten economy. The name Borg or Borge is first mentioned in written sources in 1335, but is thought to be older (Storm Munch 2003:125). Borge means fortified hills or hills suited for fortification (Rygh 1897), and the area is indeed structured around four low hills. On Vestvågøy the highest frequency of archaeological remains have been registered in all of northern Norway; among them c. 1000 graves and 18 Iron Age farms (Munch 1991a:321; 1991b:43). The archaeological feature *court site*, interpreted as quarters for a retainer group or a chieftain's guests, is also represented on the island. There are two on Vestvågøy, one at what is today Borg's neighbouring farm Bøstad dated to 145-335 CE (Johansen and Munch 2003a:40).

The excavation of the Iron Age settlement (Borg I:1) revealed several activity phases (Herschend and Mikkelsen 2003:41-42,47; Johansen and Munch 2003b:12-13). The earliest

traceable features were ard-furrows, ditches and cooking pits. At least two graves have been present underneath the NE end of Borg I:1, one of them possibly an infant's grave. The mounds have been levelled either before or in connection with the construction work of the older building (Herschend and Mikkelsen 2003:47; Holand and Hood 2003:103-104). This building, Borg I:1b, is dated to 400/500-600 CE and had, as we shall see further on, some structural traits in common with south Scandinavian halls. The latter building, I:1a, is the largest known building from the Late Iron Age, with a lifespan from c. 600 to 1000 CE.

JÄRRESTAD, SCANIA, SWEDEN

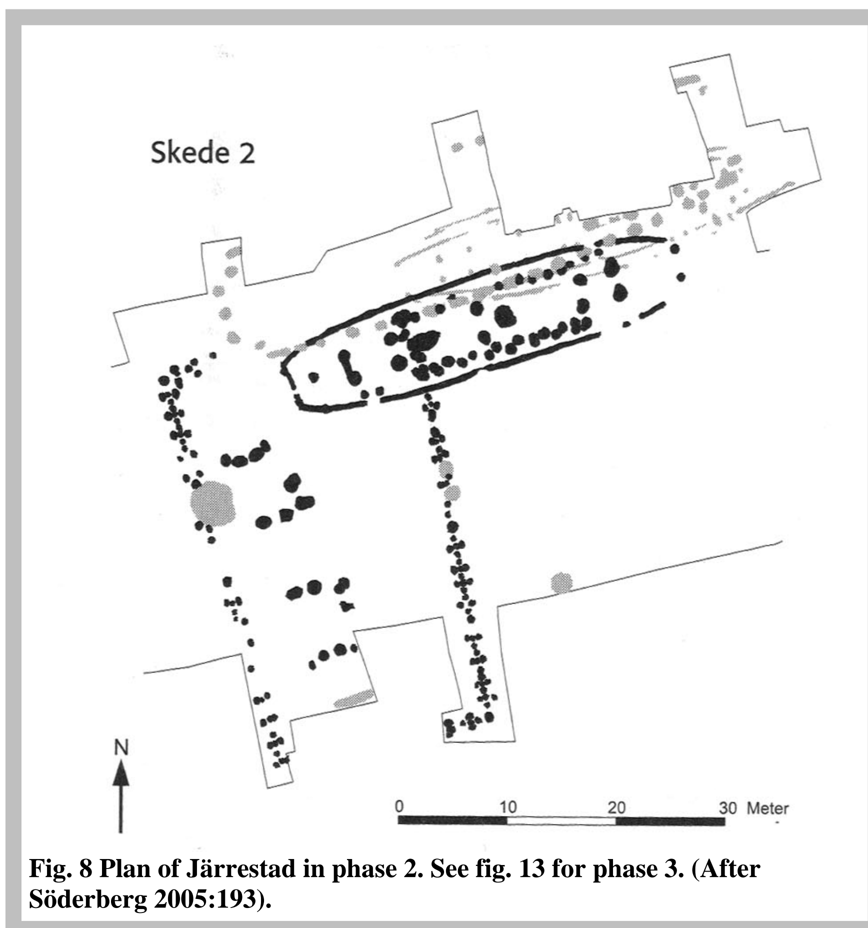


Fig. 8 Plan of Järrestad in phase 2. See fig. 13 for phase 3. (After Söderberg 2005:193).

In 1999-2000 excavations were conducted at Järrestad in southern Sweden, 'the jarl/earl's settlement' (Söderberg 2005:95). A sequence of three buildings, dating 550-1050 CE, was situated on the edge of a plateau close to the river Tommarpsån. Phases 1[3] and 3 are only partially excavated, while phase 2, dating from 700s - 950/1000, is most thoroughly excavated. An interesting feature is a close to rectangular enclosure, c. 37×22 m (fig.8). The c. 200 m2 enclosure held at least one building, poorly preserved, interpreted as a *hov* (Söderberg 2003a:293). This spatial structure closely resembles Tissø phase 1-2 (see ch.6,7). The economic basis was probably specialised production and trade and/or distribution (Söderberg 2005:68,285). Little is known of the communication routes in the area. No contemporary graves are known, but pit houses indicate a settlement N of the excavated area,

[3] Söderberg's hall phase numbers in his article from 2003 and his dissertation from 2005 do not match. I have chosen to use the phase numbers from the latter here.

while there were two phases of settlements to the W. A massive layer of fire-cracked stones may be connected with feasting in the hall. The settlement in total seems to be socially differentiated.

Building 8 (phase 2 hall) was constructed with five pairs of roof supporting posts. A concentration of animal bones, an oven and household ceramics indicate a storage room/cooking area in the E part of the building. A hearth was situated in the W. There are a number of post holes in the centre of the building, and these may represent benches fixed to the walls. The W chamber is interpreted as a private sphere in accordance with Herschend's structural divide between public and private spheres in the hall (ch.4). There are two entrances, one at the W gable leading into the interpreted kitchen area, and one leading to an entrance room W of the hall room. 171 find categories are represented in house 8, including gold foil, glass, glass beads, a costume pin, and ceramics (Söderberg 2003b:129-130; 2003c:385-389). The enclosure connected with the building was poorly preserved, but had an approximate square shape measuring 37×23m. It was connected to building 8 in the N, thus creating an enclosed – controlled – space. Building 1, the interpreted *hov*, was situated in the W part of the enclosure, creating an angle with building 8 (fig.8). The finds from building 1 included glass fragments, a glass bead, and iron production waste (Söderberg 2003c:383-4,403). The finds from Järrestad are rich and varied compared to other settlements in the region, but limited compared to other central places of the same period (Söderberg 2005:84). Two find concentrations occur in the material; costume accessories, coins and weaponry in house 16 (interpreted as the main living unit), and a concentration of all find categories in the hall area (Söderberg 2005:91). Artefacts connected to gold forging activities are exclusively found in the interpreted hall area and in the wetland area E of the settlement. The material indicates iron, bronze and gold/silver forging, textile production, amethyst/quartz bead production and traces of bone working (Söderberg 2005:92). Three fragments of glass vessels were found. Two amulets were found in one of the pit houses; a miniature þórr's hammer and a miniature fire-steel (Söderberg 2005:89). No figural gold foils were found, however a corroded patrix for figural gold foils manufacture was found connected to phase 1 houses W of the hall area.

TISSØ, ZEALAND, DENMARK

Tissø is a lake in the W part of the island of Zealand, Denmark. The name Tissø is a sacral name meaning ON 'Týr's lake'. Týr is an old god known from several place names in Scandinavia, in proto-Germanic known as **TiwaR* – which simply means "god". Today c. 50 artefacts from lake Tissø are known, most of them weapons in the form of swords and axes. The weapons date from 600 CE through the Viking Age, and are interpreted as sacrificial artefacts deposited contemporary with a settlement on the W bank (Jørgensen 2002:221). At the mount of the river Halleby Å, a grave was discovered in 1979, containing two men thought to have been executed and placed with their skulls between their legs. The grave is dated to c. 1030-1040 CE (Jørgensen 2002:221). These finds, along with several metal detector finds including a 1.8 kg neck ring of pure gold, prompted archaeological excavations. From 1995-2004 the National Museum of Denmark conducted several excavations, exposing a large settlement starting sometime during the 6th century CE and ending sometime in the first half of the 11th century CE. The entire area is situated on a ridge which was surrounded by water in the Viking Age. The only entry by land would be by bridge over the river Halleby Å. In the S end of the excavated area several workshops and production areas were found. At the W bank of the lake, the main settlement with hall buildings was situated, while N of the farm a market area has been identified (Jørgensen 2002:223-228). Thousands of metal objects, two silver hoards, the golden neck ring and the sacrificed weapons, plus the very special characteristics of the buildings and a possible separate cult area, make the Tissø complex a unique area for understanding ideas of settlement and landscape in South Scandinavia. It is analysed comparatively in ch.7, where a plan of the site is provided.

GAMLA UPPSALA, ÖSTERGÖTLAND, SWEDEN

Gamla Uppsala is a national monument immersed in national and regional mythology (Duczko 1993). It is frequently mentioned in written sources; perhaps most famous is Adam von Bremen's descriptions of human sacrifice and other cultic rites connected with a great temple. Early archaeologists have been looking for this pagan temple without great success, even though Sune Lindqvist for a time argued to have found a *hov* directly underneath the church (Duczko 1993:30). However, 1988-1994 excavations were conducted on two large artificial plateaus just N of the Gamla Uppsala church. A building dating c. 600-800, c. 40×10m, was discovered and half of the building was excavated. The plateaus were presumably built to maximise the high position of the building, which had burnt down in its

later phase. The monumental grave mounds Kungshögorna (6th century) are in close proximity with the site, as well as c.300 other graves. It is unknown whether there are contemporary settlements nearby (Duczko 1993:14,16; 1996b:39-40). Interestingly, the name Uppsala is interpreted as 'the high halls' (Duczko 1996b).

On the southern of the two artificial terraces the building was identified through post holes filled with burnt clay. The building had pairs of roof supporting posts and a wattle wall smeared with clay, which was constructed between one internal and one external post row (Nordahl 1993:61). The building burnt down c.800 CE. A small triangular 'pre-house' located close to the S gable and entrance has been interpreted to be contemporary with the main building, and its 3m wide portal served as a sort of entrance house into the area (Duczko 1996b:41). There are two interesting nearby structures: a road on the W side of the terrace, almost 2 m wide and lined with stones on at least one side – probably the official road to the area, and wide enough to accommodate wagons as wells as riders/walkers (Duczko 1996b:42).

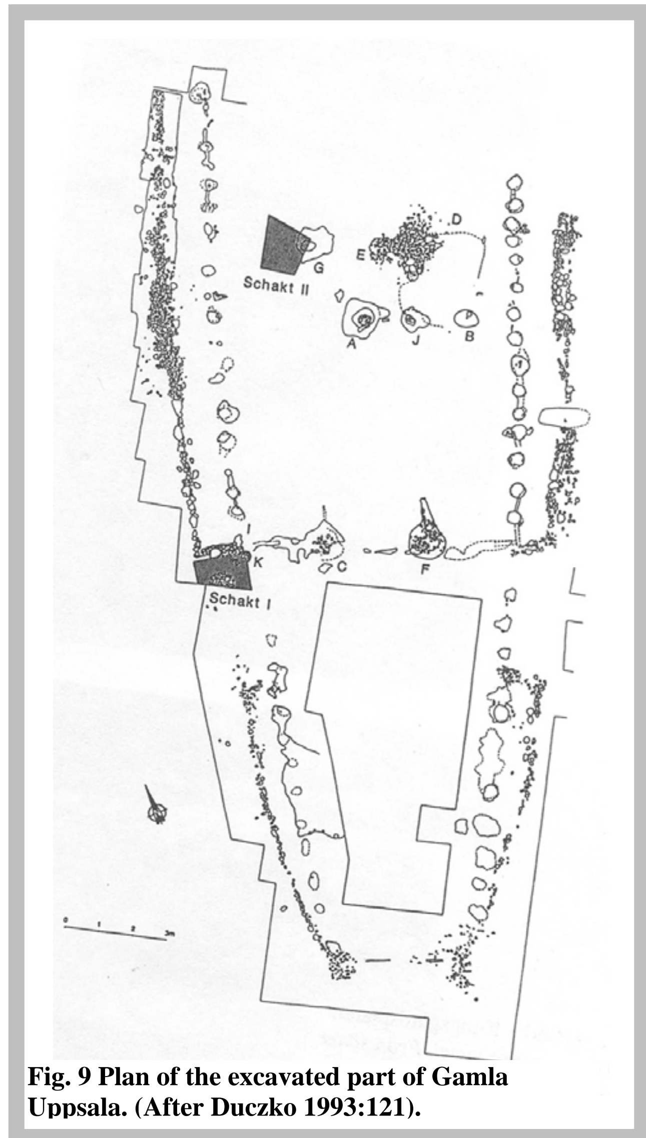


Fig. 9 Plan of the excavated part of Gamla Uppsala. (After Duczko 1993:121).

Furthermore, a number of hearths ('eldstäder'), described as round pits with rocks containing charcoal and burnt/unburned bones, were found between the road and the S terrace (Duczko 1996b:42-43). From the description, these could just as well be cooking pits, connected with preparations to feasts our outside cult. There were no finds from the building, as the surface seems to have been swept clean after the fire (Nordahl 1993:62). At least eight grave mounds were constructed on the S terrace after the building burnt down (Duczko 1993:18).

Adam von Bremen used two nouns to describe the 'temple' at Gamla Uppsala: *templum* and *triclinium*. It has been argued that the second should rather be translated to 'banqueting hall' (Dillmann 1997:66). Perhaps the pagan temple at Gamla Uppsala has been found after all (Steinsland 2005:298).

GAMMEL LEJRE, ZEALAND, DENMARK

Gl. Lejre is, as Gamla Uppsala in Sweden, a famous archaeological site perceived as the home of the first Danish Kings. By some scholars it is identified as the site of Heorot from *Beowulf* (Niles et al. 2007). It was excavated during the 1980s and 1990s. E of the river there are several grave mounds and a large ship setting, while W of the river there is a large settlement. A workshop area is situated on the flat plateau along the river, while the residential area is placed on small sharp hills W of the village (Christensen 1994:17-18). There are two interpreted hall buildings at Lejre, one dating from c.600 (Fredshøj) and one (with several phases) dating from c. 650-900 CE (Mysselhøjgård, houses III and IVab-c). Here the focus will be on the sequence at Mysselhøjgård, known as "the royal hall at Lejre". The building was placed on a small hill in an otherwise flat terrain. The site lies on the spot where land traffic and water communication routes meet (Christensen 2007 [1991]:23). There are several graves in the vicinity, including Viking Age graves with a decapitation grave and a grave with evidence of possible human sacrifice (Andersen 2007 [1960]). A settlement of seven or eight contemporary buildings is located E of the interpreted hall (Christensen 2007:111). There are also a number of pit houses, and a work shop area with smithy, indicating a complex social structure with different strata represented. The place name Lejre derives from ON *hleiðra* and means 'the place with the tents/huts' (Christensen 2007 [1991]:89).

The building was rebuilt twice, once using the same post holes and once where the northern wall was moved c. 1.5m to the S. The roof was supported in part by inner posts, in part by external wall posts (raking timber) and the height is estimated to be c. 10m (Christensen 1994:21; 2007 [1991]:42-3,48). An interesting feature is that the external raking timber was ordered so that each angled, external post corresponded with a pair of internal roof supporting posts. In addition, an external post was placed between each pair of internal roof supporting posts in the W part, with a standard length of 3 aln (old measuring unit of c. 50 cm, here c. 52 cm) between each external post. This makes the *hall room*, including pre-chamber, 36 aln long. However, the external posts have been *moved* 6 aln W so that they represent the real size

of the hall room, although not the exact placing. Herschend argues that this means that a beholder would be able to observe the size of the room from the outside of the building (Herschend 1994:53).

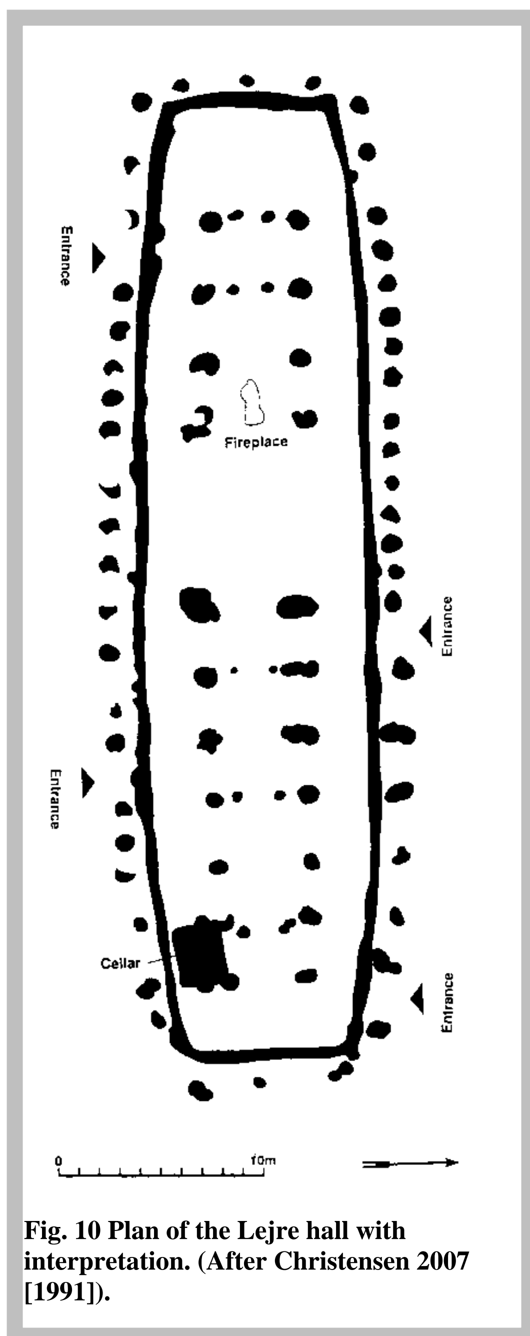


Fig. 10 Plan of the Lejre hall with interpretation. (After Christensen 2007 [1991]).

The building has four entrances, one of which is significantly wider than the others (Christensen 1994:22). This entrance, centred on the N wall, leads to a probable pre-chamber associated with the hall room. It is therefore possible to interpret this entrance as made for the upper strata of society in Lejre, either for the ruling family, or for prominent guests arriving for feasts. The E entrance leads into a room with a structure interpreted as a storage cellar. This room may represent a storage unit connected to a kitchen area where food was prepared, probably by servants or thralls. The third entrance leads to a room interpreted by Herschend as living space, either for household servants or retainers of the king (Herschend 1994:53). The last entrance is just W of the interpreted hall room. Several interpretations can be made of this entrance. Was it, as Herschend (1998:38-39) suggests, the entrance for the chieftain alone, while visitors used the large N entrance? Or was it designated for the chieftain's retainers, who might need a separate entrance to facilitate their role as a special group in the hall? The artefact distribution from Lejre does not provide much help in an interpretation of the social space. The excavation as a whole yielded many rich finds, but these were mainly found in the top soil by the use of metal detectors (Christensen 2007 [1991]:57), and many of the precious items originally belonged to grave contexts. According to the publication, some finds did belong to the building IV: "Many of the post holes" contained animal bones, and "some" contained ceramics. The wall ditch contained a Viking Age comb, and in one of the wall beam holes there was a shard of a soap stone vessel (Christensen 1994:22).

HELGÖ, UPPLAND, SWEDEN

Helgö, 'the holy island', is a small island located in lake Mälaren in central Sweden. The Migration Period-Viking Age site was excavated during the 1950s and 1960s, but the publication has later been heavily criticised because of its lack of interpretation (Callmer 1997:12; Herschend 1995:221; Zachrisson 2004:143-144). Over the years, Helgö's interpreted function has changed from a centre of trade and handicrafts (Holmqvist 1961:29) to a sacral-cultic centre (Zachrisson 2004). This is in part due to the influence of Herschend (1995) who reintroduced Holmqvist's interpretation of building group 2's main building (foundation I) as a banqueting hall. The dating of the building is unclear. Holmqvist notes that artefacts of different ages are found in the same context (Holmqvist 1961:70), but makes no comment on the age of the building. Herschend refers to the building as 8th-9th century (Herschend 1998:14). Around 800 CE Helgö was abandoned as a trading post and the island Birka a few kilometres away became a new trade centre for the region throughout the Viking Age.

