

Power and impotence: political background of urbanisation in Trøndelag 900-1100 AD

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Control of the Trøndelag counties would give access to large and differentiated resources and create a communication network that could be used to strengthen and support the physical power and social position of central monarchy in Norway and outside its borders. In Early Iron Age in inner Trøndelag uniform distribution of grave finds with objects indicative of affluence prove the lack of clear dominance relations in the province. Hence, the royal claim on the control of the Trøndelag collided with a social and political organisation that gave no room for the dominance principles represented by the king. Centralising policy could only succeed by laying foundation for a new social order and acceptance of a new ruler principle based on different ideology and different forms of social organisation of which the early town of Trondheim was a focal point. Available evidence suggests that the emergence of urban settlement at Nidarnes/Trondheim was due to royal initiative.

KEY-WORDS: medieval, Norway, Trøndelag, Trondheim, towns

URBAN ARCHAEOLOGY IN SCANDINAVIAN PERSPECTIVE

Scandinavian archaeology has devoted a great deal of attention to various aspects of medieval urbanisation, especially during the last two decades. Thus urban archaeology in Norway can look back on a research tradition of more than 100 years and it is true to say that the excavations on Bryggen in Bergen during the 1950s and 1960s were among the most extensive yet undertaken in any medieval urban centre in Scandinavia, and they drew considerable interest from researchers all over Europe. Comparable excavations in Norway's other medieval towns (Trondheim, Tønsberg and Oslo) were first initiated somewhat later, in the early 1970s. These investigations have resulted in the accumulation of a massive corpus of archaeological material, unparalleled in Scandinavia, with tremendous potential for the elucidation of medieval urbanisation.

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Drawing on a recently published synthesis of the topographical and functional development of Trondheim, based on the results provided by the archaeological investigations of the last two decades, it may be possible to place the town's development during the Early Middle Ages in a wider historical setting with special attention to the problems related to state and urban development.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF URBAN FUNCTIONS

The growth of urban societies is a global phenomenon, an integral part of the history of civilisation. However, urbanisation was by no means a uniform process, but instead displays great chronological and geographical variation. It is therefore not surprising that towns reveal major differences in their functions and physical structure. This diversity has given rise to an extensive discussion on a definition of the term "urban", *i.e.*, on what actually constitutes a town. In Scandinavia this discussion has gradually concentrated on the question of urban functions, considered the most important criteria of an urban settlement. These days, the question of definitions has rather receded into the background, giving way to concrete analyses of the actual **process** of urbanisation, where researchers attempt to characterise and define the limits of various developmental stages. This has helped to revitalise the classical discussion concerning the **functions** of towns; the subject has been widened to include the possibility of, and premises for, **changes** in urban functions. This not only enables researchers to consider urbanisation as a long-term process, but also allows closer analysis of the nature of the process and its relationship to the general development of Viking Age and medieval societies. This has led to a more consistent emphasis on the role of political authority in the rise of towns, and to a firmer recognition of the process' close connections with aspects such as the formation of states, the growth of the idea of royal sovereignty, and the development of feudal tendencies in the social relationships of the agrarian society. The relationship between urbanisation and the development of society's economic structure has been partly redefined: trade and handcrafting are, at least in Scandinavian urban archaeology, now generally regarded as having been secondary activities, at least to begin with. Their importance in the context of town life is not to be denied, but they must be considered nevertheless as responses to the needs arising from the towns' primary function as political and administrative centres.

THE RISE OF TOWNS IN NORWAY: MODELS OF EXPLANATION

There have been many attempts, by historians and archaeologists alike, to describe the rise and early development of the first urban centres. From the perspective of history of research, these attempts have primarily involved a confrontation of the two schools of thought — the “evolutionist” and the “genetic”.

The “evolutionist” school contends that the premises for early urbanisation were contained in the development of systems of production and exchange within an agrarian society ruled by chiefs, and stresses an unbroken line of development from the trading, cult and *thing* sites of the Iron Age to the early medieval urban centres.

The “genetic” school, on the other hand, emphasises the difference between these two types of centres, especially the apparent changes in their function. These changes are themselves thought to be related to social and political changes taking place during the later Viking Age and Early Middle Ages. From this point of view, urban centres cannot be studied in isolation, as if they possessed lives and developmental rules of their own. Rather, they can only be understood on the basis — or, more correctly, **as a part** — of a state-formation process, in which the growth of a central monarchy played a decisive role. Both these schools are well represented in the historical and archaeological debates concerning the urban centres in Scandinavia.

