















Bremer) discuss farms in German villages from the Early and High Middle Ages (5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century) respectively. In addition to addressing topics common to all farms discussed here, the papers from geographical and social environments outside Norway serve as important reminders that whether isolated or spatially integrated; farms are always part of wider societies, and formed by their relations to the outer world and people that surround them.

Although generally tuned to the theoretical frameworks sketched above, approaches in the individual papers vary with the particular questions addressed and the sources available. The farm as the framework of people's daily lives is addressed in several papers. In the first paper of this volume, Oma takes as her point of departure the relationship between humans and animals when she tries to understand a seemingly small change in architecture, namely the transition from two-aisled to three-aisled longhouses. She finds the explanation in the secondary products revolution. When people started to keep sheep because of the milk and the wool, they also needed to handle them more often. This may have been why three-aisled longhouses became popular, as they made it easier to house animals indoors. Oma further sketches how the relationship between people and sheep changed during the Bronze Age at Jæren in Southwest Norway. The sheep moved in with their people, where they became household members and contributed to the household through wool and milk. As the relationship between humans and sheep developed, it became a relation of understanding and trust rather than domination, she claims.

In her second paper, Oma moves in time to the end of the Iron Age, when the now age-old three-aisled longhouse gradually went out of use, and was replaced by several smaller houses. Once again animals were involved. This time it was about religion and ontological status. With Christianity, Oma claims, the ontological status of animals was changed. In the Iron Age animal styles, animals and humans could be depicted as half human, half animal, and some humans were thought to be able to shift shape into animals. Some animals shared houses with humans and were sometimes buried with humans: basically, they had much in common. In Christianity, on the other hand, the differences were stressed. Humans were close to God, animals were not. They were seen as subservient to humans, no longer worthy of sharing our houses. Consequently, the age-old longhouse went out of use and the farm was divided up in several small buildings with different functions.

The very same medieval change into a new farm architecture is addressed from another point of view, namely a technological one, in Sørheim's paper, where he argues that a new technology was the reason why the age-old tradition of stave-built longhouses was replaced with smaller ones built in the corner-notching technique, which had long been known in other parts of Europe. This architectural change also led to a change not only in the housing of animals, but in the relations between *people* of the farm, in that they were from now on scattered in many small houses instead of sharing a large longhouse. One would think that this increased the mental distance



between people – servants and masters – as well. And whatever cause we accept for this architectural change, with Christianity the old farm was shattered not only in the sense that people and animals were separated. So were the generations. From now on, former generations were no longer buried at their own farms, but on communal graveyards connected to a church.

In our one Swedish case study, Nordström studies aspects of life on the farm through keys and locks on two Swedish farms, one in the central Mälaren area in central Sweden and one on the Baltic island of Gotland, dated to the Migration period and the Viking Age respectively. She discusses the finds of keys and their use at the farms, a topic that has not been addressed very often. Nordström focusses here on *the idea* of locking, and its implications for private property and identity. Generally, keys have been associated with mighty housewives and their roles in managing the farm resources. In her study, however, Nordström finds that keys have belonged to men and women both. Keys seem to imply private property and were possibly associated with people's identities. It is interesting to note that when looking at Roman Age warrior burials and men's burials in the Viking Age town Birka in Sweden, she found a possible link between weapons and locked chests.

Doris Gutmiedl-Schumann takes us to Bavaria in Merovingian times, which in this region means late 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century. Here, the farms were far from isolated, but rather so close that it is hard to decide “where one farm begins and the other ends”, and being close to communication lines seems to have been of the utmost importance – this is all very different from the Norwegian situation. Two settlements, Kirchheim and Aschheim, are focussed on. An even better source to social structure is the burials, however. While large cemeteries were the rule in the earlier part of the period in question, farmyard burials came into use towards the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. In both cases the burials were equipped with grave goods. This is of special interest seen in relation to the Norwegian discussion regarding the transition from heathen to Christian burial rites, as the lack of grave goods has been one of the criteria used to identify Christian burials in Scandinavia, and farmyard burials are supposed to end with the formal conversion and organisation of the church.

Burials are the main subject of two more papers. Berglund describes in detail two special graves at the Sandnes farm in North Norway, and finds that they were both collective graves used over a period of hundreds of years. One grave she identifies as that of the people of the farm, while the other one may have been reserved for women specialist workers – in her own words providing “a peephole into the social life of the coastal farms of Helgeland”. She comes up with surprising results: while one grave seems to house men and women with close connections to the farm, the other holds women only. Berglund concludes that these (five) women, who were probably only loosely connected to the farm, were a group especially skilled in crafts, and perhaps in (magic) runes and healing. For this, they were provided with a special burial place

on the outskirts of the farm. If so, this is new and interesting information about medieval farm life.