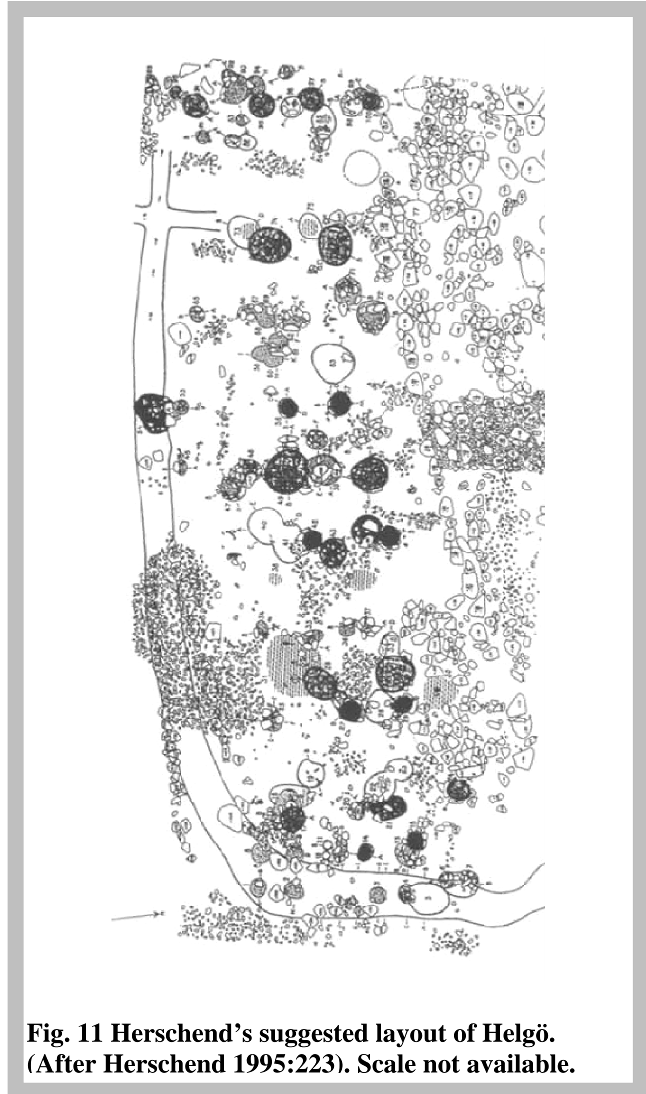


Fig. 11 Herschend's suggested layout of Helgö. (After Herschend 1995:223). Scale not available.

The building is placed on an artificial terrace in a sloping terrain. A hill fort is constructed on top of the hill, and a stone-paved path ran between the terraces. Six grave fields were placed in close proximity of the settlement, which consisted of three groups of buildings with an open space between them (Holmqvist and Granath 1969:32-34; Reisborg 1982). A separate area (building group 3) was during the Migration and Early Merovingian Period used as a workshop area with permanent smithing and bronze casting activities. Moulds for relief brooches, dress pins and sword pommels were found, and it has been suggested that the metal work activities is the reason for Helgö being a sacral centre (Hjärtner-Holdar et al. 2008:250).

Helgö gives the impression of being an important regional site during the transition from Early to Late Iron Age. The main trade traffic from eastern countries came through the channels on both sides of Helgö, and the control and taxation of these routes was probably a cornerstone in the economy and power basis (Holmqvist 1961:27). Three gold hoards have been found on this c. 1.5×5 km island, which is a rare density in the Uppland region (Zachrisson 2004:161). Little is known regarding the construction of the building. After reviewing the documentation, Herschend has proposed a layout of a 23m long building with slightly convex walls (fig.11). A weakness of Herschend's secondary interpretation is that he has excluded posthole no. 48, which was the only posthole that contained glass and gold foil figures (Holmqvist 1961:79). This makes it highly likely that the post belonged to the hall building, and should be included in a discussion of layout.

There are a number of exotic and sacral finds at Helgö. A 6th century Indian-made bronze Buddha, an 8th century enamelled copper crook interpreted as a crosier, two gold bracteate fragments and 26 figural gold foils are among them (Gyllensvärd 2004). All find groups are concentrated to the interpreted hall area. Twelve figural gold foils were clustered in a 3×4 m area SW of the central hearth, and this layer also contained padlocks – perhaps indicating caskets (Lamm 2004:51). Herschend argues that the find concentrations indicate a polarised social environment, as looms, whetstones, knives and figural gold foils are concentrated in the E, while weapons, whetstones and knives are concentrated in the W. He speculates that the living quarters are located in the E part of the building, while retainers or visiting armed men belonged in the W part, again a division in a private and representative sphere (Herschend 1995:225-227).

SLÖINGE, HALLAND, SWEDEN

From 1992-1996 and in 2000 research excavations took place at a Late Iron Age settlement in Slöinge in the coastal Halland region of SW Sweden. The settlement is interpreted as a central place representing a new form of power concentration (Lundqvist and Arcini 2003:11,23). The site shows continual cultivation and activity over c. 600 years (Lundqvist 1996:43). Two subsequent buildings from c. 700-800 CE were constructed on the highest point of a ridge. The economical basis for a central place is unknown, as it is a poor agricultural area. Control over trade and production has been suggested (Lundqvist 1996:42-46). There are several

indications of nearby graves, but preservation is poor. There are no other settlements discovered in close proximity.

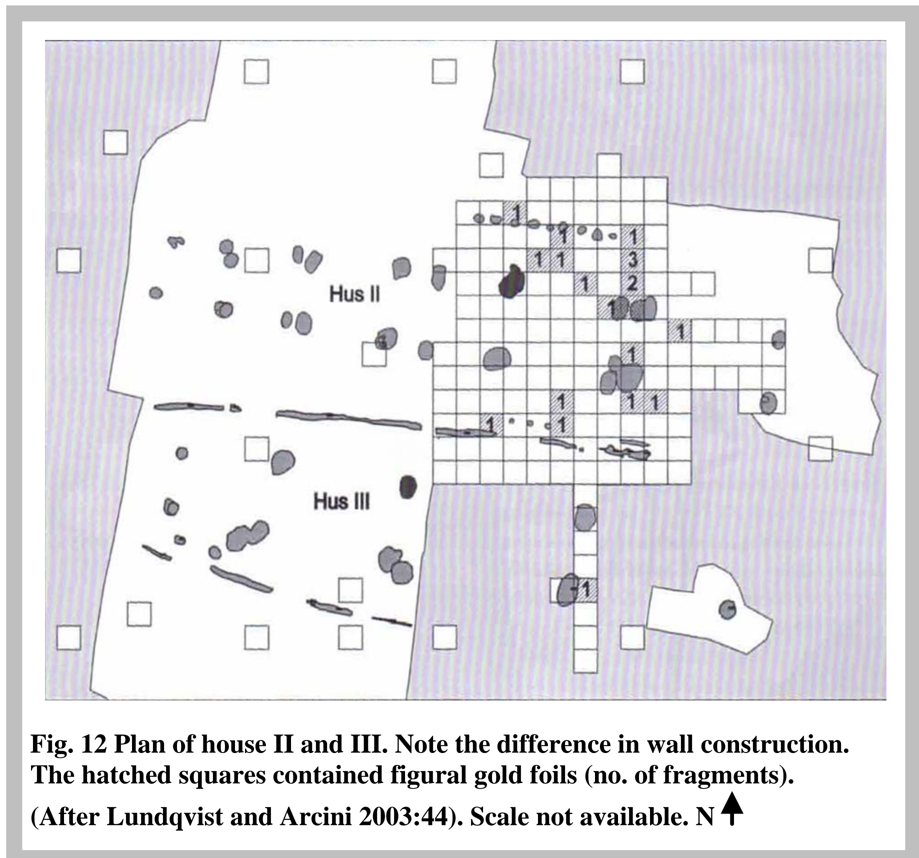


Fig. 12 Plan of house II and III. Note the difference in wall construction. The hatched squares contained figural gold foils (no. of fragments). (After Lundqvist and Arcini 2003:44). Scale not available. N ↑

The buildings were placed beside each other in an almost perfect EW direction; house II N of house III. The first building is dated from c. 710-750 CE, while the second is erected directly after the first is deconstructed. They are of approximately the same size and layout, c. 30×8.5m. The earlier building has two entrances, both in the W part of the building. Both houses have a central room where the pairs of posts are extended, creating an open space. For both houses, all the non-domestic finds are connected to this central room, interpreted as the hall room. Two postholes stand out in this context, one in house III and one in house II (Lundqvist and Arcini 2003:54, 58-59). The upper layers of the first post hole consisted of a light, calcium rich substance, interpreted as either pulverised burnt bone or pulverised mussel shells (both find categories were found in the structure). Two gold foil figures, one garnet, and gold foil were all found in this layer (Lundqvist and Arcini 2003:58-59). The younger house had a parallel in post hole A19628 – which has the exact same position in the second building – and contained 15 glass vessel fragments, 27 garnets, 35 figural gold foils, 14 pieces of gold foil, and 48 pottery shards. The finds of Slöinge in total demonstrate several types of production; gold, silver, bronze and iron metal work; textile production; glass bead production; and garnet jewellery production. This concludes the background and framework of the present thesis. We will now continue to part II – analyses.

PART II: *ORDERING SPACE* – ANALYSES

6. THE SOCIAL LIFE OF HALLS – ANALYSIS I

In this chapter the socio-spatial analysis will be structured according to the different phases of the hall's life as a social entity. This approach provides an opportunity to understand the interaction between the residence of power and its inhabitants, and thereby examine the reciprocal relationship between agent and material culture as discussed in ch.2. The common biography or macro-story of the halls' social life shall be explored through the five suggested life phases: *before construction*, *construction*, *in use and rebuilding*, *deconstruction* and *after deconstruction*. These five phases constitute the overarching framework of the analysis.

BEFORE CONSTRUCTION – 'CONCEPTION'

Choosing the place

The spatial ordering of the hall buildings and their surroundings seems to have begun prior to the construction process, and began by choosing a place (Söderberg 2005:187). In several cases it has been important to place the building at an exactly chosen spot; paying no regard to functional or practical objectives (Näsman and Roesdahl 2003:284). Today we can only imagine what criteria applied to a location in a cognitive landscape with invisible boundaries, territories and powers (Hållans and Andersson 1997). First, every building in the selection, save two, was placed at high points in the landscape (cf. appendix 1). Depending on the topographical environment this generally means more exposure to wind and storm. As an example, the reconstruction of the Borg hall was partly destroyed by a winter storm in 1996, and as a result the new construction had to have its posts steel reinforced (Jakhelln 2003:305). The consistent elevated placement indicates that it was important to construct the buildings at high points, disregarding wind exposure. As for the two exceptions, there might be other explanations: Gudme is situated on a very small hilltop in a flat terrain, and the importance of an elevated placing was naturally structured by the topography in the area. This could in turn imply that a high placement was more important in northern than southern Scandinavia. Regarding Tissø, an additional explanation where it is not necessary for the hall building to communicate towards the landscape to the same degree as the other sites, will be offered in ch.7.

The buildings were placed at communication points. Central places were central partly because they had control over trade routes or natural resources, thus controlling communication routes and economical resources such as good agricultural land, trade routes or connections with iron production sites. It is possible that some of the locations gained a part of their surplus through taxation. The buildings are clearly communicating outwards, whether to a communication route, a nearby settlement or both. In some cases, such as Borg, the chosen place does not have the resources needed for the construction, and the timber had to be imported from faraway areas – presumably a costly affair (Herschend and Mikkelsen 2003:69).

In some cases the halls have been placed at sites with connections to earlier rituals and cult. This is the case at Tissø (Jørgensen 2002), Borg (Narmo 2009), Helgö (Zachrisson 2004) and Järrestad (Söderberg 2005:190). Perhaps Gamla Uppsala should also be included here – as mentioned in ch.5 a number of round hearths filled with fire-cracked stoned – possibly cooking pits – have been found close to the hall (Duczko 1996b:42-43). Interestingly the aforementioned sites overlap in time and are all established after the postulated religious break during the 6th century (ch.4). A connection with older cult sites may have opened for meditated or un-meditated manipulations of older ritual practices into a more individual-focused cult (Söderberg 2005:192). Cultic connotations may also be preserved in place names. Gudme, *home of the gods*, Helgö, *the holy island*, and Tissø, *Týr's lake*, are all interpreted as sacral/cultic names. Högom, *the mounds* – after the grave mounds, Borg, *hill or hills suited for fortification* and Uppsala, *the high halls*, all refer to height, while Järrestad, *the jarl/earl's settlement*, Lejre, *the place with the tents/huts* and Slöinge constitute a miscellaneous group.

Preparing the site

It seems that the terrain was not always found suitable for a construction site. Instead of moving the foundation to the next hilltop, the builders sometimes chose to manipulate the terrain instead. At Gamla Uppsala two monumental plateaus were built by stone and clay, presumably to give the building a more elevated position in the landscape (Nordahl 1993:59). At Helgö, the entire settlement was placed on artificial terraces (Holmqvist and Granath 1969:32), while at Borg, pre-existing grave mounds were flattened prior to the construction (Herschend and Mikkelsen 2003:47) – perhaps in a strategy of either sacrilege or power

continuation. The magnetic mapping at Borg also indicated that some activity prior to the construction involved fire (Arrhenius and Freij 2003:81), perhaps a ritual preparation before the hall was erected. The construction of the artificial plateaus, the flattening of graves, the action involving fire and other practices which are not traceable in the archaeological evidence, may have taken place prior to the construction of the halls as rituals or actions used to *code* the space.

CONSTRUCTION – 'BIRTH'

After choosing a place and preparing the site, a new phase of the halls' biography could begin: the construction process. As it has been pointed out, the act of building a grave mound can be *a ritual in itself* (Gansum 2002). In a similar manner the choice of constructing and building a hall has ritual implications. Anthropologist Mary Helms (1993:77-87) examines the act of building as a 'kingly ideal', where the ruler is personally responsible for a process which involves sacred or supernatural abilities as much as material and technical competence. He transforms space from being uncoded or from being in the control of mythical forefathers/powers into an ordered and safe place under his personal control (Knott 2005:42-43). It has been argued that Hroðgar building Heorot in *Beowulf* represents his inauguration as king (Herschend 1998:36). Thus the act of construction is already a distinct act of power with ritualistic overtones.

Spatial ideals

When observing the plans of the halls in ch.5 it seems that the spatial ideal of the hall has differed somewhat in space and time. However, there are also some emerging patterns. At Gudme (Sørensen 1994:31), Järrestad (Söderberg 2005:196-7), Lejre (Draiby 1994:30), Slöinge (Lundqvist and Arcini 2003:53) Tissø (Jørgensen 2002) and, as we shall see, the older phase at Borg, there seems to be a desire for *an open space* in the interpreted hall rooms, where the trestles are expanded or their number is reduced in order to increase the space of the room, sometimes centered on a hearth. This has been observed in other interpreted hall buildings as well, such as Forsandmoen, SW Norway (Komber 1989:130; Løken 2001:56-58), and Missingen, SE Norway (Bårdseth 2009; Bårdseth and Sandvik 2007:130). The open space around the hearth could signify a wish to gather around the fire, it could be related to some activity taking place there, or it could have a functional objective. No matter the reason, the

room stands out because of its spatial ordering, implying that the idea of *an open space* was an important part of the idea of a hall.

A second spatial ideal is represented at Järrestad and Tissø. In these two cases the hall buildings are only a part of a larger complex including a separate cultic building (*hov*?) and enclosure. The entrances to both hall and enclosure are situated in the same places. The spatial ordering communicates *a separate space* and above all control. The space inside the enclosures is exclusive and both regulates and communicates differences in social relations.

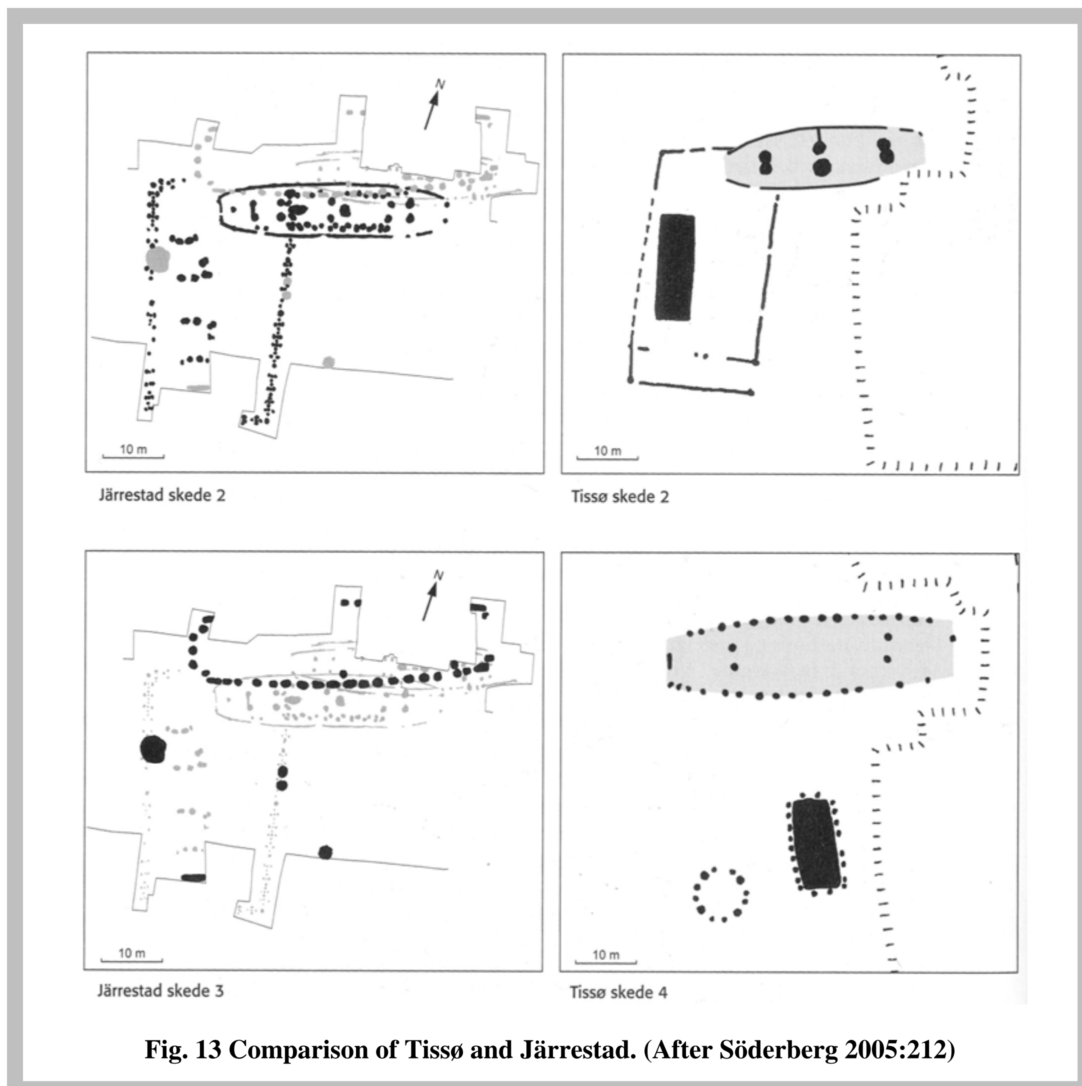


Fig. 13 Comparison of Tissø and Järrestad. (After Söderberg 2005:212)

The striking similarity between the sites has been taken as a sign of a close alliance between the two ruling families (Söderberg 2005:184; 2006:157). The space seems even more differentiated than at the other sites as the space of the interpreted *hov* needed to be even further separated from the economical everyday life. At Tissø there are even two enclosures, constituting a doubling of the communication of exclusion. Perhaps this was an attempt to distinguish the safe zone, the central space, from the wild and unsafe zones outside the

enclosure. Boundaries create contact between spaces, and there is a mutual dependence between boundary and space (Hållans and Andersson 1997:584). The two spatial ideals are discussed further in ch.8.