To conclude this review of the history of research into Scandinavian urbanisation, the basic points of the two opposing schools can be summarised as follows: the former considers the rise of towns to be a direct result of the operation of economic forces, originating in the Iron Age, whereas the latter sees the process as part of the social and political transformations taking place during the transition to the historical era. Despite their theoretical differences, however, both schools rely heavily on the source material of archaeology. Artefact analyses provide information on a wide variety of relevant subjects (such as the existence of local, regional and international trading network, productive activities, *etc.*), while the spatial organisation of settlement may reflect the influence of directing forces. The role of archaeology in demonstrating continuity of occupation has also been of great importance, likewise its ability to provide chronological frameworks for the structures and activities revealed by excavation.

Discussion concerning the early towns’ function(s) revolves to a great extent around the problem of continuity. There are two main sides to this question, one related to geographical factors, the other related to function.

The **geographical** aspect is purely concerned with the spatial relationships between the Iron Age market, cult and *thing* sites, and the younger urban centres.

This may entail either “direct continuity” or “areal continuity”. Areas with continuity of settlement have also been called “central-place areas”, where there is reason to believe that the central-place functions were retained despite changes in the location of settlement.

The **functional** aspect addresses a number of questions involving the functions of the two types of centres. Did the early towns incorporate the same functions as their predecessors? Or was their emergence associated with **new central-place functions**, functions that transcended the physical and political frameworks of the older centres? Who initiated and controlled the process, and what was the purpose behind it? All these questions, to mention but a few, are relevant to the problem of state and urban development.

A PROVINCE IN FOCUS

In the texts of sagas the province situated along Trondheimsfjord (Fig. 1) is presented as one of the key districts in the process of unification of Norway; all pretenders to the throne, from Harald I Fairhair (*ca.* 855–930) to Harald III Hårdråde (1047–1066), considered it their primary objective to gain control of the Trøndelag region.

It was generally understood at an early stage that “the weight of the country”, as Snorre puts it, was in Trøndelag. This was partly due to the economic potential of the region and partly to its advanced social and political organisation: control of the Trøndelag counties would give access to large and differentiated resources and create a communication network that could be used to strengthen and support the physical power and social position of central monarchy in Norway and outside its borders. Equally important was the fact that royal power in Trøndelag was faced with a strong local “resistance movement” led by an elite that stood by the peasantry against the pressing king. Now we take it for granted that Trøndelag’s long and bitter fight against royal power turned out as it did, but it is far from being that obvious. It really **is** conspicuous that the opposition against royal power in Trøndelag was long and massive and that it got support **despite** prevailing social and political relations. In this context I deliberately leave out Håkon I the Good (*ca.* 945–960) who was in fact accepted as a king of Trøndelag but on **the terms stated by the peasants** and not on his own. What local social and political conditions could have brought about the long and collective resistance of Trøndelag’s inhabitants against the pressing pretender to the throne?

It has been pointed out by historians that Trøndelag’s notables should rather be considered in terms of *primus inter pares*, *i.e.*, a group of land owners that had built up their position on inherited function as the leaders of local cult and thing