The other paper that takes burials as a point of departure is the long-term study by Dommasnes and Hommedal, following two farms in the Vik settlement on the Sognefjord, Western Norway, over a period of almost one thousand years (c. 200–1200 AD). Starting with ten monumental Roman Age burial mounds, interpreted as symbols of power, the farms and their inhabitants are followed through the Viking Age into the era of Christianisation, the formal conversion and the unification of the country with new symbols of power, the churches. Burials, especially those of powerful people as was the case in most of the examples mentioned here, are mainly public events, even if they are conducted on a farm. Another (semi-)public aspect of farm life was the feasts that chiefs and magnates regularly seem to have held perhaps from Roman times through the Middle Ages (Bårdseth 2009; Sigurdsson 2010) to secure the continued loyalty of their allies. When the first churches were built in medieval Norway, they were connected to individual farms. The development that this new religion set in motion was, however, one that led public worship away from the individual farms into the greater society, and ultimately to the universal Catholic church.

Although it is very probable that both the two Vik farms and the northern Sandnes farm referred to above had halls, these could hardly match the more than 80 metres long hall building excavated on the northernmost Norwegian farm discussed in this volume, namely the chiefly Borg farm in Lofoten, North Norway. This farm is the point of departure for Storli, who discusses the Borg farm, its environs, houses and the impressive finds from the site. Through archaeological and written sources, she discusses the local society and cultural environment, including how the Borg chieftain may have played a role in the politics of Viking Age Norway. Towards the end of the paper, she describes his (postulated) decision to leave Borg and the fight for sovereignty in order to look for a new life on Iceland. Storli also suggests that the posts that had been removed from the Borg house may have travelled with him, to be thrown on the sea so that they could guide him to his new land. And keep the memory of his old farm alive?

On Iceland, Carlisle and Milek take over, and introduce us to some interesting finds from Viking Age Icelandic farm houses, characterised as “structured” deposits or foundation deposits, tentatively interpreted as traces of house offerings, the Norse settlers’ way of adapting to their new environment and conditions of life. The deposits vary from a walrus carcass built into a wall to iron blooms and scattered finds of a human tooth and a wide variety of other small finds. In each case the structured deposits are taken to relate to sources of wealth on the farms in question. The authors suggest that the deposits may have been used in the negotiation of social standing in this brand new society.

In our second paper dealing with German medieval society, Bremer discusses the village Pier in Northern Rhineland, from the Roman period through High Medieval

times. While written sources have previously dominated the discussion of medieval social structures, landscape archaeology has now been developed into a forceful tool and a new approach to the exploration of the rural past in the area. From the Roman until High Medieval times there was an enormous population increase, accompanied by a very complex social structure. Towns influenced rural life, and in the rural areas farms and noble estates “were integrated in a complex settlement system and could not be regarded as isolated ‘small worlds’” (Bremer this volume). Studying individual farms in such a setting makes little sense, and the paper is an important reminder of the widely varying social conditions in medieval Europe. A feudal society as described here was never fully developed in Norway. However, after the unification of Norway under one king and the formal Church organisation developed, these institutions became great landowners, inspired by feudal Europe.

The chronologically latest paper in this volume is written by Berglund, and presents some of her results from an excavation of the North-Norwegian site of a vicarage, namely the one where the 17<sup>th</sup> century vicar, hymnist, poet and large personality Petter Dass (1647–1707) and his descendants lived. Petter Dass is still a household name in Norway, and his hymns are still sung in Norwegian churches every Sunday. The unique opportunity to follow how he used material culture to construct his European identity in the North of Norway is therefore of general interest, even more so as it also demonstrates the potential of archaeological evidence in such matters.

### **Why the farm?**

The main objective of this volume is to draw your attention to a gap in the scholarship on the prehistoric and medieval farm, in that its social function has until now been more or less disregarded in archaeology. The sources may be less complete than one would wish for, but even so, concentrating on this aspect brings some new insights. First of all, focussing on the basic unit of society makes it easier to follow processes of continuity and change over time. In spite of many changes, the overall impression is stability: the farm was the social unit that almost everybody related to over the centuries.

One change was the position of the farm in the structure of society. Over time, it changed from ancestral site in the founding period of settled farming and chiefdoms, to farms of varying sizes and statuses, ending in the Middle Ages with clusters of farms (estates) controlled by institutions like the church and kingship. Architectural conventions changed, although slowly, and following this, the structure of the farmyard. With changing farm houses and yard, the relations between those who lived on the farm, humans and animals, were also altered.