Depositions during the construction –'house offerings'

During the construction process rituals and practices took place. It is not unusual to find deposited artefacts such as ceramics or bones in constructional elements of Iron Age longhouses (Kristensen 2010). Perhaps because of the artefacts' usually unspectacular nature, little work has been done regarding this ritualistic phenomenon at least in Norwegian archaeology, and the artefacts in post holes, wall ditches and hearths are often explained as mishaps and coincidences (Kristensen 2010:61). In several of the present buildings artefacts are found in constructional elements, but it is seldom discussed whether this is due to intended deposits or natural processes (i.e. Christensen 1994:22). Deposited artefacts in constructional elements where these (1) constitute an anomaly or pattern, or (2) can be stratagraphically interpreted as deposited, may be viewed as a conscious and intentional action incorporated in the practices of utilisation and coding the hall space (cf. Kristensen 2010:62).

At Högom (Ramqvist 1992:168,170-174), Helgö (Holmqvist 1961:74-88), Järrestad (Söderberg 2005:225,230), and Borg (Herschend and Mikkelsen 2003:66), items seem to have been deposited in constructional elements during the construction or re-construction processes. The artefacts found in post holes and other constructional elements range from locally produced ceramics to precious items such as jewellery and figural gold foils. Some probably derive from normal usage where debris is swept towards the posts or walls, but other are deposited intentionally, and it is the meaning of these finds that is important here. It is possible to interpret the deposition or re-deposition of artefacts in constructional elements as a strategy to somehow *initiate* or *code the space*. Applying a biographical perspective, this could be the equivalent of a *rite de passage* (van Gennep 1960 [1909]). The deposition of figural gold foils may be a ritual connected with sacralising the hall space and creating an arena where political-cultic actions could take place (Steinsland 1991). Depositing ceramics and animal bones could symbolise consumption, while glass may symbolise intoxication and feasting. The deposition of beads during the construction of the youngest hall at Järrestad has been interpreted as a metaphor for a synthesis between the wild outside – *útangarðs* – and the safe inside – *innangarðs* (Söderberg 2005:246).

The written sources repeatedly refer to the mythological hall buildings as 'golden', 'shimmering', 'gleaming', and they are described as thatched with silver or gold (*Beowulf* 300-305; *Grímnismál* 6,8,15; *Gylfaginning* 14; *Vǫluspá* 64), (cf. Nordberg 2003:168-171). The name *Skírnir*, interpreted as an aspect of Freyr in *Skírnismál*, also has the etymological meaning 'glittering, gleaming'. Could there be a connection between the concept of the golden or glittering hall and the precious metal artefacts deposited in constructional elements of the halls? Not only mythological sources connect the halls and precious metals. Adam von Bremen's *templum* and *triclinium* (cf. ch.5) is described as gilded and with a gold chain hanging over the roof (addition 139). The concept of the hall being thatched with gold or silver may be a remnant of real practices, but in my opinion the precious metals deposited may rather constitute a link between the mythological ideas/metaphorical meaning of the hall and the real archaeological remains. Thus, depositing artefacts during the construction, reconstruction and deconstruction of the hall may be meaningful practices which *initiate* or *conclude the space*, symbolise *consumption, intoxication* and *feasting*, create a synthesis of the *inside* and *outside*, underline the *divine lineage of the ruler* and create a strong link between the *mythological and earthly halls*.

IN USE AND REBUILDING – 'LIFE'

After the place was chosen, the site prepared and the constructional rites were concluded, the life of the standing hall could begin. Several of the sites in question had a lifespan of several centuries. As standing reflections of the social organisation it is suggested that the buildings provided an arena for *ritual*, *transformation*, *differentiation* and *negotiation*.

A ritual arena

Ritual and cult can be practiced as an integrated part of *or* separated from everyday life. Rituals may be executed in separate sacral spaces, but as Olsen (1966) argued regarding the *hov*, profane space may also have sacral qualities at times (Kaliff 2006:130; Knott 2005:39). When in use, the hall buildings clearly provided a ritual arena connected with feasts, representation, gift exchange and intoxication. The hall provided a focal point for the very warrior existence (Evans 1997; Fredriksen 2002:52). The concept of a chieftain-retainer feast is mentioned as early as in *Germania* 14-15, where feasts and entertainment are referred to as the warriors' only pay. Archaeologically, feasts are traceable through the finds of animal

bones, ceramics, glass vessels, cooking pits, and the likes. The role of the feast was clearly ideologically and symbolically important in the Iron Age aristocratic environment. The written sources describe halls with key words and poetic formula such as OE *medoheal*, *beorsele,* ON *mjöðrann, bjórsalr*; intimately connecting the hall with alcoholic consumption (Lönnroth 1997:33). From *Beowulf* we have a detailed description of the practices taking place in the hall. The king belongs in his high seat (*gif-stol*, literally gift-chair) while the retainers sit on benches. Mead or beer is devoured while a lot of bragging and talk of heroics takes place. There is entertainment in the form of skaldic verse, joking, contests and harp music. Both the king and the queen deliver gifts in reward for manly accomplishments. The practices can be described as ritualistic in their character with a clear idealised signification (Lönnroth 1997:33). The description of the hall life in *Beowulf* is not a literal description of the aristocratic hall. Just like the descriptions provided by Snorri or in the Eddic poetry it represents an idealised image (Niles et al. 2007:176-177). However, it is interesting that in a Christian environment there was room for a narrative which procured its plot, motifs and cultural context from a heathen Scandinavia.

Michael Dietler (2001) has, in his own words, 'theorised the feast' in a practice theory-perspective. He argues that feasts are political in nature and constitute an instrument and theatre of political relations (Dietler 2001:66). Feasts are a distinctive type of ritual activity usable to manipulate and negotiate relationships between agents. Consumption of food and drink is one of the most cultural-dependant and ritualised human practices (Mauss 1979:118-119). Feasting can be perceived as a euphemised gift exchange where the warriors receive and *devour* the gift, and thereby accept the social debt which follows (Dietler 2001:73; cf. Mauss 1954). The feast in the hall may therefore be regarded as a ritualised performance where agents – the warriors – strived to maximise their symbolic capital. As mentioned in ch.4, horse meat seems especially connected to ritual feasting in the Iron Age, as the horse comes across as a sacred animal. Horse bones have been found at Tissø (Jørgensen 2002:243), Gamla Uppsala (Bäckström 1996), Slöinge (Lundqvist and Arcini 2003:79), Järrestad (Söderberg 2006:158) and Högom (Ramqvist 1992:178); at the two latter sites entire horse skulls have been deposited, in wells and next to the long wall respectively.

Up to this point the social roles discussed in relation with the hall have been most stereotypically masculine: warriors, chieftains, scalds or, in the next paragraph, crafters. In

relationship with feasting in the halls, Michael Enright (1996) has underlined the role of *the queen*. He also understands the feast as a power negotiation, but where the chieftain's wife or queen acts as a powerbroker or mediator through pouring mead in a certain order, assigning social position – capital – to the warriors while doing so (cf. queen Wealhthow in *Beowulf*). She is able to uphold this role because she stands outside the fellowship between king and retainer, but is still connected to the ruler as his spouse – she is simultaneously inside and outside the warrior system, and this transcendental aspect opens for her role as a status assigner. The hall providing a space for feasting, gift exchange and intoxication will have structured the ritual practices, and has in turn defined the valid strategies for capital negotiation among the *comitatus* and the aristocracy in general. This is a probable reason for the idea of the hall being widespread through space and time. Hence the hall and the inhabitants continually engage in a cycle of mutual influence (cf. fig.2).

Arena for transformation

The hall space was not used for feasting continually throughout the year. At times the hall space also provided an arena for production, which will be seen here in the light of the metaphor of *transformation*. Production and crafting may be perceived as expressions of transformative processes, where a material changes quality through a liminal practice (Helms 1993:13-24). Production of various kinds is present in the material (cf. appendix 3), either in separate areas or within the hall building.

As we will see in the comparative analysis of Borg and Tissø, smithing and forging, jewellery production and textile production seem especially connected with the hall. Terje Østigård (2007) has analysed the role of the smith in the Iron Age with a perspective of transformation. He argues that the smith was a ritual specialist of high social standing, who was in charge of both the metaphorical transformation from bog iron to steel but also the cremation; the transformation from living agent to socially dead. Kristoffersen (1995) has likewise underlined the transformative aspects of Migration Period animal art, as well as textile production. The first may be viewed as a symbolic transformation from human to animal (i.e. *berserk, hamr*), and is clearly closely associated with individuals or families who are potentially central in politics of power (Kristoffersen 2000:188,205). Textile production, on the other hand, may be connected with the *norns* spinning fate and destiny, and female divination (Kristoffersen 2000:137-139). The halls' intimate connection with aspects of

transformation will be discussed more closely in ch.8. Here it will suffice to say that the hall provided an arena for several transformative practices by specialists who might have been in a client relationship with the ruling family.

Arena for differentiation

One of the central questions in the present thesis is how the hall's spatial ordering was an instrument for differentiation between social groups in space and place, i.e. in a social space and a physical place. During their standing life, the halls constituted arenas for exclusion and were a channel for conveying a euphemised ideology where some agents were in control over others. This was done in part by drawing visible and invisible borders in the landscape and inside the built environment. Such cognitive borders would be known to the inhabitants and undoubtedly strictly regulate the social and physical space (Hållans and Andersson 1997). *Entrances* are a key to understanding spatial differentiation, because they regulate access to the different spaces (Herschend 1997:59; Hillier and Hanson 1984).

In the present material, there are indications of geographical differences and a chronological development of the placement of entrances. In the early dated hall buildings Gudme (Sørensen 1994:31), Högom (Ramqvist 1992:180,189), and possibly during the oldest phase of Järrestad (Söderberg 2003b:125); the entrance(s) lead directly into a typically South Scandinavian central entrance room. However, in the cases of Gamla Uppsala (Duczko 1996b:41), Slöinge (Lundqvist and Arcini 2003:56), Lejre (Christensen 1994:22), Borg (Herschend and Mikkelsen 2003:47,58-60), the younger phases of Järrestad (Söderberg 2003b:127,129,137) and Tissø (Jørgensen 2002:227-238), who are all constructed in the second half of the millennium, the entrances lead into more peripheral entrance chambers or other parts of the building. As for Borg and the central Scandinavian halls the placement of entrances could be based on local tradition, but as Lejre, Tissø and Järrestad belong in South Scandinavian area, the chronological aspect is still interesting. This concurs with the changes in Viking Age's construction of entrances in Denmark, where entrances very rarely lead directly into the heated, central rooms any more (Jensen 2004:163; Schmidt 1999:92). The present material thereby implies that there was a chronological break in the spatial ordering of entrances and access c. 500-600 CE. After this *century of structural change* (cf. ch.4), the direct access to the central room of hall buildings is discontinued, and the hall space becomes less accessible from the outside. This may be a material manifestation of the idea of the hall

becoming increasingly exclusive in the second half of the first century. There are also examples of differentiated entrances within the same hall, where some entrances are communicatively placed and are wide as portals, while others are narrow and placed in peripheral parts of the building (cf. ch.5 on Lejre (Christensen 1994:22), ch.7 on Borg (Herschend and Mikkelsen 2003:58-60)). Interestingly, this feature is also present in the early case of Gudme (Sørensen 1994:31), and could be due to Gudme's unparalleled social standing in its time. Constructing different entrances for different social groups is both a highly visible and highly efficient way of differentiating agents in the household.

Regarding the high seat, it is impossible to discuss its placement in each of the nine halls within the scope of this inquiry. I therefore confer to earlier works on the subject (Birkeli 1932; Herschend 1997:49-60; 1998:25-31). However, the high seat's location has been suggested at a few of the sites in question: at Högom there are indications by the transverse row of posts in the middle of the building (Ramqvist 1992:169); at Helgö Herschend (1997:51) has suggested that the high seat is placed in one of the corners. Regarding Järrestad, Bengt Söderberg (2005:203-210) has suggested the placement of the high seat based on post holes, placement of the hearth and an access analysis. When it comes to Slöinge, the publication makes no comment regarding the high seat, but the concentration of finds (including garnets and figural gold foils) in the NW corner of both hall rooms may imply the location. At Borg, the high seat is suggested to belong in the NE corner of the hall room (cf. ch.7). In any case, an exclusive seat with ritual, political and judicial overtones did belong in the hall space, and its elevated position would create both mental and physical boundaries between the agents in the hall. A mythological mirroring of this may be found in Skírnismál. It is because Freyr without permission sits in Óðinn's high seat that he discovers Gerðr; thus his transcendental act of breaking the rules is what causes his union with the giantess. The high seat and seating arrangements in general must be understood as strongly differentiating, even within the group of aristocratic hall inhabitants.

The differentiation between agents evident in the archaeological material discussed above, is present in the written sources as well. One poem is particularly interesting when trying to identify the social groups associated with halls – *Rigsþula*. In this poem the god Heimdall (under the name Rig) institutes the different social strata. The appearances, houses, chores and resources of the characters are directly connected to social position; and on the top we find the

jarl in the *salr*. The inhabitants of the sal own imported drinking vessels, eat light bread and food in abundance, and it is pointed out that they drink and sloth all day (cf. *Germania* 15). Pointedly aristocratic activities such as throwing imported Frankish spears and horseback riding belong in this environment. Lund (2009:18-20) has pointed out that the material culture described in the poem belongs to Merovingian/Viking Age, implying that either the poem is composed before the Middle Ages; or the composer had detailed insight in the material culture of the past. Either way it increases the value of the poem as a source to Iron Age mentality. In this mythological explanation for social organisation, and the different social strata, *the house* is strongly associated with social position. Furthermore, the social stratification is explained as a divine institution, thereby constituting an indisputable world order. Rigsþula is clearly an example of how mythology is used for legitimising power (Steinsland 2005:390). It is interesting that the upper social stratum spawn, the jarl, is the only child that Rig accepts as his own. In reverse this could mean that the aristocrats in the halls traced their genealogy back to a divine forefather, much like the aforementioned Ynglings traced their kin back to Freyr and Gerðr.

Negotiation and renewal

Rebuilding the hall may represent either continuity or break of the socio-spatial ordering – or perhaps both. At both Järrestad and Tissø, which as we have seen have a similar spatial ordering with enclosure and separate building, profound changes occur during the centuries (Jørgensen 1998,2002; Söderberg 2003b). Could new layouts be perceived as 'a second life' for the buildings?

On the other hand, the most striking pattern emerging in this selection is that of *continuity*. This relates directly to research question (2) as stated in ch.1. At Borg the expansion from the earlier to the later building was done in a manner which kept the hall room uninterrupted on the very highest point of the ridge, but expanded and altered the rest of the building (Herschend and Mikkelsen 2003:65). It was obviously important that the hall room was kept uninterrupted on the exact same spot. At Slöinge, when the earliest building was taken down, a second building with an almost identical layout was placed immediately to the S. The same post hole was given special consideration in both buildings. Upholding the same spatial ordering for centuries (again, Tissø, Järrestad); keeping the hall room at the exact same spot (Borg); or building new halls with almost exact same layout (Gudme, Järrestad, Slöinge)

seems oxymoronic while society is perceived by scholars to be in a time of constant power struggles. The question is: how can the residence of power look so stable, if power was under constant negotiation? It seems possible, but not very likely, that the same family was in power in an area for 400 years – c. 12 generations. On the other hand, the increased social mobility may have lead to the initiation of leaders who had not inherited their title (ch. 4). Perhaps upholding a spatial ordering of earlier rulers reveals a desire to associate oneself with real or mythical forefathers, thus legitimising oneself as a ruler taking over what is transferred through generations. Munch (2003a), Steinsland (1991) and Fabech (1994:171) have argued for initiation rites for the new chieftain or king belonging in the hall. Much connects this with the heterogeneous characteristics of the five figural gold foils at Borg, and suggests that these "...represent the assumption of power by succeeding chieftains" (Munch 2003a:261). It is an alluring thought to combine the idea of rebuilding the hall and re-depositing figural gold foils as initiating the power of the new chieftain through a new spatial ordering. The wish to renew and/or expand the hall space and its surroundings may in addition have had functional reasons like population increase and a growing economy – in itself aspects related to centralisation and stratification of power.

DECONSTRUCTION - 'DEATH'

At some point in time the agents decide that the halls have played their part. Interestingly, they are not simply abandoned – they are in at least seven of the nine present cases somehow deconstructed[4] (Christensen 1994:21; Herschend and Mikkelsen 2003:51; Lundqvist and Arcini 2003:59; Nordahl 1993:61; Ramqvist 1992:190; Söderberg 2005:225; Sørensen 1994:29). Some scholars have claimed that the halls' power loss manifests itself by de-compositing halls standing alone in the country side (Gansum 2008:205), but this theory does not seem to apply to the present halls. It is difficult to speculate as to why these central places are discontinued. It could be due to new power centres emerging, it could be for political reasons and in the case of the later halls – Tissø, Järrestad, Lejre, Helgö and Borg – it could be due to religious reasons. With Christianity came new power strategies regarding controlling the official cult. We shall here concentrate on the actions taking place during the deconstruction process.

[4] The publications on Tissø and Helgö do not provide any information on the subject.

Post removal

At at least six of the nine present sites[5] the roof supporting posts were pulled out of the ground during the deconstruction process. This practice could be due to economical reasons, as timber of the required size was expensive. But the written sources indicate that we must consider other reasons as well. In *Eyrbyggjenes saga* the chieftain Torolf brings the high seat posts from his *hov* in Norway on the journey to Iceland. On arrival he throws the posts, which are carved with his preferred god þórr, overboard, and at the spot where they reach the shore he builds his new settlement. The story indicates that the posts, especially being from the high seat, are intertwined with the world of the gods and have special properties that are important enough for Torolf to bring them on his journey. I argue that it was important to reuse the posts in new buildings, as they could provide a link between the forefathers and the incumbents. In addition the removal of the posts can be understood as a symbolic rite of passage when the halls that had run their course. The deconstruction certainly constituted the end of the hall building's lifespan.

The burning hall – violence and deconstruction

Some scholars have underlined the violent deconstruction of hall buildings, where an attack on a hall is viewed as an attack on the ruler's power basis (Herschend 1997:36-37; Ringtved 1999:364,373) or as an attack on the peace of the hall (Sørensen 2003:270-271). The concept of the burning hall is present in the written sources, such as *Atlakviða* and *Lokasenna*, and a remnant of the concept of violent deconstruction of the hall may also be remembered in Grendel's attack on Heorot in *Beowulf*. In a sense such an attack becomes a metaphorical attack on the ruler himself.

The notion of the burning hall is also traceable in the archaeological material. In this selection two or three hall buildings show traces of fire; Högom, Gamla Uppsala and possibly Helgö (Holmqvist 1961:72; Nordahl 1993:61; Ramqvist 1992:189). At Högom the fire might have been a hostile act: a bone arrowhead was found stuck in the wattle wall. Ramqvist interprets this as an armed attack on what he sees as the highest stratum of society. It is important to note that after the fire, posts and sill beams have been removed also here (Ramqvist 1992:169), as it seems improbable that these were to be reused due to fire damage. At Tissø

[5] The publications of Tissø and Helgö did not state anything on the matter, while the burnt posts were found in place at Gamla Uppsala.

the exact timing and reason for abandonment is unknown, but the deconstruction is parallel with the execution of two men located in a nearby burial (Jørgensen 2002:221). At Lejre there is also a decapitation grave contemporary with the cease of general activity on the site. Similarly, it is possible to interpret the smashed glasses lying concentrated in the northern corner of the hall room at Borg as consciously destroyed, whether in an attack (Herschend 1997:36; Herschend and Mikkelsen 2003:52) or as part of a decoding ritual. Some of the glass shards have been re-deposited on the floor of room A. It is suggested that this is done to raise or restore the floor level in this room (Holand 2003a:138), but it may also have other reasons, as parts of the glass from the same vessels are deposited in the midden outside. Based on the continual cycle of interaction between the agents and the hall, the material traces of violent attack are here interpreted as decoding rituals or attacks on the ruler's power base.