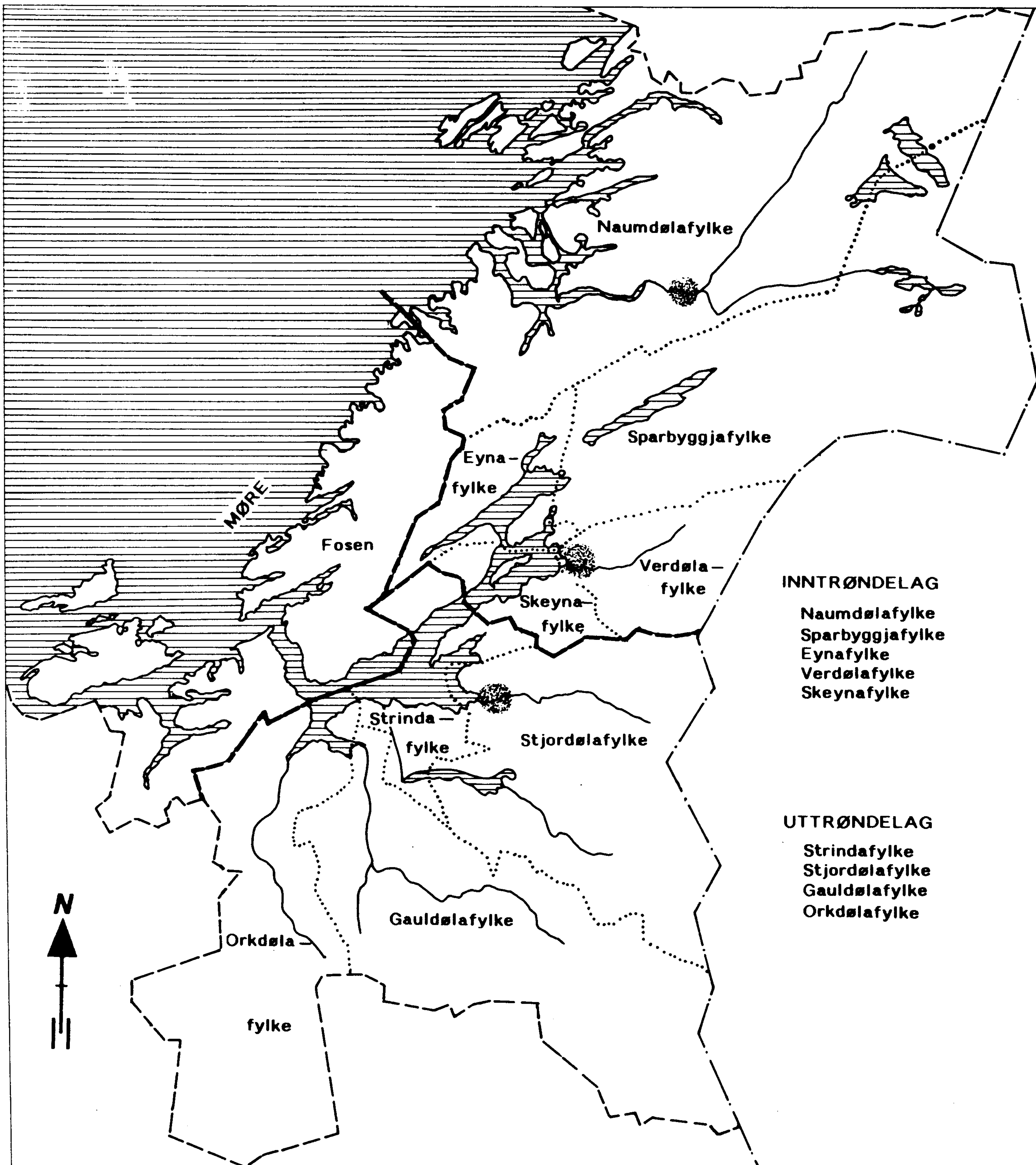


Fig. 1. Trøndelag: the old county divisions (according to Sandnes 1971).

communities. They were deeply rooted in their farms and fertile and densely populated valleys. Conditions on the western coast of Norway were totally different. According to the historian Andreas Holmsen, the notables of western Norway can always be related to a definite district that constituted their “kingdom”. Holmsen (1976:102–5) has clearly stated his point of view on the specific feature of Trøndelag’s power structure in the Viking Period: “on the

basis of ‘resistance regulations’ formulated in the laws of *Frostating* (section IV) one can conclude that the inhabitants of Trøndelag did not find it necessary for their chiefs to become kings or earls and they were required by law to oppose them”. Recently, the historian Jørn Sandnes (1992:259ff.) has advocated a virtually similar opinion in his study of resistance regulations in the laws of *Frostating* seen against the background of peasants’ mobilisation prior to the battle of Stiklestad in 1030 AD.

The view adopted by Holmsen and his supporters is consistent with newer archaeological studies. Stene discusses the distribution of gold, silver, bronze and imported objects in Iron Age grave finds in inner Trøndelag. The farms are ranked by means of “an affluence index”; the farm with the highest rank within a given rural society is termed “central farm”. The study adduces proof that in older Iron Age there were prosperous “central farms” that “could have played a dominant role in their neighbourhood” (Stene 1989:76), as distinct from younger Iron Age when “central farms did not differ from each other to that extent that one could have dominated the others” (*ibid.*).

If we take for granted that prosperity and power go together then we must see the uniform distribution of objects indicative of affluence in Early Iron Age grave finds “in inner Trøndelag as a **proof of lack of clear dominance relations in the province**. Stene concludes his thesis (1989:120) by saying that in inner Trøndelag ... different territories were autonomous and equal, and they had not been under domination of any central authority until they came under the king, at first represented by an earl seated in Lade”.