The farm in mental images is an aspect following us explicitly or implicitly through most of the papers, and we have been able to identify some of the ideolo-

gies behind the development. Among such ideological changes were probably the conceptions of animals – and the farm itself – in myths and religion, in connection with burial rites, and in ontological statuses. The farm's central place in the human mind is also expressed through cult activities and farmyard burials, both in heathen and in Christian times.

This again brings us closer to the people of the past, and enables us to consider the relations of these people, how they interacted with each other and influenced each other's lives and history. Some of our authors have followed small-scale events and developments on the farm, or looked very closely at events and processes, discovering unexpected connections and relations, or demonstrating that seemingly small changes may have profound consequences. Some farms have been home to mighty people, whose rise and fall we have been able to follow. The physical and mental frameworks of people's lives were also parts of the interaction: the surrounding nature, neighbours or lack of neighbours, the farm infields with the houses, animals, people and deities. This was the architecture that formed social life at the farm.

## Bibliography

- Bourdieu 1997: Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a theory of practice* (Cambridge 1977).
- Bårdseth 2009: Gro Anita Bårdseth. The Roman Age Hall and the Warrior-Aristocracy: Reflections upon the Hall at Missingen, South-East Norway. *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 42/2, 2009, 146–158.
- Enright 1996: Michael J. Enright, *Lady with a Mead Cup. Ritual, Prophecy and Lordship in the European Warband From La Tène to the Viking Age* (Dublin 1996).
- Goncáles-Marcén et. al 2008: Paloma Goncáles-Marcén/Sandra Montón-Subías/Marina Picazo, *Towards an archaeology of maintenance activities*. In: Sandra Montón-Subías/Margarita Sánchez-Romero (eds.), *Engendering Social Dynamics: The Archaeology of Maintenance Activities* (Oxford 2008).
- Habermas 1981: Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns* (Frankfurt am Main 1981).
- Hagen 1953: Anders Hagen, *Studier i jernalderens gårdssamfunn*. Universitetets Oldsaksamlings Skrifter (Oslo 1953).
- Harding 2004: Sandra Harding, *Introduction: Standpoint Theory as a Site of Political, Philosophic, and Scientific Debate*. In: Sandra Harding (ed.), *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader. Intellectual & Political Controversies*. (New York and London 2004) 1–15.
- Hedeager 2011: Lotte Hedeager, *Iron Age Myth and Materiality. An Archaeology of Scandinavia AD 400–1000*. (London and New York 2011).
- Mansrud 2005: Anja Mansrud, *Flytende identiteter? – dyrebein i graver og førkristne personoppfatninger*. In: Terje Østigård (ed.), *UBAS Nordisk 2, Lik og ulik. Tilnæringer til variasjon i gravskikk* (Bergen 2005) 133–157.
- Montón-Subías 2010: Sandra Montón-Subías, *Maintenance activities and the ethics of care*. In: Liv Helga Dommasnes/Tove Hjørungdal/Sandra Montón-Subías/Margarita Sánchez-

- Romero/Nancy L. Wicker, *Situating gender in European archaeologies* (Budapest 2010) 23–34.
- Price 2014: Neil Price, *Belief & Ritual*. In: Gareth Williams/Peter Pentz/Matthias Wemhoff (eds.), *Viking Life and Legend* (London 2014).
- Schütz/Luckmann 1979: Alfred Schütz/Thomas Luckmann, *Strukturen der Lebenswelt* (Frankfurt am Main 1979).
- Sigurdsson 2010: Jon Vidar Sigurdsson, *Den vennlige vikingen. Vennskapets makt i Norge og på Island ca. 900–1300* (Oslo 2010).
- Skre 1997: Dagfinn Skre, *Haug og grav. Hva betyr gravhaugene?* In: Ann Christensson/Else Mundal/Ingvild Øye (eds.), *Middelalderens symboler. Kulturtekster 11*, 37–52. *Senter for europeiske kulturstudier* (Bergen 1997).
- Steinsland 2005: Gro Steinsland, *Norrøn religion. Myter, riter, samfunn* (Oslo 2005).
- Øye 2002: Ingvild Øye, *Innledning*. In: Ingvild Øye (ed.), *Vestlandsgården – fire arkeologiske undersøkelser. Arkeologiske avhandlinger og rapporter fra Universitetet i Bergen* (Bergen 2002) 7–13.