AFTER DECONSTRUCTION – 'BURIAL'

After the posts are removed and the building taken down, one would expect the activity to cease. However, this is not the case. Just as intentional depositions were made during the construction and rebuilding of the halls, some depositions were also made after the deconstruction of the building. At Slöinge, two post holes with an exceptional amount of finds such as figural gold foils, garnets, ceramics, bones and beads (cf. ch.5) were excavated. The finds were found in the top layer of the post fill, but further down, the base of the original wooden posts was found (Lundqvist and Arcini 2003:59). This implies that the people at Slöinge have removed the upper end of the post and subsequently the finds have been deposited – but only in *one posthole* in each building. If these were the remains of a floor (Lundqvist and Arcini 2003:59), it is unlikely that the floor sunk into only one posthole – placed in the exact same position in the NE corner of the hall room – in each building. The artefacts are most likely intentionally deposited, probably after the removal of the upper and non-rotting part of the posts. The same phenomenon is represented at Gudme: it is not discussed whether the depositions are the result of 'mishaps', but after the removal of the enormous roof supporting posts, gold and silver jewellery, roman silver denarii, shards of imported glass and fragments of a silver neck ring were deposited in the post holes (Sørensen 1994:31,36). In one of the post holes in the separate cultic building of Järrestad, smithing tools were deposited, in addition to a ring door handle. The deposition of these artefacts has been interpreted as a ritual *burial* for the building (Söderberg 2005:233).

Other concluding actions seem to have taken place. At Järrestad horse skulls were deposited in the wells right before the wells were taken out of use (Söderberg 2006:158). At Gamla Uppsala and Tissø the surface of the hall site has been meticulously cleaned (Jørgensen 2002:238; Nordahl 1993:62). This could be a result of looting, but at Gamla Uppsala the charcoal layer after the fire has been swept away, and at Tissø a large amount of precious objects was left behind. Thus, these actions may rather be decoding rituals performed to conclude the life of the halls. It is possible to interpret the practices taking place after the fire at Högom in a similar manner. Two hearths were constructed on the hall site shortly after the building burnt down. These hearths are interpreted as being used to prepare a burial meal of calf for the two women that are postulated to have burnt within the building (Ramqvist 1992:190). An alternative hypothesis is that if this building was indeed lit on fire as a hostile act, and if one accepts that such an attack would mean a metaphorical attack on the ruling family or chieftain, the burial meal could also be a ritual connected with the building's own metaphorical *death*. After this meal the site was immediately covered by a monumental grave mound – and the hall was subsequently *buried*. Afterwards, both at Högom and Gamla Uppsala (Duczko 1993:18) the space that was previously designated for halls was now recoded into space for the dead – as the hall sites were covered by graves.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER AND PRELIMINARY RESULTS

This chapter has attempted to reveal the many actions that took place before, during and after the construction of the hall buildings, and thereby grasp the halls' *biography* as stated in the third research question (ch.1). This writer's view is that the lifespan analysis underlines the impression of the hall buildings being controlled and coded spaces with repeated interaction between the built environment and its inhabitants in every life phase. The continual negotiation, coding and recoding of space demonstrated through these practices, challenge the rather static and simplistic image of the king and his men just sitting in the hall for centuries, drinking and feasting, (cf. Duczko 1996a:11). It seems that the actions involved in utilising the hall space were more complex that earlier works have demonstrated. This analysis has made it clear that continual actions and practices followed the halls from the beginning to the end, that there is a strong connection between building and landscape, a continual focus on the roof supporting posts, and that the spatial ideals of *the open space* and *the separated space* were known over time and in large geographical areas. There are also indications of a chronological break in these ideals. The actions and rites performed by agents through the

lifespan of the halls are in this context connected with communication and contestation of power.

7. BORG AND TISSØ:

COMPLEMENTARY DIFFERENCES OR IDEAS ON COLLISION COURSE? ANALYSIS II

After the overarching analysis of hall buildings from different geographical areas and time periods we shall now turn to a comparative approach of two contemporary hall buildings from the Late Iron Age: Borg, Lofoten, Norway and Tissø, Zealand, Denmark, which were both shortly introduced in ch.5. This analysis provides an opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of the spatial ordering within a local context, and furthermore demonstrates the similarities and differences of hall buildings from each end of Scandinavia (see fig.3).

BORG IN LOFOTEN

Placement in the landscape

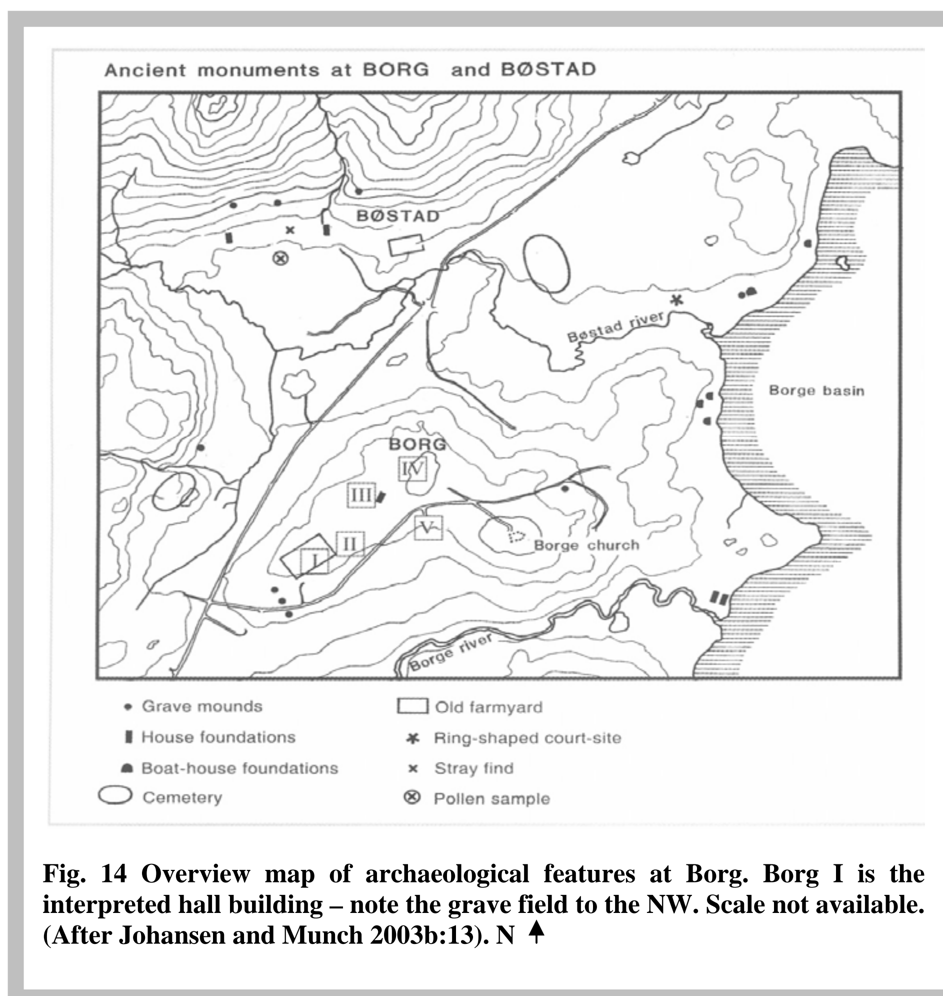
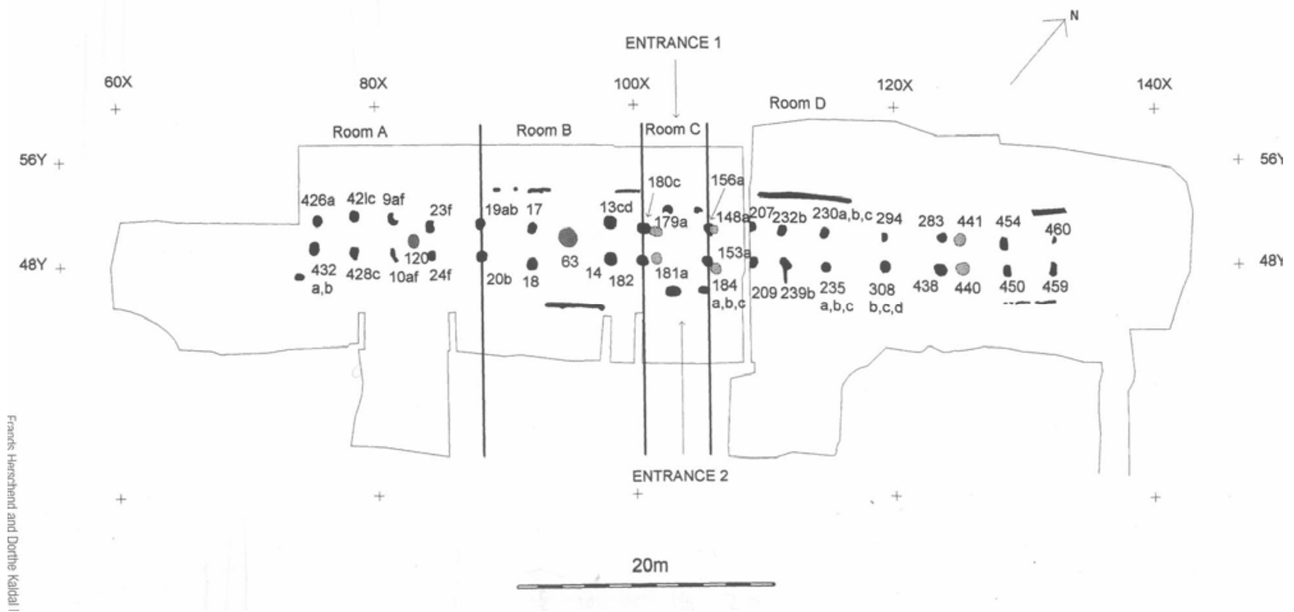


Fig. 14 Overview map of archaeological features at Borg. Borg I is the interpreted hall building – note the grave field to the NW. Scale not available. (After Johansen and Munch 2003b:13). N ↑

The site was discovered during ploughing in 1981 and was excavated 1983-1989. Two successive hall buildings were unearthed, dating c.400/500-600 and 600-1000 CE. The buildings were erected on a ridge-top in a valley surrounded by mountains. To the S, the ridge overlooks a small lake and the present day settlement; to the NW the fjord – the sailing route and main route of communication to Iron Age Borg. Borg was thus placed in a high position in the valley. The interpreted hall room

was in both phases placed at the highest section of the plateau. It seems the quality or characteristics of the room made it important to keep it at the highest point of the slightly sloping ground.

In the Iron Age a ship could sail from the North Sea through the narrow waterways into the brackish water basins, as the water level was higher and the two basins constituted a fjord (Munch 1991a:321). This route was probably used by trade ships bringing various goods to the settlement, and the control over this route may have been a large part of the power basis of the inhabitants at Borg in the Late Iron Age. A succession of boathouses have been excavated by the inner basin, Borgepollen. Two of them are of an impressive size indicating the presence of large fishing or trading ships, c. 20-30 m long (Munch 1991b:43). A number of grave mounds are situated in close proximity to the water (unfortunately, not all of them are marked on fig. 14). Their placing is conspicuous, and could be a method of communicating to visitors that the area is controlled by a certain family. This is known strategy to underline territorial claims and position in a stratified society (Rudebeck 2002:189). There is also a grave field with 11 burial mounds situated on a hilltop c. 300m northwest of Borg 1:I (Johansen and Munch 2003b:15). The graves have not been excavated, but based on some of the graves' shape and the grave field's topographical position, Johansen and Munch (2003b:15) argue that they are connected with the settlement. They do not elaborate regarding this grave field, but I believe it has a very interesting placement vis-à-vis the hall buildings. The hall and the graves lay c. 300m apart as the eagle flies, but are divided by a modern road. Whether this road has a history back to the Late Iron Age is impossible to say, but both the road and the valley create a *structural divide* between the space of the living and the space of the dead. The grave field is also undoubtedly placed at a visible point in the landscape. Catharina Rudebeck has argued for several symbolic meanings for placing graves in connection to roads; for example materialising liminality in both a spatial and symbolic sense; or else displaying a wish of keeping the dead away from the living as they could be dangerous (Rudebeck 2002:191; Steinsland 2005:346). As mentioned above, graves could also be placed at visible points to symbolise a territorial claim through the forefathers (Rudebeck 2002:191-2). The people at Borg will have lived their lives in the line of sight of the dead. The grave field at Borg seems very much connected to the hall buildings, placed at the other side of a dividing valley, and possibly a road, but still clearly visible and a large part of the surrounding cognitive landscape.



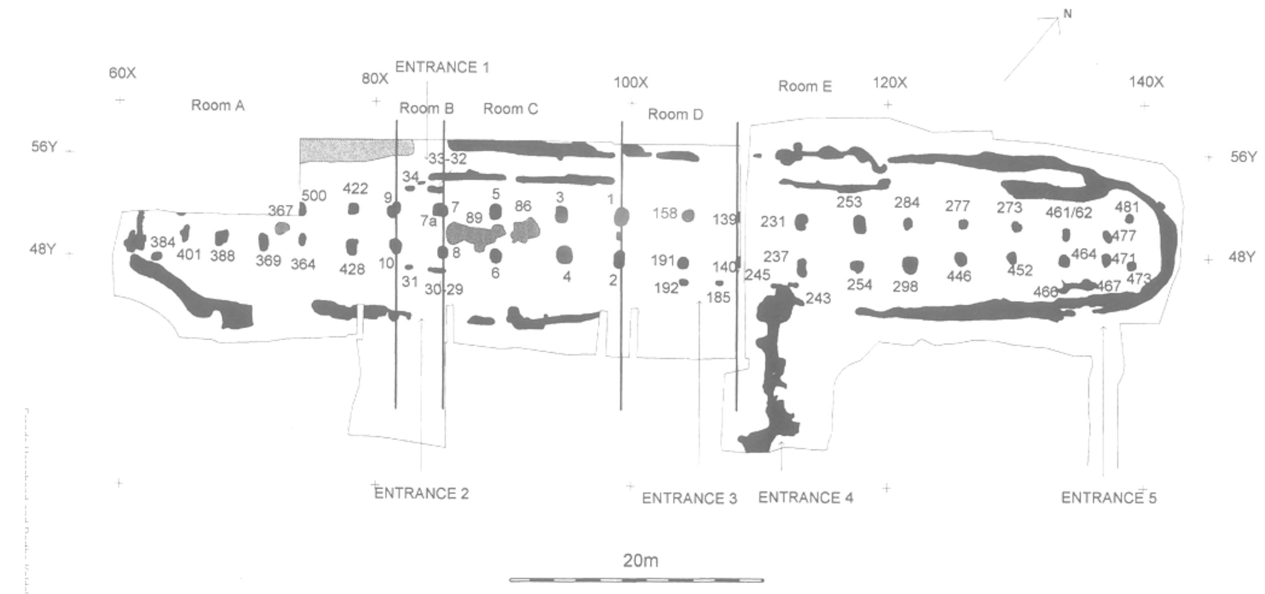


Fig. 15 Plans of Borg I:1b (above) and Borg I:1a (below). (After Herschend and Mikkelsen 2003:48,52).

Borg I:1b (c. 400/500 – 600 CE)

The earliest building was c. 64m long and between 7 and 8m wide (inner measurements) (Herschend and Mikkelsen 2003:47). It was a three-aisled trestle construction, with inner wooden walls set in a sill and exterior isolating turf walls. A drainage ditch was constructed outside the turf walls. The timber used for the roof supporting posts would have to have been imported from the mainland (Herschend and Mikkelsen 2003:69). No distinct partition walls were found in either of the two buildings, and the room division is stated to be based on construction details such as hearths, finds distribution and grouping of posts (Herschend and Mikkelsen 2003:60,62). 16 pairs of posts were identified in the building, which has been interpreted to consist of four rooms; (A) living room, (B) hall room, (C) entrance room, and (D) byre (Herschend and Mikkelsen 2003:63). There were two entrances; one from either long wall leading into a central entrance chamber (fig.15). The entrance chamber represented a distinct divide between the space of humans and the space of animals.

At least part of the building was deconstructed in the process of erecting the second house. The terrain was modified before the younger building was erected, by building a platform of earth and sand in the S-W end of the site (Herschend and Mikkelsen 2003:49,53). The two pairs of posts in room B have a distance of c. 6m according to the plan drawing, while the average in the building was 2.5m (Herschend and Mikkelsen 2003:53). Thus the posts were extended to create *an open space* in the building. In the mid-aisle between the posts there was a round hearth with fire-cracked stones. The publication is somewhat contradicting in the treatment of this hearth (feature 63), as it in some chapters is interpreted to belong to the later building (Johansen and Munch 2003a; Munch 2003a), while it by Herschend and Mikkelsen (2003:61; cf. Narmo 2009:62), as well as in the plan drawings is interpreted to belong to the older building. This writer agrees with Herschend and Mikkelsen’s argumentation that if this hearth belonged to the youngest building it would be placed directly between a pair of posts creating a substantial fire-hazard. However, the ^{14}C-dating of feature 63 was 680-890 CE (Johansen and Munch 2003a:37). Herschend and Mikkelsen reject the ^{14}C-samples when it comes to dating the older building (Herschend and Mikkelsen 2003:67). If the hearth was to belong to I:1b, it would be neatly placed mid-aisle in the centre of the room, as for instance in the case of the earlier Gudme (fig.6). This open space-parallel constitutes a link between the south Scandinavian aristocratic buildings and the north Norwegian periphery.

Only five artefacts were found in situ, all in room B and C. The finds are not outside a usual range of household artefacts from long houses, and it is therefore difficult to trace social groups and thereby social differentiation in the older building. On one hand, a connection or alliance with south Scandinavia, the size of the building, and the need or wish for a representative room all indicate that the inhabitants at Borg were or strived to be regarded as aristocracy. On the other hand, the finds do not give an impression of the settlement being unusually rich. The household must in any case have been quite large. Several smaller buildings have been registered at Borg, possibly storage buildings or dwellings for other social groups such as workers or thralls.

Borg I:1a (c. 600 – 1000 CE).

During the seventh century CE, the people at Borg decide that the c. 100-150 year old building should be replaced. At least a part of the old building is deconstructed, and a platform is created in the SW end of the construction site, where the terrain is sloping c. 1.2m. A similar, but much larger building is constructed exactly on top of the old. This building also has slightly curved walls and rounded corners. The interpreted hall room is placed on the exact same spot as the hall room in the older building, and is located on the highest point of the house foundation. The new building (Borg I:1a) is c. 11-12m wide and 83m long – the largest Late Iron Age building known to date. Like building b, it is also divided between humans and animals. The rooms are interpreted to be: room A (living quarters), room B (entrance room), C (hall), D ("room") and E (byre) (Herschend and Mikkelsen 2003:63). There were five entrances to the second building (fig.15). As seen in ch.5, analysing entrances and room division is a fruitful approach to trace social differentiation because it reflects ideas of control and access of space. The entrances were identified by pairs of smaller post holes outside the rows of roof-supporting posts. There was only one entrance on the N-W long wall (entrance 1), while entrance 2-5 were on the SE wall. Entrance 1 and 2, placed directly opposite each other, lead into the entrance room, or pre-chamber, B. In the earlier building the entrance room had separated the space of humans and the space of the animals, but this is not the case in the latter building. However, it did separate the hall room with its (at least at times) sacral space, from the everyday living quarters of the aristocratic family. Thus, room B had a structuring function in separating different spaces within the building.

Entrance 2, which was situated on the SW wall, was poorly preserved and not much could be said about its construction. Entrance 1, on the other hand, was in a much better state. There was a path leading to the threshold and a roofed passage to the building (Herschend and Mikkelsen 2003:58-9). Entrance 1 must have been elaborate, according to the publication, and with the path leading to the entrance as well as it being the only entrance on the N-W side of the building, it may have been the main entrance (Herschend and Mikkelsen 2003:59). On the other hand it did not communicate towards the fjord and sailing route, nor to the nearby settlement. In addition there was a midden right outside. The entrance does, however, communicate towards the grave field situated on the hilltop separated from the hall building by a valley. Could this entrance, in addition to being used in everyday life, be symbolically connected with the dead?

Entrance 3 is the only entrance leading into room D, which is vaguely labelled as "room" in the publication. The possible functions coach room, storage room, weapon room, treasury and private room are all suggested (Herschend and Mikkelsen 2003:60,66). The space could also be part of the hall room (personal comment Lars Erik Narmo 2009), or perhaps part of the byre. Entrance 3 is described as a 'gateway', and bore signs of having been heavily used (Herschend and Mikkelsen 2003:58). It is difficult to assign the use and function of room D, especially as only one artefact was found in situ – a loom weight. Entrance 4, leading into the 33 m long room E, was early interpreted as a cattle track. The macrofossils support the notion of room E being a byre.

Interestingly, there is still one more entrance to the building – entrance 5, on the easternmost end of the S-E long wall. The reason for why one would need a separate entrance to the byre is not treated in the publication. Svante Norr, however, has written compellingly of what he calls "the room beyond the byre" (Norr 1996). His material is from the Mälar valley from the Late Roman Period and Migration Period. It is therefore not automatically applicable to a north Norwegian building from the Merovingian and Viking Period – but it constitutes an interesting analogy. In his material, he finds that some of the long houses have an additional room between the byre and its nearest gable, sometimes equipped with a hearth (Norr 1996:158). A characteristic is that there is a greater span between the trestles than in the byre itself, and/or a separate entrance. Such a room is also identified in house III at Forsandmoen, SW Norway (Løken 2001:59; Norr 1996:160). Norr connects the innovation of this extra

room with the major shift in the material expression of the home in this period, where the social space is becoming more and more complex. He argues that this is interconnected with social changes regarding the comitatus system, concentration of land ownership rights and, not least, the innovation of the hall – all signs of power structures changing in this period. Norr argues that the context of the room beyond the byre is the same in all of Scandinavia: it is an additional living room used by groups without land ownership rights, dependant on the house and land owners (Norr 1996:161). This argument could also suggest that the interpretation of the easternmost part of building 1:Ia is such a room – living quarters for a family of dependants, whether thralls or clients belonging to the household. The finds from room E neither support nor reject such a hypothesis: an iron knife, an iron ring, an amber bead, slag and clay (Herschend and Mikkelsen 2003:75). The interpretation implies that the socio-spatial organisation at Borg was altered between the older and the younger house. Norr states that the room beyond the byre was the material expression of the status of the room's inhabitants; they were an extension of the household in the same way as their space was an extension of the classical long house (Norr 1996:162). And although Norr does not state it explicitly, these people implicitly belonged in close proximity to the space of animals, not humans.

To conclude, the social space of Borg was regulated through different sets of entrances designated for different agents. A number of different social groups would have belonged here, from traders and merchants to farmers working the land, to children, shepherds and slaves. Presumably, not every agent would even be able to enter the main building, and at the time of the later building some people might have lived in a room connected with the byre.

The hall room

Room C was 14×9m, and had a size of c. 120m^2. The find distribution gives a peculiar impression. Not only is 139 of a total of 199 in situ-finds from room C (c. 70%), but the function of the finds differ in the building as well. In room A, the interpreted living quarters, what Herschend & Mikkelsen call 'daily life-finds' (ceramics, beads, soapstone vessels, a small brooch, etc.) and heavy production waste is overrepresented. 'Luxury items', on the other hand (glass vessels, figural gold foils, Tating-ware) and indication of crafts (mainly textile-related artefacts), represent the majority of room C (Herschend and Mikkelsen 2003:63-65). In the top fill of just one post hole (no. 1) ten shards of glass, one shard of

Tating ware, three figural gold foils, one possible baking-slab of mica slate, one whetstone, one soapstone shard and two pieces of iron slag were found. At this point the reader should be made aware that glass shards from this period have only been found in *one* other location in all of northern Norway (Holand 1992). At Borg, a total of 115 Iron Age glass shards representing 15-16 different vessels were found. The location of some of the artefacts in the top of the post fill indicates that these artefacts were deposited after the removal of the post, and must therefore have been left behind after the deconstruction (Herschend and Mikkelsen 2003:63). This is not emphasised in the publication, which only briefly states that two other artefacts (an axe and a potsherd) found in the inner ditch in room E are interpreted as votive finds (Herschend and Mikkelsen 2003:63). Immediately N of the central hearth there was a phosphate concentration which is interpreted to indicate "some kind of fixture" (Arrhenius and Freij 2003:77), like a bench or dais (Herschend and Mikkelsen 2003:65). Finds related to textile production suggests that a loom was set up on the NW side of a hearth, while spinning took place on the SE side (Holand 2003a:139). This is interesting, seeing that the luxury finds as well as the ordinary household objects seem to be concentrated to one special area of room C, in the NE corner.

An important reason for the interpretation of one of the rooms at Borg as a hall room is the five figural gold foils discovered in connection with posthole no 1, the northernmost post. The post had been replaced twice (Munch 2003a:254). Two gold foils were found in a ploughing layer outside of the building, but are interpreted as belonging to the post hole; a third came from the top layer of the post hole. The last two foils were discovered underneath a stone deep in the last phase of the post, assumedly intentionally deposited. The figural gold foils at Borg may depict Freyr and Gerðr or Óðinn and Skade according to Steinsland's hypothesis (ch.4) (Munch 2003a:259), and is also here interpreted to be an important part of the coding of the hall, as discussed in the previous chapter. Another indicating that Borg was of a high social standing are the types of production present: silver forging, production of soapstone vessels, and textile production (Herschend and Mikkelsen 2003:63). An object of special character is a jet ring fragment found in post hole no. 3, either deposited intentionally or in connection with post replacements or floor cleaning (Munch 2003a:254). 56 of 60 ceramic shards were classified as Tating-ware, which is only known from two other sites in Norway, all of them in situ-finds from rooms A and C (Holand 2003c:203-4). Tating-ware is sometimes interpreted as Christian, but is frequently found in Scandinavian pre-Christian graves (Holand 2003c:208), which indicate that the pottery has a symbolic meaning also in ON cult. A golden

pointer for manuscripts was also found in room C, probably originating in Anglo-Saxon areas (Munch 2003b:247). The glass vessels mentioned above are also important in the interpretation of room C as a hall room. The typology indicates that there were three vessels per century, or c. one per generation (Holand 2003b:211). The most spectacular glass vessel was represented by 23 slightly green shards with applied gold foil and a central cross motif (Holand 2003b:219).

The artefact distribution directs our attention to room C, and especially the NE corner. What was special about this space? Munch places a lot of weight on the earlier mentioned round hearth (feature 63 – see above). She argues the opposite of Mikkelsen and Herschend; namely that the feature does belong to the younger building. She interprets this hearth as a 'cultic hearth', only used at very special occasions when the fire hazard was controlled (Munch 2003a:260-261). Munch relates the find concentration, the gold foils, the special hearth (which the present author believes belong to the older phase), and the phosphate reading which indicated some kind of fixture; and argues that the high seat was placed somewhere in the northern corner of the room (Munch 2003a:261-2). Obviously the hall room in the younger building had some special characteristics, as did its predecessor. The characteristics changed, however, from the older building to the younger. The older building had a spatial organisation which constituted a strong link between south Scandinavian aristocracy and north Norwegian periphery; the wish for *an open space* around the central fireplace. However, it lacked particularly rich or special finds. The latter building was not built after the early south Scandinavian hall model; but did have rich imports, including rare glass vessels, a manuscript pointer and Tating-ware, in addition to the artefact perhaps most associated with hall buildings: figural gold foils. The southern Scandinavian idea of a representative room used for feasting, cult and production seems to have travelled all the way to Borg, perhaps through an alliance or relationship with a South Scandinavian chieftain. In the later phase at Borg the desire for an open space became less prominent, but links to other power strategies from South Scandinavia were upheld as discussed in the previous chapter.

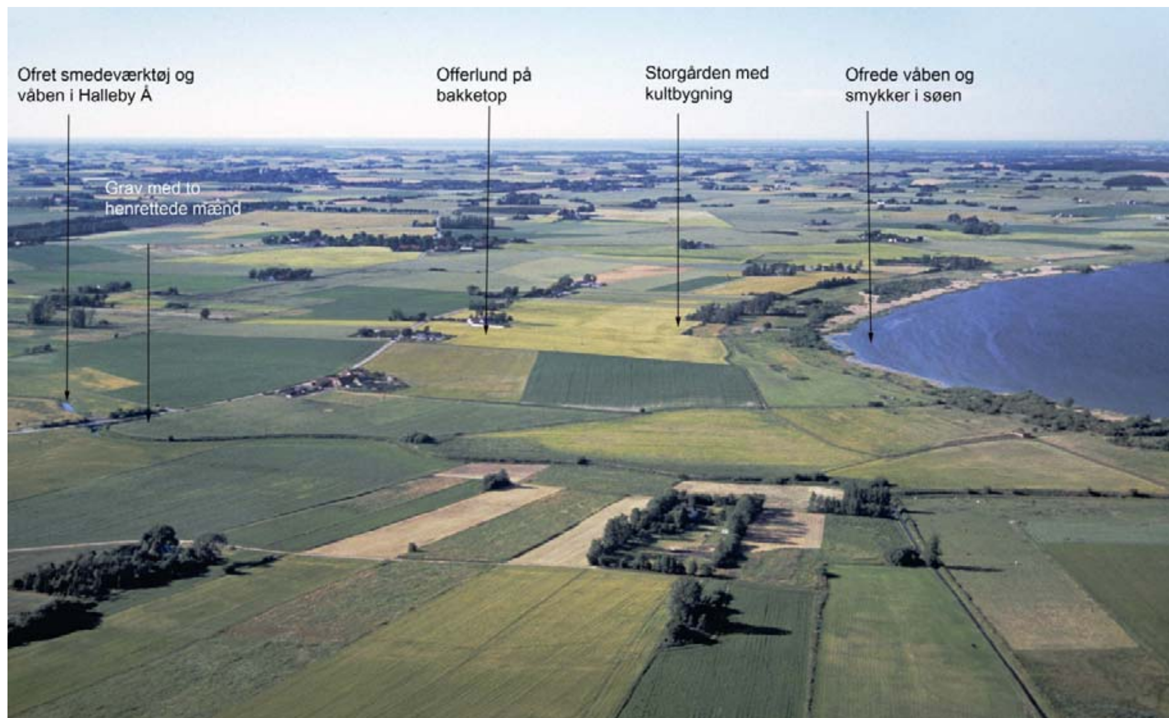


Fig. 16 Overview of the landscape at Tissø looking N. From left to right: -Deposited metal work tools and weapons in Halleby Å. -Grave with two executed men. -Sacrificial grove on hilltop. -Manor with cultic building. -Sacrificed weapons and jewellry in the lake. Illustration: www.natmus.dk.

Placement in the landscape

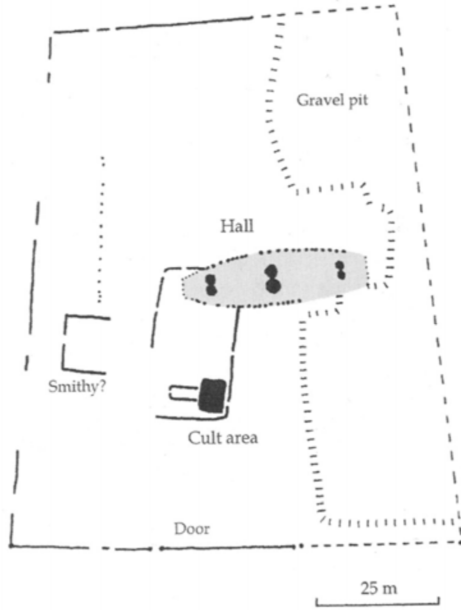
The site was shortly introduced in ch.5. To the W of Tissø the landscape is flat with moraine sediments, while to the E the landscape is more uneven and covered in small hills. The excavated site is located on the W bank of the lake, c. 7 km from the coast, sheltered from the wind by a small hill (Jensen 2004:166). The placement of the settlement is strategic, as Halleby Å provided a possible sailing route from the ocean, even for large ships. Several smaller rivers also connect with the sea, thus a large part of the population in W Zealand had water way access to Tissø (Jørgensen 1998; 2002:218). As mentioned in the presentation of the site, the only land route in the Late Iron Age was probably across the bridge over Halleby Å. The entire site measures c. 500,000 m^2. Surprisingly, no grave mounds or grave fields have been found in connection with the complex, except the grave of the two executed men by the river, although the excavators actively sought to locate them (Jørgensen 2002:245).

The buildings

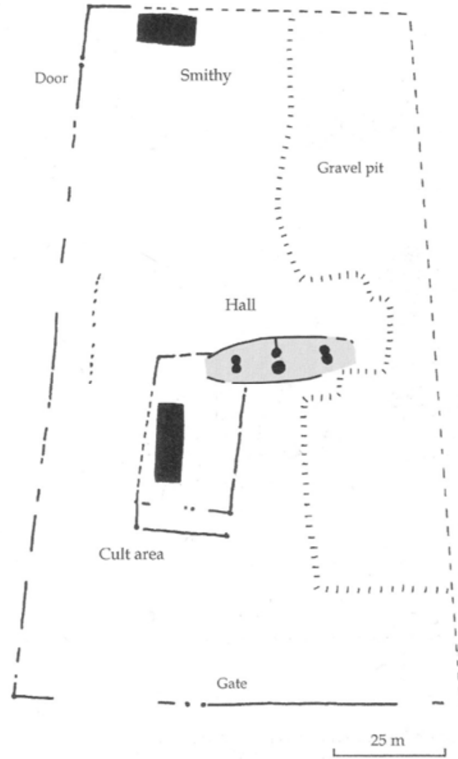
The earliest phase of the settlement was constructed early in the 7th century. The area around the hall was bordered by a fence, and covered approx. 10,000 m^2. Several entrances in the enclosure were found, and a smithy was located just inside the fence in the N. In the central part of the area a second enclosure, rectangular in shape, was identified, signifying a separated and controlled space. This enclosed area was connected with the W part of the hall building, as well as a second, separate building (see fig.17). In the first phase the hall was c. 36×11.5m, while the smaller building measured c. 5×6m. An entrance was situated on the E side of the fence. The hall building's post holes were unusually deep, c. 60cm in diameter but 3m in depth (!), possibly indicating that the building had two floors (Jørgensen 2002:231). The walls were convex, with stone filled ditches as fundament, and there were five pairs of roof supporting posts. Two entrances were found; one close to the NE gable, one close to the SW gable – this entrance gave direct access from the smaller enclosed area. The structure of the buildings is very unusual, as there are no indications of agricultural production. None of the buildings could be linked to the agricultural economy (Jørgensen 1998:234-238; 2002:229-231).

In the second phase, dated to the 8th and 9th centuries, the unusual farm structure continues. The hall building as well as the enclosed area is rebuilt – the hall keeps its length but the width is reduced to 10m. The two entrances stay the same. In the S end of the fence, a 5m broad portal, wide enough to accommodate wagons is built. The smaller, enclosed area is extended; the small building is replaced by a somewhat larger building, c.6×20m. The smithy is continued in the northern part of the area. And a second building is probably erected just inside the southern enclosure (Jørgensen 1998:238; 2002:231). During the third phase, the spatial layout of the hall area alters. The entire area is extended to the W and S. The smaller, enclosed area is separated from the hall building, and now constitutes a separate entity. The separate building in the enclosed area is moved, and is constructed by only two pairs of roof supporting posts, with an entrance in each gable. The hall building itself is rebuilt with a new width of 11.5m. The smithy remains in the northern end of the area. Five new buildings are constructed in the W; four of them are interpreted as storage buildings, perhaps for storing tributes from neighbouring settlements, and the number of finds increases (Jørgensen 1998:238-241; 2002:231-235).

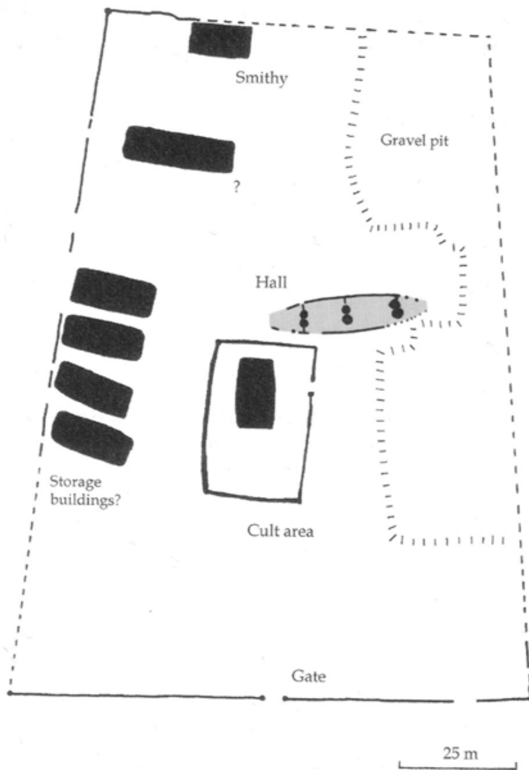
Phase 1



Phase 2



Phase 3



Phase 4

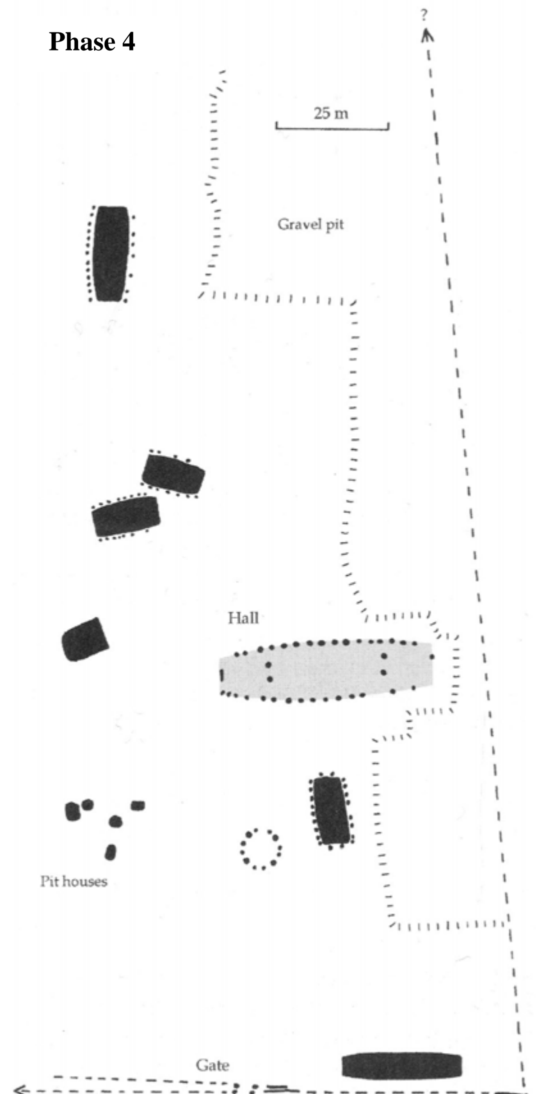


Fig. 17 Plans of Tissø phase 1-4. (After Söderberg 2005:141-145), arrangement by the author. Direction not available.

The last phase of the settlement, from the end of the 10th and beginning of the 11th century, is characterised by profound changes. The hall building is constructed with only 4 pairs of roof supporting posts, and measures c. 48×12.5 m. The separate, enclosed area disappears and two new buildings are constructed on this spot; a circular or perhaps cross-shaped house, and a larger building (Jørgensen 1998:241; 2002:235-238). Sometime in the first half of the 11th century, the activity at Tissø cease. As mentioned in ch.6 this happens at approximately the same time as the two men are executed and placed in a grave S in the area, c. 1030-1040 (Jørgensen 2002:223).

Artefact distribution

Thousands of metal artefacts are found at Tissø, partly because of extended use of metal detectors. Two silver depots and the large golden neck ring were all found in the southern workshop area. Characteristic finds like glass shards, weapons, gilded artefacts of silver and bronze, coins and riding gear are all concentrated to the hall buildings and the smaller, enclosed area (Jørgensen 2002:225,229). A special find category from Tissø is various amulets. C. 20 þórr's hammers; one miniature fire-steel; an unspecified number of pendants interpreted as greeting valkyries; and an unspecified number of figures of single females (valkyries or Freya) have been found inside the enclosure (Jørgensen 2002:234). This find category underlines the cultic-religious role that Tissø clearly played. Another special find reveals something about the use of the hall at Tissø: in the wall ditch an ornamented tuning device for a musical instrument, probably a lyre, was found (Jørgensen 2002:231). It is worth noting that no figural gold foils have been found at Tissø. As discussed in ch.4, this finds category is intimately associated with hall buildings and power legitimating in recent research (Lundqvist and Arcini 2003:64; Steinsland 1991).

Unfortunately, the publication of the excavations does not go into detail regarding where artefacts are found *within* the buildings. It is therefore difficult to trace the utilisation of the different rooms. However, it is clear that in the first three phases the halls were divided between two eastern and two western rooms, with partitioning walls connected with the pairs of roof supporting posts. Both the bone material and the artefacts were concentrated in the eastern rooms, while the western rooms are empty and, like the rest of the enclosure area, give the impression of being cleaned out. The find of animal bones in the E part of the buildings has lead to an interpretation of the feasting taking place in this area, while the empty, western

rooms are interpreted as living quarters (Jørgensen 2002:238). In my opinion this could also indicate that food preparation took place in the eastern rooms, while the feasts themselves took place in the later cleaned western rooms – thus separating the representative and economical spaces. The fact that the W entrance had a direct access to the separate building in the enclosure during the first two phases may support this hypothesis.

There are some indications of differentiated social groups belonging at Tissø. First of all, I assume that the settlement was under the control of an aristocratic family. The jewellery implies that these people belonged to the absolute élite (Jørgensen 2002:243). Secondly, the weapons and ornamented riding gear clearly indicate that warriors/retainers belonged in the hall area (Jørgensen 2002:243). Third, the work shop and market areas N and S of the central area have numerous booths, pit houses, tents and other dwelling structures, presumably occupied by crafters and merchants. These did not stay permanently, perhaps because the need for their services varied during the year, but the dwellings are reused on several occasions. However, there are two exceptions: the smiths and the jewellery producers (Jørgensen 2002:241). The smithy clearly belonged inside the fenced area during the entire duration of the settlement, c. 350 years. Also, the jewellery production took place in the entire area including in the hall and the enclosed area – indicating that this craft and its producers had a special standing. A group which is seldom traceable in archaeological material was also identified at Tissø, namely children. The remains of a small child, 3-4 years old, were found in a pit house immediately W of the enclosure. As Lars Jørgensen laconically states, this is not the most natural place to expect human remains (Jørgensen 1998:242).

The separated space

The unique structure of hall, enclosed area and small, separate building was at Tissø conserved for almost 350 years (Jørgensen 2002: 234). This implies that the spatial ordering of the settlement was upheld and rebuilt for c. 10-12 generations. The fact that the hall and separate building were controlled by two enclosures also implies that the space was given special characteristics. Borders and fences are important in power negotiations because they communicate inclusion and exclusion (Hållans and Andersson 1997); and a large part of society was apparently excluded from the inner centres of Tissø. It is possible to interpret the small enclosure and separate building in a cultic context. The large amount of amulets as well as the sacral name indicates that Tissø as a place had mythological-religious connotations.

The structures inside the enclosure held an un-proportional amount of animal bones compared to the rest of the settlement. The child remains were found in a pit house immediately W of the enclosure (Jørgensen 1998:242). A preliminary osteological analysis suggests that the horses at Tissø were larger than horses from contemporary Danish settlements. This could imply trained war horses (Jørgensen 2002:243), but may in addition be connected with Tissø's role as a cult centre. On the basis of these arguments it seems reasonable to interpret the separate building as a *hov* (Jørgensen 1998:243). Lars Jørgensen argues that the people in control of Tissø belonged to the highest social stratum in Late Iron Age Denmark. He compares Tissø with the settlement at Lejre, and finds that Tissø's lack of economical buildings and graves could mean that Tissø was not a permanent aristocratic residence, but rather a king's farm used in a system of mobile power execution – i.e. a seasonal settlement for the king and his retainers. Lejre, on the other hand, is interpreted to be the main residence of the king who perhaps was in control of the entire island of Zealand (Jensen 2004:172; Jørgensen 2002:245).

BORG AND TISSØ: COMPARE AND CONTRAST

At first glance, the settlements at Borg and Tissø seem very dissimilar. The two central places belong in each end of Scandinavia. While Tissø was close to the political and religious contesting of the continent during the second half of the first millennium, Borg was situated in the periphery of the Scandinavian cultural sphere. As an example, the distance from Borg to Danevirke equals the distance from Danevirke to Rome (Näsman and Roesdahl 2003:283). Comparatively, their hierarchical position seems to differ. Although the settlement at Borg is important on a north Norwegian regional scale, it is probably not a residence for a centralised royal power in the way Tissø is interpreted to be. Within its local context the site at Borg is rich, on a comparative scale it is not on the same level as Tissø. However it should be noted that the image of Tissø and other halls being richer in artefacts than Borg could in part be due to the excavation technique. At Borg post holes and other constructional elements were sectioned, leaving half the fill unexcavated for the benefit of future archaeology (Herschend and Mikkelsen 2003:43).

At Tissø the production seems to have been moved to a separate area distant from the hall. At Borg several types of production took place *within* the hall rooms. This implies a different approach to what kind of space the hall constitutes, and which social groups belong inside.

However, jewellery production and metal work seems to belong to the hall area in both cases (Holand 2003a:136; Jørgensen 2002:240-241). At Tissø the sacral space is likewise extracted from the hall building, and is in phase 3 completely extracted as a separate entity. The ordering of the space thus seems more complex at Tissø than at Borg, as the space is more portioned and different utilitarian zones are moved further apart. This may be connected with Kent's theory outlined in ch.2, postulating a reciprocity between spatial partitioning and social complexity (Kent 1996). Tissø may belong in a more complexly ordered society and thus have increased spatial partitioning.

The communication of power differs at the two sites. The hall building at Tissø is not communicating outwards to the same degree. For instance, the hall and enclosure are placed in shelter from the wind, next to a hilltop. As we have seen, a characteristic trait of the hall buildings is their high placement in the terrain, no matter the exposure to wind and storm. There is no known permanent nearby settlement to communicate power towards at Tissø, but the seasonal marketplace and the probable large ship traffic could have been subject to a strategic communication of power. Secondly, the dead seem to play a less prominent part of the power negotiations at Tissø than at Borg. Jørgensen used the lack of graves as an argument for Tissø being one of several royal farms, but not a permanent residence. At Borg we have seen indications that the dead – and perhaps other ancestral or sacral powers – were an important part of the settlement's cognitive surroundings. The practise of sacrificing weapons in the lake at Tissø continues throughout the period, and may be seen as a communication towards sacral powers – but we do not know who sacrificed the artefacts; i.e. the aristocracy, the warriors, or the crafters and merchants. Weapons, smith's tools and jewellery were all sacrificed in the river and the lake, implying that several social groups made sacrifices in Týr's lake. Furthermore, 50 finds over 400 years means that one artefact was deposited every 8 years – not indicating a very frequent tradition. Tissø also lacks the otherwise characteristic find category of hall buildings; the figural gold foils.

Could the diverging spatial ordering at Tissø and the lack of figural gold foils be due to the fact that the ruler did not have to contest or display power in the same way as at Borg and other hall sites? The hall building and ordering of the landscape at Borg was still used in power communications where the projection of power towards the landscape by seeking legitimacy from the ancestors, was the most effective way to euphemise the social

organisation. But Borg is, as we have seen, not a regional centre to the extent that Tissø is. The seasonal marketplace at Tissø may even be seen as a small-scale proto-city. Tissø is perhaps an example of the stratigraphical social organisation being so internalised in society that it is no longer necessary to negotiate with the surroundings in the same way; the king's power is perhaps rather negotiated in other arenas, such as the *thing* (Skre 2001:12). In conclusion, the royal residence at Tissø is herein interpreted as a material manifestation of the transition to early statehood in Scandinavia.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER AND PRELIMINARY RESULTS

In the present chapter two hall sites from each end of Scandinavia have been analysed comparatively; revealing similarities and differences between the *idea of the hall* in different geographical areas (cf. research question 1). The Borg hall is a room in a multifunctional longhouse shared by humans and animals. Tissø is interpreted as a royal farm for a mobile royal power. However, there are shared spatial ideals, architectural features and metaphorical connotations between the two. The representative functions of the hall, the religious practices, and the role of the feasting in power strategies is not diverging in the two cases. The idea of the hall as an arena for ritualised behaviour and a strategy for distinction seems to be shared by the two sites. As seen in ch.6, the halls seem to have a shared life story where the roof supporting posts are in continual focus. This implies that several social strata used the strategy of the hall as a representative room with political and cosmological connotations as part of their power negotiations, but that these strategies varied depending on the local context.

PART III: *IN THE BETWEEN* – DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

8. Between the real and ideal – The hall in metaphors

In the preceding chapters nine hall sites in Scandinavia, 250-1050 CE, have been analysed from a perspective of power. In ch.1 the problem statement was introduced: *how was the hall as a building, social space and mythological idea used to differentiate people and exercise power in space, place and the mythological (symbolic) realm*. The theoretical framework presented in ch.2 is used as an overarching structure for the entire thesis. As a heuristic device to grasp the practices and intimate interaction between agent and built environment, a biographical perspective was applied in ch.6. The social life of the halls was divided into five phases representing a metaphorical life-cycle. A second archaeological analysis was conducted by comparing two contemporary but different hall sites: Tissø, Denmark and Borg, Norway (ch.7). The aim of ch.7 was to treat the material with greater depth and within a local context, displaying that the sites played different roles in their respective communities, but at the same time utilised many of the same power strategies.

As we have seen, there is a strong connection between material culture and mythology in the Late Iron Age. Some of the connections between myth and material culture were discussed, such as the concept of 'the golden hall' and its possible link with figural gold foils (ch.6). In ch.4 it was argued that after the structural changes in the 6th century, where settlement patterns, cultic depositions, language and material culture underwent profound changes; the aristocracy managed to 'coup' the official cult and connect it with the *arena of the ruler* (Fabech 1994). This brings us to the present chapter, 'between the real and ideal'. The hall building seems to have belonged somewhere between the real and ideal spheres of Iron Age society. In this chapter, material from the preceding chapters are extracted and discussed further by using a framework of metaphors. Unfortunately, the limited scope of this thesis does not allow exploring every idea and issue from the analyses. I have chosen to concentrate on these **five key metaphors** in order to answer the problem statement (above):

- The hall as a centre
- The hall as an exclusive domain
- The hall as liminal space
- The hall and personhood
- The hall as a symbolic system

Before we dive into a metaphorical exploration of these issues I will add a few thoughts about the nature of metaphors and the metaphorical process. "In the most general sense metaphor involves comprehending some entity from the point of view, or perspective, of another", writes Tilley (1999:4). Humans beings are inherently metaphorical (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), and so is material culture (Tilley 1999). In ch.2 it was established that material culture is multi-vocal: it has any number of both functional and symbolic/metaphorical meanings.

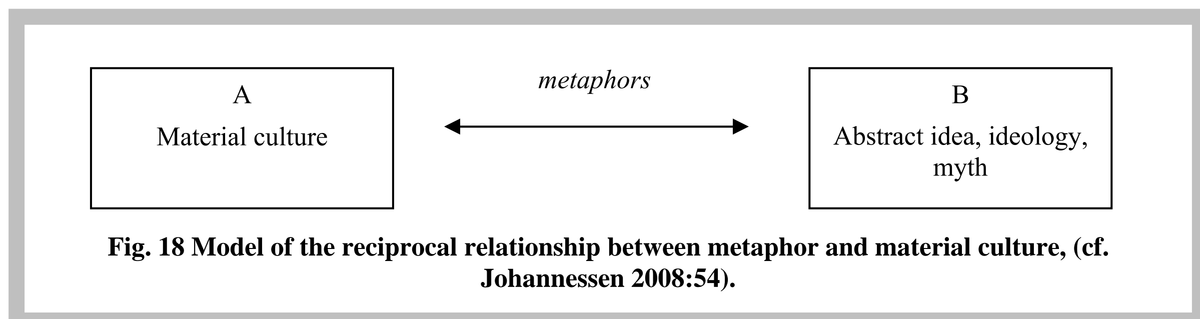


Fig. 18 Model of the reciprocal relationship between metaphor and material culture, (cf. Johannessen 2008:54).

Metaphors exist *in the between*, they challenge the perception of strict categories and create unexpected links between different phenomena (Hastrup 1999:172). Metaphors also signify both inclusion and exclusion. Within a culture or habitus people share and understand common metaphors, which in turn are efficient demonstrative tools of signalling if a person is an *outsider*. Therefore metaphors in a wide sense, including language, actions and material culture are both inclusive by reinforcing links between individuals and groups, while simultaneously being exclusive and may even be "...utilised as vehicles of power in the sense of social dominion and control" (Tilley 1999:9). The idealised hall and its connotations are metaphorical and exclusive in several ways, and in the following we shall explore a few of these metaphorical aspects of the hall.

THE HALL AS THE CENTRE

The first metaphorical meaning of the hall is the idea of the hall as a cognitive centre of the world. This idea partly originates from the textual sources. It seems that in the Eddic poetry the words *hǫll* or *salr* have been used as synonyms or metaphors for the world (*Rigsþula, Vǫluspá* 64). As mentioned in ch.2, a house or dwelling metaphorically represents the world or the cosmos in various cultures (Eliade 2002 [1957]). A quite common metaphor is that of the cosmos as a house, where the roof represents the sky and the posts or walls are holding it up (Nordberg 2003:164). Religious scholar Mircea Eliade, who applied an Indo-European comparative approach, writes that 'our world' is always perceived as being *in the centre* (cf. the *innangarðs-útangarðs* model from ch.4). Eliade (2002 [1957]:29) argues that the order of

the world becomes the archetype for any human construction. This is especially valid for the cultic space (Eliade 2002 [1957]:37). Religious historian Andreas Nordberg hypothesises that the hall was perceived as a metaphor for the cosmos in the Iron Age. The world tree Yggdrasill is often interpreted as an *axis mundi*, a world axis connecting the worlds of humans and gods, in the ON mythology. Nordberg (2003:173-175) argues that the idea of Yggdrasill as an axis mundi has at some point been mirrored to Valhǫll, which means that the mythological as well as the aristocratic halls was intimately linked with the cosmos, the gods and the world order. The idealised hall space was *transcendental* as it simultaneously belonged to this world and the divine world. The agents in the aristocratic halls were certainly aware of the mythological image of feasting in the hall – one of the characteristic traits of Valhǫll is the relentless feasting in a continual cycle of death and life, strife and consumption. The connection between Valhǫll and the aristocratic hall must have been obvious in the Late Iron Age and may have contributed to the sacral or transcendental aspects of the real hall room – and has legitimated the asymmetrical power structures of society.

This strategy was made even more effective by the cosmological model *innangarðs – útangarðs* (ch.4). The hall was seemingly not the parallel to Miðgarðr, but to Ásgarðr, which was the home of the gods and reflection of the aristocratic residence. According to Eliade (2002 [1957]:37) it is unproblematic to perceive many *imago mundi* – centres of the world – as contemporary, because it is not the physical but *sacral space* which is in focus, and the latter allows countless connections with the transcendental. This could mean that the Iron Age people had knowledge of several halls and still perceived them as the centre of the world; or had different types of centres in addition to the hall buildings, such as border areas, hill tops, lakes, groves and the like (cf. Lund 2009:63-64). The mythological concepts regarding the hall – especially the motif Valhǫll – has by religious scholars been interpreted as an idealised version of the cosmological order, as well as an *axis mundi*, a sacral place connecting the world of man and the world of the gods (Nordberg 2003). In this sense the hall space was characterised by transcendence and was a meeting place of different powers.

Regarding the archaeological remains, this idea seems to have materialised in several ways. The first material trait to be discussed is the halls' position in the landscape. In ch.4 it was argued that landscapes are socially constructed and an important part of political and other power negotiations. As I hope to have demonstrated in this thesis, *space is ideological*

(Lefebvre 1991:44). It has become increasingly evident through the analyses in the present thesis that the hall buildings cannot be spatially analysed extracted from their contextual placing in the cognitive landscape. Constructing monuments is an effective way of freezing the eye of the beholder in a contested landscape, as it changes character and is suddenly inexplicably focused on the nodal point of the monument (Tilley 1994:204). The hall was an important part of the *geography of power*. A high placing was clearly important at all sites, except two. In that connection it is interesting that three locations in the selection – Högom, Borg and Gamla Uppsala – have names referring to height (cf. ch.6). Furthermore, it is worth noting that the word *hov* itself means height or hill (Söderberg 2003a:294) and, easily overlooked, the most esteemed position of power in Iron Age society was the *high seat*. Elevation, but also architectural features, were important methods to communicate power – i.e. we saw in ch.5 that the Lejre hall was constructed with an ideological façade to convey the inner spatial ordering to an outsider. Thus the analyses indicate that the buildings were communicating towards settlements (the closest neighbours and social allies, employees and antagonists), communication routes (guests, visitors, traders) and to other powers in society – the dead, forefathers and/or deities and supernatural beings (see ch.6,7, below). The latter may have been just as important power negotiations as the struggle with competing aristocratic families. The idea of the hall as cognitive centre was efficiently communicated through the architecture and placement of the hall.

The metaphor of the hall as the centre had other material manifestations as well. At the end of ch.6 I emphasised the continual focus on the roof supporting posts throughout the halls' social life. We shall now explore the idea of the roof supporting posts as a perfect symbiosis between the material and the metaphorical. A continual focal point in this thesis, the roof supporting posts seem to be important in practices connected with construction, rebuilding and deconstruction of the halls. What made this architectural feature significant? First of all, the posts were *anchored in the ground*. In one case, Borg, the posts were anchored in earlier graves. Whether this was intentional or not, it seems improbable that the space so meticulously chosen for constructing a hall was without signification. Anchoring the posts in the ground could be another way of connecting the building with the ancestors, the dead, or other sacral powers. Secondly, the posts were used in communication processes. As seen in ch.6 depositions of various valuable artefacts under the posts was very common – especially posts interpreted to be connected with the high seat. The same actions take place during reconstructions of the halls and even after the posts have been removed. These rituals were in

ch.6 connected with initialising or coding/decoding the hall space, perhaps in connection with initiation rites for new chieftains. The posts were also in at least six cases removed during the deconstruction – perhaps, as indicated by *Eyrbyggjenes saga*, because they had a cultic meaning (ch.6). The roof supporting posts may have been perceived as a direct channel of communication between the mythological and earthly realms. As mentioned above, the posts supporting the roof are metaphorically understood as the posts holding up the sky in many cultures. Thus, the halls' monumental posts were perhaps metaphorically *anchored in the ground* but also *holding up the sky*. Artefacts connected with drinking, feasting and myths were deposited under them, as well as jewellery and other golden items – creating 'a golden hall' (ch.6). The posts stood more or less as pillars of the earth, creating a material and metaphorical link between the aristocratic and mythological realms, thus underlining the idea of the hall as the centre of the world.

In conclusion, the idea of the hall as a cognitive centre is preserved in the later written sources, but may also be interpreted from the monumental architecture, the high and communicative placement, and the continual focus on the roof supporting posts.

THE HALL AS AN EXCLUSIVE DOMAIN

The second metaphorical (and material) aspect of the hall to be discussed is its exclusivity. As stated in the introduction, the hall is interpreted as a result of surplus production in a politically laden environment with strong societal differentiation. The surplus production was used by the élite to construct a monumental architectural feature, while creating a purely social space extracted from the economical everyday life of the Iron Age (Herschend 1993). The hall space was first and foremost a place for social activity, whether in the form of feasting or telling stories around the fire. In *Germania* (15) as well as in *Rigsþula* (32) – written over a thousand years apart – it is pointed out that the upper stratum of the Germanic society had the luxury of committing themselves to drink and sloth all day. The notion of not having to work must have been quite extraordinary. The idea of exclusivity and differentiation materialised in several ways (ch.6). As discussed earlier, there are several instances of fences and enclosures in the material (Gamla Uppsala, Järrestad, Tissø). The intention of borders is not only to physically separate agents from each other. Borders are communicative and ambivalent, depending on perspective (Hållans and Andersson 1997). Visible and invisible borders have separated agents not only in the physical but also in the social space. The notion

of exclusivity and control further materialises in the regulation of entrances (front entrance or back entrance, portal or narrow door) and room division (areas for food preparation, the room beyond the byre). The door and threshold may metaphorically be understood as *the between*, a transitional space constituting a boundary between two spaces confronting each other – whether these represent the inside and outside, the sacred and profane, the individual and collective, the king and subject, or all of the above (Bourdieu 1977:130-132; Eliade 2002 [1957]:107-109; Herschend 1997:59).

We may also connect the abovementioned ideas with the *spatial ideals* presented in ch.6: the *open space* and the *separated space*. The first was centred on the focal point of the hearth. Why was the hearth clearly emphasised? The focus on the fireplace is possibly connected with the aforementioned concept of the hall being an extracted social arena. The second spatial ideal, the *separated space*, may be understood in the light of Bordieu's notion of distinction. The interpreted separate *hov* buildings are not contrary to the idea of the hall. A separate cultic building was constructed where the economy and social organisation would allow. As the idea of the hall travelled further and further, the striving aristocracy needed new forms of distinction (Bourdieu 1995). We may therefore see the two diverging spatial ideals as a result of a chronological development of the *idea of exclusivity*. As discussed in ch.4 and 8 and in the introduction to this chapter, it was argued that there was a break in cultic activity during the 6th century CE. The public cult was moved inside, made exclusive and directly connected to the upper strata of society in the hall. After this break, the earlier ideal of an open space around the fireplace continued, but simultaneously new forms of materialising exclusion emerged – such as Järrestad and Tissø's enclosures within enclosures, or the shift from a central entrance room to peripheral entrances. These changes are interpreted as an effort of further social distinction.

In conclusion, it is argued that the physical hall provided differentiated spaces, controlled areas, various entrances, and spatial ideals that not only worked to separate agents in a geographical, physical sense; but simultaneously created cognitive spaces and practices which kept a large part of society physically and mentally *outside* the exclusive domain of the hall.

THE HALL AS LIMINAL SPACE

It may seem like a paradox that the hall – which, it was argued above, constituted a centre of the world, a micro-cosmos – also had liminal aspects. Nevertheless, the present author believes that several *liminal practices* took place inside the hall. It will be argued that the reason for this unlikely utilisation of space is the potency of the union between chaos and order, or the *innangarðs* and *útangarðs*. First, a few words on liminality: van Gennep's theory of *rites de passage* has been frequently cited throughout the thesis (Gennep 1960 [1909]). Victor Turner (1999 [1964]) developed the theory further while emphasising the liminal phase, the 'between'. Several of the practices discussed in this thesis have liminal qualities: feasting, initiation rituals and rebuilding, production, and communication with the dead.

The feast as a liminal practice

It was established in ch.6 that the standing hall provided an arena for ritual, with special regard to the feast. This was especially true for the *veizla*, where agents sought to maximise their symbolic capital through power negotiations such as the queen's ritual pouring of mead, bragger, and gift exchange (cf. Dietler 2001). The situation of the feast – contesting rank in a ritualised theatre – may not be a *rite de passage* in its strictest sense, but in my opinion the feast does have liminal qualities. The social status of the agent may change; he may lose or gain symbolic capital through the practices of the feast such as the mead pouring ceremony. As part of the *blót* animals were ritually slaughtered – also a liminal practice. Social status was under negotiation in a very public and ritualised way; thus the social space of the hall was *exclusive*, *ritualised* and *liminal* at the times of the feast.

Crafting as a liminal practice

Secondly, the analysis showed strong connections between the halls and various types of production. Crafting may be perceived as a metaphorical *transformation*. In ch.6 it was suggested that in the hall's standing life it provided an arena for transformation especially through metal work and textile production (cf. appendix 3). Every site in the present thesis, with the exception of the cleaned Gamla Uppsala, contains finds related to textile production, either within the hall (Högom, Borg, Helgö, Slöinge) or in a pit house or workshop area (Järrestad, Gudme, Tissø, perhaps Lejre). It should be noted that a textile-related pit house at Järrestad is situated within the enclosure next to the hall and *hov*, indicating a special status

(Söderberg 2003c:399). As mentioned in ch.6 weaving and spinning seems intimately connected with the halls, but the topic is rarely in focus. Could this be because textile production is perceived as a female activity? At Slöinge the textile production finds are found exclusively in the same contexts as figural gold foils and glass vessels, which "...may say something regarding the status of textile production" (Lundqvist and Arcini 2003:82). This is, of course, true for other halls as well – at Borg a loom was set up in the hall room itself (Holand 2003a:139). Like other forms of crafting, textile production is a transformative process; concretely through the action of transforming thread to weave; metaphorically as a practice of weaving an image, weaving destiny. The practice of spinning is in the mythology connected with the *norns*, who control fate (Kristoffersen 1995:13; Steinsland 2005:249-250). Textile production may be connected with female divination; with women who can *see* (Kristoffersen 2000:137-139) – giving textile production a *second liminal aspect*.

The second craft intimately connected with the hall and central places, is *forging* and *smithing* (Grandin and Hjärtner-Holdar 2003). Forging and smithing has taken place on every site in the analysis except Gamla Uppsala. The separate cultic building (*hov*) at Järrestad seems to have been used as a smithy, perhaps as a symbolic representation of the smithy in Ásgarðr (Söderberg 2003b:131). However, slag and other smithing/forging finds have also been discovered inside the hall buildings. At Borg, iron production seems to have taken place inside the hall space of the youngest building. The publication dismisses iron forging taking place inside the hall, not for stratigraphical reasons, but because "it seems unlikely" that such activities took place in the hall (Holand 2003a:137). However, as "heavy manufacture" such as soap stone vessel production took place in the hall space at Borg (Holand 2003a:140), and as the smith may have held a special position in society (Østigård 2007, *Vǫlundarkviða*), it is possible that smithing/forging activities could belong in the hall as well. Jewellery production has taken place inside the main building at Tissø, while the permanent smithy is interpreted to have special status, perhaps connected with cult (Jørgensen 2002:234, 241).

As we saw, smithing and cremation rituals have been interconnected by Østigård (2007). In the context of the hall as a liminal space, it might be fruitful to also stress the inherent connection between animal ornamentation, warrior ideology and halls. The written sources (*Beowulf*; *Gylfaginning*; *Grímnismál*) strongly connect the hall with animals such as wolves, swine, goats, eagles, ravens, and deer (Heorot). Animal art is thought to be material manifestation of the mythological or metaphorical connection between animals and warriors

(*berserkr*) or even animals and the religious practice of *seið* (Hedeager 1999b:84-85; 2004:235-246; Jakobsson 2003:127-136; Kristoffersen 1995:12-13; Solli 2002:201-204). The emergence of animal ornamentation during the 5th century has been connected with the political changes occurring at the time (Hedeager 2004:219). It is important to note that animal ornamentation has been characterised as a metaphorical art form strongly connected with the Iron Age élite which is difficult to understand from an outside perspective, similar to the metaphorical language of skaldic and eddic poetry (Jakobsson 2003:125,132). Crafting (and wearing) jewellery with animal ornamentation is therefore another example of excluding social practices. These are also closely linked to an idea of human-animal transformation, and related rituals which may have taken place within the halls. The hall space may therefore have had transformative or even transcendental aspects both with regard to *crafting* in itself but also with regard to other transformative aspects such as *hamr* and *fylgja* connected with the king's warriors. The god most connected to the halls is, after all, Óðinn, *the transformer* (Hedeager 1999b:79-80; Nordberg 2003; Steinsland 2005:184-187).

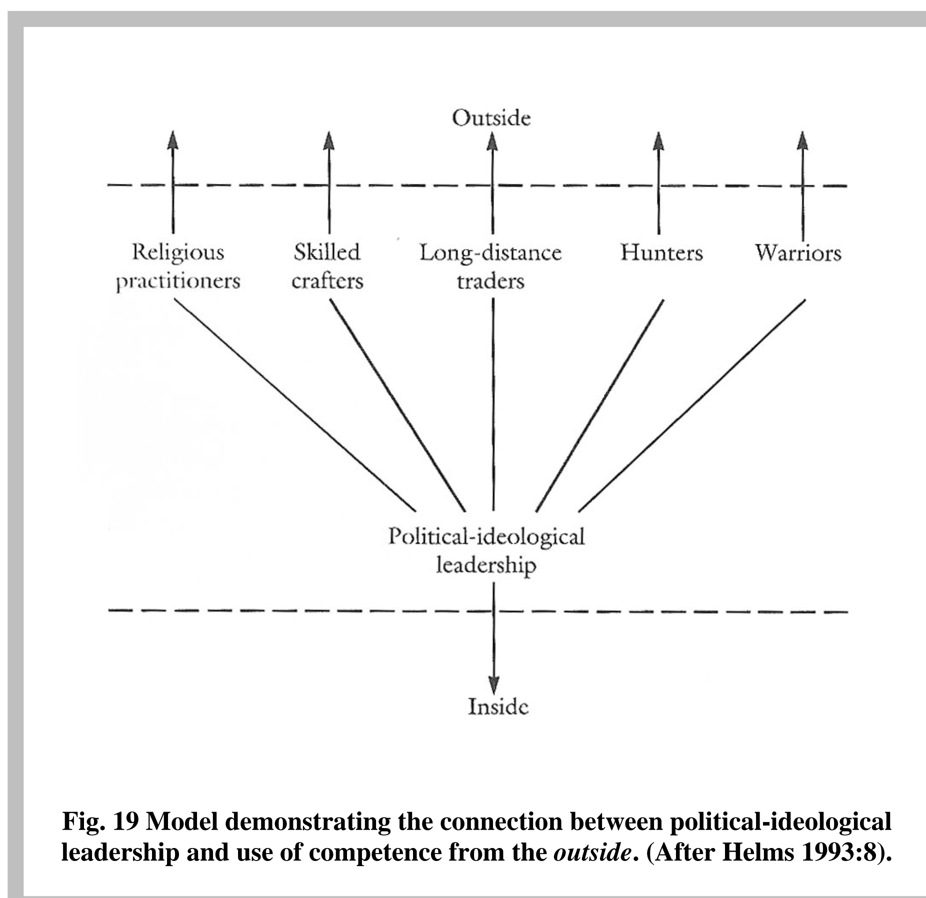


Fig. 19 Model demonstrating the connection between political-ideological leadership and use of competence from the *outside*. (After Helms 1993:8).

There is a strong connection between skilled crafting and a kingly ideal in many cultures (Helms 1993). Based on finds from Slöinge, this connection has been interpreted as a fertility cult emphasising the ruler's ability to create wealth (Jakobsson 2003:171-172). I will rather focus on the ambivalence of the outside/inside and the potency in the *útangarðs*. The transformative process of crafting is by nature metaphorical: raw material (i.e. bog iron)

from *outside* known society – the dangerous exterior realm – is taken *inside* and is transformed and manipulated into a prestige artefact (Helms 1993:14-16). The synthesis between the dangerous and powerful outside material, the personal knowledge or *competence* of the crafter, and the fact that the material is transformed inside, makes the artefact special and with mythological signification. In this way the process of crafting creates a relation between the centre of society and the wild exterior as a cosmological mediator. To bring raw materials from the *útangarðs* such as unprocessed iron, precious metals, or wool for textile production, into or close to the socio-political space of the hall does not seem to be a result of lack of space for production activities. The reason is here seen as quite the contrary; the nature of the transformative processes made sure that they belonged close to the hall space – the centre of society. The king, who was in charge of the process, was not only the owner of the resulting prestigious object, but got to have his political authority accepted and implemented, and impose form and ideals (Helms 1993:69). After all, the prototype king in ON mythology is Fjolner, who was the result of a union between a giantess from Útgarðr and a god from Ásgarðr – a union of chaos and order (Steinsland 1991). The outside realm was dangerous, yes, but there was knowledge and power there as well. The ability to utilise both chaos and order may have set the king apart from other men.

Rebuilding as a liminal practice

A third liminal aspect of the hall is perhaps connected with the passage rite *par excellence* – the initiation ritual. In ch.6 it was suggested that rebuilding the hall could be perceived as a statement of continuity, or break, or both. Rebuilding or reconstructing the hall (which also represents *crafting*) in addition to (re)depositing artefacts in constructional elements, was connected with the initiation of new rulers (Munch 2003a:261; Steinsland 1991). If we accept the notion of rebuilding the hall as representing a power shift, we must assume that the period between the old king's death and the enthronisation of the new king was a time of uncertainty and danger. A new ruler must be selected in the hall or at the *thing*, constituting a liminal phase when there is uncertainty of who is in charge. The social organisation and society's balance was intimately connected with the personal abilities of the ruler. In the transition period from one ruler to the next, the entire society might have been in danger. Rebuilding the hall may have been one of the rituals used to consolidate the new social status of the ruler, legitimise his reign and implement him in his role.

In ch.6 I raised the question of how the residence of power could look so stable, if power was under constant negotiation. I argue that the act of rebuilding using the same layout is a power strategy, creating a connection between the incumbent and his real or mythical forefathers. Altering the spatial ideal may be a way of signalling a new ideological idea (Söderberg 2003b:124) while simultaneously upholding the same overarching theme – a pure social space used for feasting and other liminal practices. Thus, rebuilding the hall constituted a synthesis between old and new powers.

Communication with the dead as a liminal practice

The continual communication and dispute over the cognitive landscape seems to integrate a communication and connection with the dead (ch.6,7). The analyses show several strong links between the hall and the dead. These include intimate relationships with graves (Borg, Lejre, Högom, Gamla Uppsala), a mythological concept of the hall as an arena for dead warriors, the hall as an arena for sacrifice, communication towards the dead, and attacks on the hall as a metaphorical attack on the hall owner (see below). The connection between the dead and the hall are materially constituted by the *hogback*-stones from Northumbria and the Orkneys.

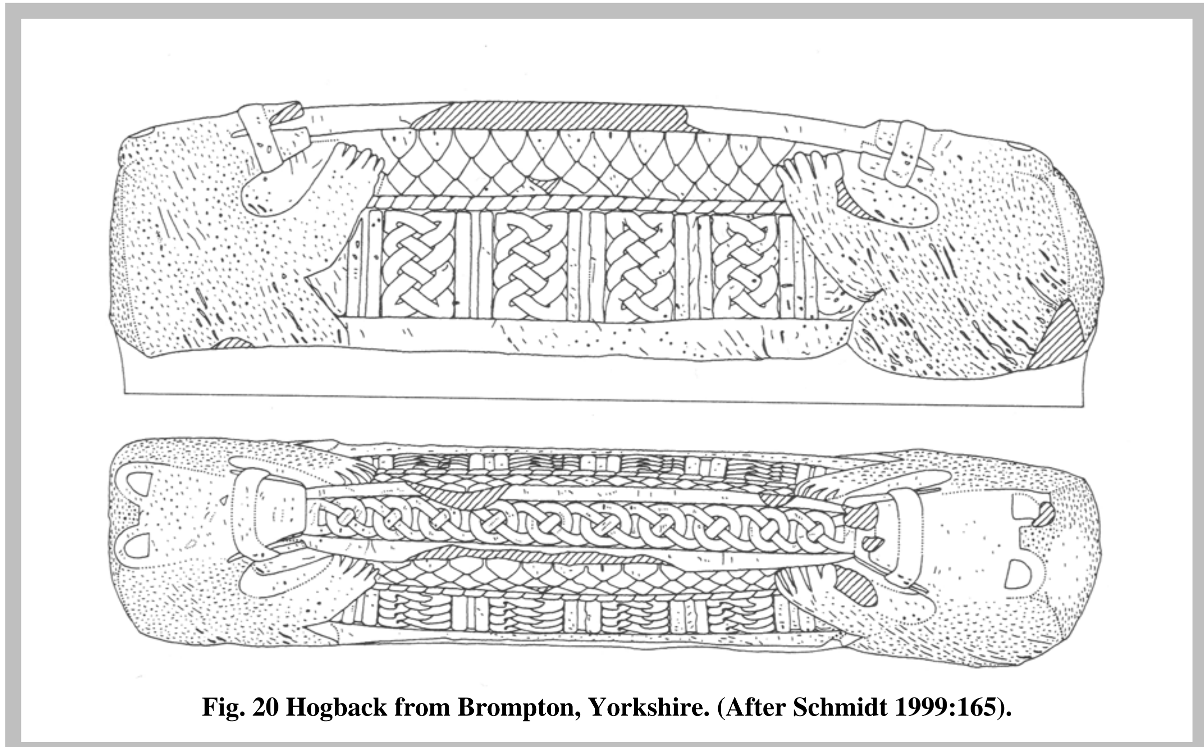


Fig. 20 Hogback from Brompton, Yorkshire. (After Schmidt 1999:165).

These were in the Viking Age used as markers on Viking graves; and are interpreted as idealised representations of Nordic houses or halls (Schmidt 1999:162-180). On 10 hogbacks from Yorkshire each gable of the hall is attacked – or perhaps protected, cf. *Beowulf* meaning

'bee-wolf' – by a bear, again emphasising the connection between the hall and animals (fig.20). The custom of leaving a house for the dead on the grave may underline the idea of *the dead belonging in the hall*. Similarly, Herschend (1997:51-59)'s suggestion of common structural traits between the boat grave Valsgärde 8 and the interior of the hall may also constitute another example of the intimate connection between the hall and the dead.

We will now explore the idea of *the dead as guests*. The idea of power legitimating through ancestors who live in grave mounds was mentioned previously. As a part of the same tradition, there has been an idea in prehistory of the dead sometimes returning to the farm, preferably during *jól* (Kaliff 2006:139-140; Nordberg 2003:188). While discussing bone preservation, Birgit Arrhenius (1983:67, note 7) suggested that rituals were conducted with the use of the dead bodies. The state of the bones Arrhenius worked with from the Vendel and Valsgärde grave fields indicate that they were not buried for a long time after the time of death. Ramqvist develops the idea further by connecting it with Adam von Bremen's descriptions of the feasts at Gamla Uppsala every ninth year. Ramqvist suggests that perhaps the dead kings and aristocrats needed to join feasts such as these one last time before they were laid to rest (Ramqvist 1992:144). This is, if based on actual practices, very difficult to prove archaeologically. However, most scholars acknowledge that there is a difference between being biologically dead and socially dead – and in many cases the transition is dependent on a form of *rite de passage* in order to acquire a new social status (Eliade 2002 [1957]:109-112; van Gennep 1960 [1909]). The idea of using dead bodies is not unparalleled, as among others, Gansum (2002) has discussed the practice of *haugbrott* and other rituals where the action of re-visiting or re-accessing the bodies was important. Anders Kaliff has suggested that some of the separate cultic buildings excavated in recent years may be houses constructed entirely as 'houses for the dead' (Kaliff 2006:139). Perhaps the custom of sacrificing mead or beer to grave mounds, which continued well into medieval times (Steinsland 2005:344), was a way of including the dead in the feast?

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to attempt to prove that rituals including the use of dead bodies have taken place in the sites in the present thesis. This excursion has rather been a demonstration of the many, to us, foreign and strange concepts that existed in a society very unlike our own, where the dead were part of power negotiations as well as everyday life. The halls in our selection have strong metaphorical connections with the dead. For instance, the

suggestion of the only entrance on the northern long wall of Borg being a *door for the dead* (ch.7) may have acquired an explanation, if there indeed was a perception of the dead returning to the settlement – either metaphorically or physically. The material displays a close connection between graves and settlement at several of the sites, and it is here argued that this is part of a metaphorical power legitimating, negotiation, or both, through the use of the ancestors. In conclusion, the hall provided a space for several liminal and transformative practices, such as feasting, crafting, rebuilding and communications towards the dead. These practices provide another dimension to the answer of how the hall space was ordered, controlled and utilised in power strategies.

THE HALL AND PERSONHOOD

The fourth key metaphor to be discussed is the intimate connection between the hall and the ruler. Implicitly, the idea of the hall being personified has already been established by examining the hall buildings from a biographical viewpoint, suggesting life phases such as before construction – *conception*, construction – *birth*, in use and rebuilding – *life*, deconstruction – *death*, and after deconstruction – *burial*. We shall now further explore a meaning of the hall as a metaphorical representation of the ruler.

Body – house – cosmos

As stated in ch.2 and above houses recurrently have cosmological connotations. Built structures represent a micro-cosmological mirroring of the world order, and humans will place themselves in the centre of the world, where they may reach the divine (Eliade 2002 [1957]:103). In the same way as the house is a micro-cosmos, the *body* may constitute a micro-cosmos in a similar manner (Bourdieu 1977:114-125; 1996:7-26; Tilley 1999:44-49). One *lives* in the body in the same way that one *lives* in a house. In Indian mythology, for example, the human body is homolog with the cosmos, but is also compared with a house of one post and nine doors (Eliade 2002 [1957]:103). Eliade argues that the cosmos, house and body, all have or may have an *opening* which make a transition to another world possible. A concept widely spread in Eurasia is connected with this metaphor – the soul of the dead flying out through the chimney or the roof, especially the part of the roof above the 'holy corner', which in the hall might be represented by the high seat. During a person's death struggle, beams or even the entire roof is removed to help the soul depart the body (Eliade 2002

[1957]:103-104). There are also many ethnographical examples of the homology between bodies' and buildings' lifespan – birth, maturing, aging, dying (Bloch 1995; Carsten 2004).

In our context, this implies that the hall building may have been related to the body. But the hall was not principally a *house*. It was, as stated in ch.4, a *residence of power*. And who represented the power in the stratified, *comitatus*-focused political alliance system? The *chieftain* or *king*. In my opinion it is possible that the hall, in addition to representing a spatial ideal, providing arenas for ritual, transformation, differentiation and negotiation, and in addition to being a political manifestation in the landscape, was also *a metaphorical representation of the ruler*. There is some support for this hypothesis in the written sources. In *Beowulf* the main character is arguably not *Beowulf* himself, but *Heorot* – the hall (Thompson 1995:11). There is an intimate connection between the hall building and the person in power, just as material culture and people are intimately connected in general. It has already been suggested that practices such as house offerings could be connected with the initiation of a chieftain, or that a violent attack on a hall represents an attack on the king. Rebuilding the hall has been connected with new chieftains, new ideals; symbolising both transition and break at the same time. However, acts of rebuilding and even the deconstruction of the hall may certainly as well be representative of the death and passage of the old king – cf. the practice of removing beams to help the soul depart mentioned above. Even the strong connections with the dead *beneath* the hall; structurally *divided* from the hall; *around* the hall; *above* the hall or even *visiting* the hall may be connected with the metaphor of the chieftain and the hall's fates being intertwined. The dead chieftains – or their queens – may still reside inside, under, above or close to their monuments of power.

In conclusion, it is possible that the idea of the hall being a metaphorical representation of the ruler explains the reconstruction of the halls representing both break and continuity, the strong connection with the dead, and the many rituals and practices during the hall's lifespan. This notion may also help explain why the hall seemingly became such an important mythological and cognitive symbol during the Iron Age.

THE HALL AS A SYMBOLIC SYSTEM

The last key metaphor to be discussed in this thesis is the idea of the hall as a symbolic system. Symbolic systems were mentioned in ch.2 as a part of Bourdieu's theories of

symbolic power. "Symbolic power is to have power to construct reality…", he writes, and "Symbols … make possible a *consensus* of the meaning of the social world, and this consensus provides a fundamental contribution to the reproduction of the social world" (Bourdieu 1996:40, my translation). I argue that the hall complex, e.g. the symbolic, metaphorical, ideal and architectural hall, the entire *ideology of the hall*, can be perceived as a symbolic system. The hall is both a cause and effect of social processes; as both buildings and mythology have a reciprocal connection with agents (ch.2). The ideology surrounding the hall made it an excellent instrument for dominion, while simultaneously it was the product of other social processes such as political, cultic and religious development. The development of the hall ideology through the centuries was part of a 'symbolic struggle' to enforce the definition of the world best suited for the upper strata of society, as seen especially in the structural changes of the 6th century. The practice of *ritualisation* (see ch.2), whether in relation with feasts, initiation rituals or rituals related to the lifespan of the halls, were used as strategies to differentiate rituals from conventional practices and establish a symbolic dominion (Bell 1992:90-91). I do not perceive it as a coincidence that the god of warriors, aristocracy and Eddic poetry gained precedence in the same period as a profound cultic shift made the halls an important religious and socio-political arena (Fabech 1994; Hedeager 1999b:85).

In conclusion, it is suggested that the aristocracy consciously or unconsciously mirrored their aristocratic practices and spatial ideals to the mythological realm to increase their capital and social position in society. The hall became a cognitive centre, an exclusive domain, a liminal space and a metaphor for the ruler – in summary a symbolic system, which was a successful instrument to communicate, implement and euphemise power (see fig.21).

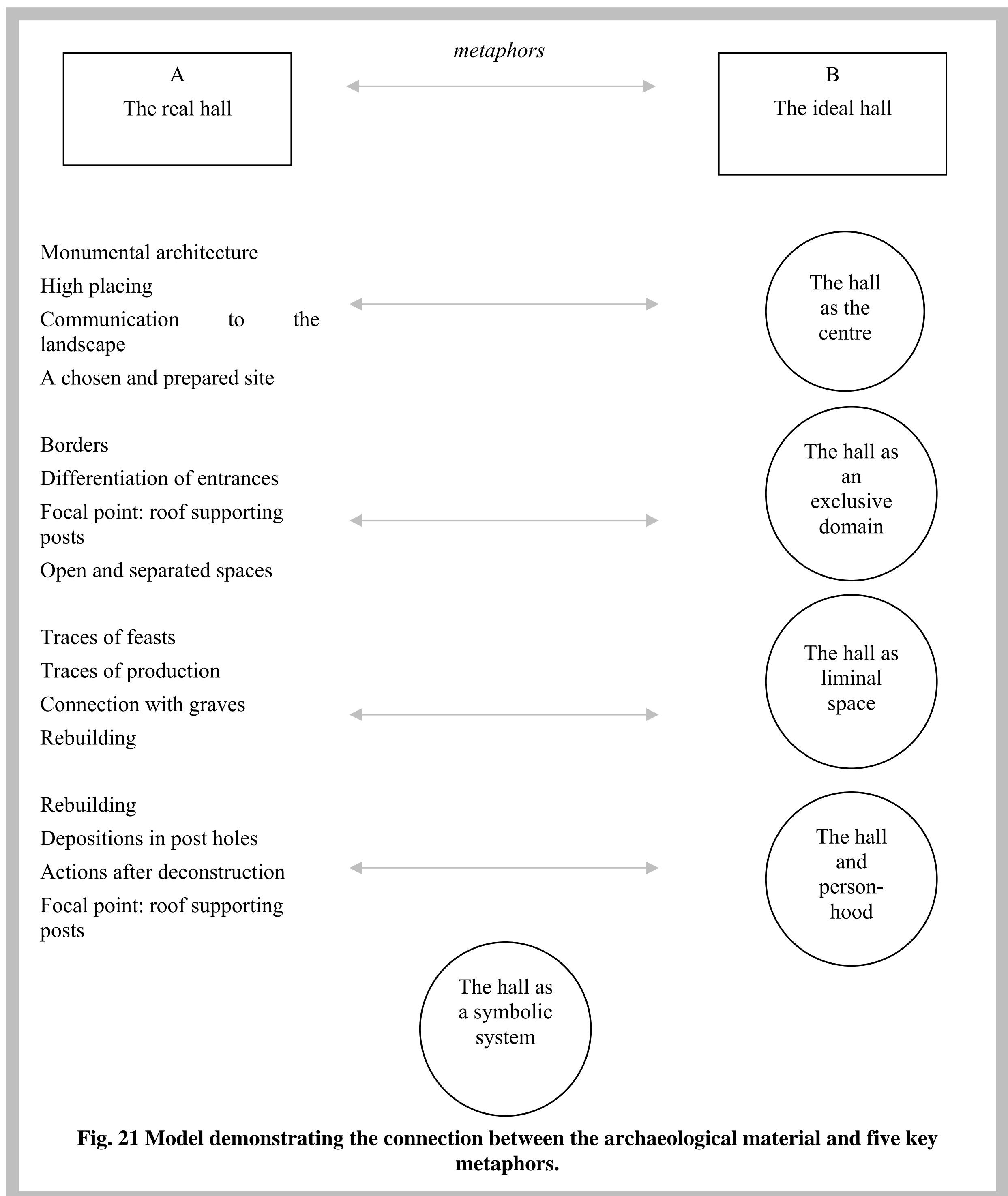


Fig. 21 Model demonstrating the connection between the archaeological material and five key metaphors.

Conclusions: In the between

It is not easy to provide *one, concise* answer to the problem statement of the thesis. However, when the spatial ordering, finds, traces of rituals, traces of production, textual evidence and the metaphorical concepts are connected, they provide an eclectic but consistent picture. To use another metaphor, the hall is like a Chinese box – with layers upon layers of meaning. This thesis has presented many arguments for the hall being an arena for exclusion and an instrument for power through the metaphorical concepts discussed above. By combining architecture and mythology a powerful strategy for power legitimating was created. In ch.2 I referred to Bourdieu's habitus as mediating between a subjectivist and objectivist view of human behaviour, seeing that an agent has the ability to choose between different strategies. Richard Blanton states that within a household – such as a hall environment – habitus is not simply a reproduction of society as a whole, but expresses different strategies carried out by different household members (Blanton 1995:116). These strategies will (and have) change with socio-political development. This means that the coding/meaning of space is dynamic and changes depending on perspective, and that the meaning of the hall and the practices therein have differed over time. We have identified chronological breaks regarding entrances, spatial ideals (ch.6) – and in the hall's role as a mythological symbol, based on Fabech's hypothesis (Fabech 1994). However, the chronological breaks do not change that the idea of the hall seems to have been impressively long-lived and wide-spread. The most striking find in the analyses is the consistency and continuity in the spatial ordering of the building itself, its relationship with the surroundings, and the metaphorical connotations expressed. I argue that the innovative strategy stemming from sometime in the Early Iron Age and developed throughout the Viking Age represents a *longue dureé* mentality (Braudel 1958).

In the beginning of this chapter I argued that metaphors exist *in the between* – and so does the hall. By using five key metaphors connected with the Scandinavian halls the thesis aimed to answer the problem statement: The hall *differentiated people* by being a cognitive centre and exclusive domain. *Power was exercised* by dividing the social space with the help of visible and invisible borders, constructing differentiated entrances and by controlled and excluding architecture. By developing *mythological* ideas where the different social strata were founded by the gods, and by creating a mythological parallel to the aristocratic architecture and practices; the stratification, actions and ideology of the élite was efficiently legitimised, institutionalised, and reproduced (ch.4,6). The notion of equating the ruler with the building is

yet another way of euphemising an asymmetrical social order. The hall also provided an arena for liminal and transformative practices used in power legitimating and negotiation.

The hall seems to challenge the perception of strict categories, and belongs somewhere *in the between*: between the real and ideal; between the functional and symbolic; between the inside and outside; between the sacred and profane, between the individual and collective; and between the material and metaphorical. This transcendental quality made the hall *a place apart* and an excellent instrument for symbolic power, social differentiation and exclusion.

9. FINAL REMARKS

In this thesis the ordering, control and utilisation of space expressed through the Scandinavian hall buildings has been examined. The focus has been on the real and ideal hall building in a comparative perspective, with the aim of understanding the usage of the hall in power negotiations from the Roman Period throughout the Viking Age. The hall has been understood as a political manifestation in a contested landscape, where it played several roles in communicative and legitimising power strategies. A recurrent theme throughout the thesis has been the reciprocity between the built environment and the agents therein, as well as a focus on the biography of the hall buildings. Other important aspects discussed is the strong connection between the hall and the dead, the use of space as a differentiating factor between social groups, and the hall as an arena for rituals, transformation and liminality, differentiation and negotiation. Conclusively, it has been suggested that the aristocratic hall constituted *a cognitive centre, an exclusive domain, a liminal space, a metaphor for the ruler* and *a symbolic system* in a Bourdieu-sense. The hall seems to have belonged *between* the real and ideal realms of Iron Age Scandinavia.

The hall, the mythological hall and the practices taking place in the hall can be metaphorically described as a Chinese box. There are layers upon layers of meaning, ideas and actions relating to ideology and power. The focus on symbolic power and the hall as an ideological expression used to euphemise an asymmetrical social order is what makes the present thesis different from many other works on the hall. All the while, it is important to stress that the hall buildings were an eclectic mix of ideas, and had many significations unrelated to power. The hall should not be reduced to *only* an instrument of or symbol for power. However, the aim of this thesis has been to study the hall in relation with power structures, and with such a limited scope the other meanings, functions and ideas of these monuments have been left out by necessity.

At the end of the road, I would like to make one last point: The development of the hall is inextricably intertwined with aristocracy and the development from chiefdom to statehood. But it also indirectly tells the story of the less visible groups in society: dependants, servants, thralls. The fact that scholars have been so focused on central places and residences of power during the last 10-15 years has provided an unparalleled material. However, if Norr (1996, ch.

7) is right, the Late Roman Period saw not the innovation of one, but of *two* new social spaces: the hall room *and* the room beyond the byre. This is an excellent demonstration of the fact that when some gain power, it is always at the cost of others.

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Appendix 1: Placement in the landscape

	House orientation	*Description*
Gudme	E-W	Located on a slight hilltop c. 600m from the lake. Approx. 50 contemporary smaller farms. Lundeborg harbour constituting major transit area for Roman imports and work shop area, probable economical basis. Large grave field in the middle of the settled area (Nielsen et al. 1994; Sørensen 1994).
Högom	WNW-ESE	Centrally situated in Norrland at major intersection between inland routes connected with iron production sites. Covered by monumental grave mound, possibly erected between two monumental mounds. The site lies on the edge of ridge sloping down to a river (Ramqvist 1992).
Helgö	E-W	The building was placed on an artificial terrace in sloping terrain underneath a hill with a possible cultic connection. A hill fort and six grave fields in close proximity (Holmqvist 1961; Zachrisson 2004)
Järrestad	**Halls**: WSW-ENE **Hov**: NNW-SSE	The sequence of hall buildings with enclosure was placed on the edge of a plateau c. 30 m above sea level, close to the river Tommarpsån. Little is known about communication routes in the area. No known contemporary graves (Söderberg 2003b,2005).
Gamla Uppsala	N-S	The building was situated on an artificial terrace constructed by earth and stone in a very rich archaeological area. A road led up to a pre-house controlling access. Many grave mounds in close proximity (Duczko 1996b; Hedlund 1993; Nordahl 1993).
Borg	SE-NW	The two buildings were placed on one of several ridge tops in a valley, overlooking the fjord (main communication and trade route) and historical settlement. Contemporary grave field c. 300m away, on next hilltop (Herschend and Mikkelsen 2003; Johansen and Munch 2003b).
Tissø	**Halls:** E-W **Hov:** c. N-S	The sequence of buildings and enclosure was situated on the W bank of lake Tissø. Entire settlement surrounded by water in the Late Iron Age. The site was accessible by ship. No known graves in the area (Jørgensen 1998,2002).
Slöinge	c. E-W	Two buildings buildings of almost identical layout placed on a ridge at communication centre in the region. Many indications of nearby graves but none excavated. Control over trade is suggested economical basis (Lundqvist and Arcini 2003).
Lejre	E-W	Interpreted as main royal residence for a mobile king controlled most or all of Zealand. Viking Age grave field on the other side of river, monumental grave mounds close to the settlement (Christensen 1994,2007 [1991]).

Appendix 2: Find categories present

	Gudme/ Lundeborg	*Högom*	*Helgö*	*Gamla Uppsala*	*Järrestad*	*Lejre*	*Slöinge*	*Borg*	*Tissø*
Figural gold foils	X		X		patrix		X	X	X
Glass shards	X		X		X	X	X	X	X
Glass beads	X	X			X	X	X	X	
Other beads		X			X		X	X	
Weapons		X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Textile-production items	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	
Gold jewellry	X	X	X		X		X		X
Silver jewellry	X		X		X	X	X		X
Bronze jewellry	X	X	X			X	X		X
Soapstone vessels						X		X	
Knives	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Whetstones		X	X		X	X	X	X	
Exotic artefacts/ Imports	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Horse bones		X		X	X	X	X		X
Riding gear	X				X				X
Coins	X				X	X	X		X
Amulets (þórr's hammers, miniatures)			X		X	X			X
Crucibles	X	X	X		X	X	X		X
Weights	X					X	X		X

Note: this table does not differentiate between artefacts from the site in general and specifically in the hall building, partly because most of the publications do not. The information is based on the publications as listed in table 3, ch.5. Some publications are equipped with find catalogue, however most are not, and this overview table may therefore be incomplete.

Appendix 3: Production types present

	Gudme/Lundeborg	*Högom*	*Helgö*	*Gamla Uppsala*	*Järrestad*	*Lejre*	*Slöinge*	*Borg*	*Tissø*
Iron smithing	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Precious metal/bronze forging	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Glass bead production							X		
Other bead production (garnet, amber, etc.)					X		X		
Textile production	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	
Figural gold foil production	X				X				
Soapstone vessel production								X	
Antler/bone working (comb production)	X				X	X			

Note: this table does not differentiate between production on the site in general and specifically in the hall building. This information can in part be found in the main text, ch.8. The information is based on the publications as listed in table 3, ch.5. Some publications are equipped with find catalogues, however most are not, and this overview table may therefore be incomplete.

Appendix 4: Comparison with Herschend's defining criteria

	Herschend's criteria (1)	*Herschend's criteria (2)*	*Herschend's criteria (3)*	*Herschend's criteria (4)*	*Herschend's criteria (5)*
Gudme	X	-	X	?	X
Högom	X	-	X	X	X
Helgö	X	-	X	?	X
Gamla Uppsala	X	-	X	?	
Järrestad	X	-	X	?	X
Lejre	X	-	X	?	X
Slöinge	X	-	X	?	X
Borg	X	-	X	X	X
Tissø	X	-	X	?	X

(1) They belong to big farms
(2) Originally they consisted of one room with a minimum of posts
(3) They are singled out by their position on the farm
(4) Their hearths were not used for cooking or for handicraft
(5) The artefacts found in the houses are different from those found in the dwelling part of the main house on the farm

Notes to (1): The halls do not in all cases belong to 'big farms' (imprecise expression). In some cases, such as Borg and Tissø, they ARE the big farm. I have chosen to interpret the criterion widely and thus all sites are related to 'big farms' in some notion.

Notes to (2): None of the halls in question seem to be the successor of an earlier building consisting of one room, although at Tissø, Järrestad and perhaps Lejre there are separate cultic buildings with a minimum of posts in addition to the halls.

Notes to (3): This criterion is in my opinion imprecise, as 'singled out' is a vague term. However, the spatial ordering, the size, the placement in the landscape and the find categories do 'single out' the halls from other, contemporary settlements.

Notes to (4): This is a difficult criterion to fulfil, as almost none of the publications provide an answer. In the cases where this information is provided, it has been displayed in the table, if not the box is marked with a question mark.

Notes to (5): Not all halls have 'a main house on the farm', but the find categories of the present sites, save Gamla Uppsala, are different than finds from 'normal' long houses.

My view of the diacritical criteria presented by Herschend is that they are imprecise and not easily applicable to the selection of sites in this thesis.