Special importance should be attached to the fact of symmetrical power division in the district of Trøndelag in Early Iron Age because it provides a sharp contrast to other districts of Norway, specifically to the western part — Vestlandet (Myhre 1987). The Swedish archaeologist Mikael Jakobsson (1988:108) has given a possible explanation for the specific situation in Trøndelag: in an area where resources are not limited or constitute a conglomerate of limited resources, notables with similar power have no possibility of outstripping each other. The result is a structure of power characterised by an equal elite. According to Jakobsson, lack of dominance in these areas is conducive to a stable political situation marked by peace and order. It was in the interest of the entire Trøndelag society to counteract centralisation and dominance tendencies in the region.

On this background it is possible to explain **why** the fight against central monarchy was longer and stiffer in Trøndelag than in other regions of the country. Royal claim on the control of the Trøndelag region collided with a social and political organisation that gave no room for the dominance principles represented by the king. This social and political organisation enforced **collective** resistance because not only the position of notables but the entire stability of the society was

threatened from the outside. There are numerous examples of such collective resistance, *e.g.*, peasant mobilisation against king Håkon I the Good and jarl Sigurd whom they awaited down south in Møre county and the peasant army that met king Olav II Haraldsson (1016–1030 AD) in the battle of Stiklestad in Værdalen.

Until Olav I Trygvasson (995–1000 AD) appeared on the political scene in Trøndelag, the old social organisation had been intact despite regular assaults since the days of Harald Fairhair. What caused the collapse of the old dominance patterns? Why did the province accept a new structure of power and enter new political and social alliances?

DISINTEGRATION OF POWER

Trøndelag's resistance against new masters could continue as long as the social and political organisation of the society was intact. It had been an important task for Håkon the Good, Olav Trygvasson, Olav Haraldsson and other kings who endeavoured to impose centralised power based on feudal subordination principles on Trøndelag. However, they could not dream of incorporating the province into a bigger political community by sheer physical or economic means. In the long term they could only succeed by laying foundations for a new "social contract" and acceptance of a new ruler principle based on **different ideology and different forms of social organisation than those Trøndelag's structure of power had been traditionally built upon.**

Trøndelag's social organisation was initially based on pagan ideas and local cult traditions. The elimination of the local power elite could be done by subverting these religious and cult illusions and traditions Trøndelag's power elite had maintained and authenticated their position of power on (Meulengracht Sørensen 1992:242). This was the strategy Olav Trygvasson and Olav Haraldsson followed in the most consequent and inexorable way. Besides military power and sheer terror, they made extensive use of an ideological weapon - the new Christian religion. Christianity supported royal dominion morally, and later on also legally, and imposed a new ideal of a Christian ruler through Augustinian philosophy. The Anglo-Saxon missionary church became the kings' most important ally in their fight for incorporation of Trøndelag into common Norwegian kingdom. The struggle developed mostly into combating the old truth, pagan priesthood, sacrificial feasts, cult centres and other institutions that contributed to the maintenance and spread of the established power structure.

The Viking Period is characterised by a breach between old and new social, economic and ideological/religious conceptions. This omnipresent dualism was the source of dynamic social development specifically in socially and politically stable

districts deeply rooted in prehistoric times, like Trøndelag and eastern parts of middle Sweden. In these areas the older centres of power were gradually replaced with new royal structures. Trondheim (and Sigtuna) were submitted to similar conquest tactics: economic, legal, ideological and cult functions that had been executed by different centres spread throughout the area were now gathered into a new type of “multifunctional centres” under control of the king. It was not by accident that the king and the church came to play the dominant role in these new power structures because they both institutionally and topographically represented a strong manifestation of the two-sided base of royal power — the physical and the ideological (Christophersen 1992:78).

KINGS AND URBANISATION AT NIDARNES IN A BROADER HISTORICAL CONTEXT

With the preceding sections as background, we can now discuss some of the questions concerning the fundamental nature of urbanisation in this area, and the factors which affected this process.

In the view of most recent Norwegian historians, the province of Trøndelag constituted one of the key areas in connection with the process of national unification, and it is more than likely that it was regarded as such by the contemporary participants as well. Snorre, for example, relates that Olav Haraldsson “proceeded with all speed to *Trondheimen* [*i.e.*, Trøndelag], since he believed it to be the most important part of the realm”. The subjugation of this region, with its rich farming land, its extensive highland and rough grazing areas, its fjords and indented coastline, was seen as a vital prerequisite for the establishment of royal supremacy; at any rate, the early contenders for royal power used every means at their disposal in order to achieve this objective. Some of the reasons why so much effort was expended on this particular area are presented below:

1. Control of Trøndelag gave access to considerable resources, a vital part of any power base. Using these resources, the king (or person aspiring to kingship) was able to establish and maintain the social and political relationships on which his position ultimately depended.
2. Subjugation of the area involved serious problems. The local chieftains and leaders were well organised, and were able to draw on a wealth of resources.
3. Attempts to impose royal authority were resisted by a well-integrated opposition, the core of which was a strong socio-political organisation, itself primarily based on cult and *thing* fellowships. This resistance could only be broken by first **destroying the basis of the area’s socio-political organisa-**

tion. To Hakon the Good, Olav Trygvasson and Olav Haraldsson, this was not just a question of the application of military force and economic exploitation; rather, their prime concern was to establish and consolidate a different type of leadership principle, one based on new ideologies and new forms of social organisation. To do so, it was necessary to attack the ideological basis of the old society; in other words, **to remove or discredit the religious, cult and juridical conceptions that established and legitimised the power held by Trøndelag's social elite.** Once having "neutralised" this elite, the kings (or their representatives) would then be able to erect their own power structures.

The early Christian kings therefore set out, systematically and deliberately, to eradicate every manifestation of paganism, including the pagan priesthood, sacrificial practices, and the cult sites themselves. However, by no means all of the pre-Christian centres were destroyed, or made redundant; some, as a result of the introduction of Christianity, the establishment of new juridical/administrative systems, and the development of new forms of exchange, were in fact relocated and assigned new functions. At the same time, the older forms of social organisation, based on kinship, were gradually replaced, primarily by associations (*i.e.*, various kinds of guilds) based on different kinds of social relations. The development of these associations was closely linked with the emerging urban centres.

The fact that the early medieval towns are often to be found **in the same area**, but rarely occupy **the same sites**, as the more seasonal Iron Age settlements, is quite amenable to explanation. The choice of area was governed by regional factors of localisation, which appear to have been relatively invariable, whereas the choice of site depended on factors operating at a much more local level, with a greater tendency toward variation. Thus the older central places were generally in the vicinity of the local chieftain's residence and, in addition, were usually situated close to communication and transport lines. By way of contrast, a number of the early medieval towns were not especially well placed as regards transport and communication connections with the surrounding districts; in these cases, localisation seems to have been determined by other motives, such as the need to neutralise and control the seats of important chieftains.

In respect of their political, social and ideological/religious functions, it is evident that the early medieval towns were quite different from the central places of the former chiefdoms. Their development was subject to royal and ecclesiastical control, and it was therefore no accident that the royal estate, with its accompanying church, was situated so as to dominate the settlement at Nidarnes. Whether deliberately used or not, this kind of symbolism would naturally have served to enhance the power of both king and church.

THE KING'S ROLE IN THE EARLY URBANISATION OF NIDAROS/TRONDHEIM

Having described the general background, it is now time to address the specific problems and approaches associated with Trondheim's earliest development, roughly from the town's "foundation" in the late 10th century to *ca.* 1100. The archaeological advances of the last 15 years ought to allow us to make a tentative start on the problem of urban origins. The archaeological and topographical material relating to this period has now been assembled and analysed, as part of the project "*Trondheim's fortid i bygrunnen: Folkebibliotekstomten*". Much of this material derives from the extensive excavations conducted from 1973 to 1985 at the "Library site", which was located in the centre of the medieval town and covered a total area of a little more than 3200 m². Together with archaeologist O. Lunde's survey of Trondheim's topographic development during the medieval period, this enables us to form a relatively detailed and representative picture of the way in which the urban settlement developed at the end of the 10th century:

1. During the late Iron Age, at least, the area of Nidarnes was farm land, used for both grazing and cultivation, belonging to the so-called "Nidarnes farm". A nearby weapon burial of the Merovingian Period indicates that the farmstead dates back to the 8th century, if not even earlier, and would appear to proclaim the farm-owner's status as freeholder. This ought to invalidate the hypothesis that Nidarnes was part of Lade farm's outfield, and that Nidarnes farm was no more than a tenant holding.
2. Sometime before AD 1000, the land around a shallow inlet of the River Nid was divided up into numerous small plots, comprising a minimum area of 1.9 hectares, with the boundaries marked off by a system of ditches and wattle fences. The earliest actual settlement was situated on the plots along the inlet's eastern shore, the other plots being occupied in successive stages. This first partition of land around the inlet seems to have been at the expense of a previously cultivated area but, nevertheless, there is little basis for inferring royal confiscation of Nidarnes farm. In fact, a number of factors indicate that no such confiscation took place.
3. The probable area occupied by the royal estate has been localised in the vicinity of an inlet, identified as the *Skipakrok* mentioned in the sagas, not far from the mouth of the Nid. St. Clement's church was built on part of the royal estate, with an unobstructed, commanding position on a little promontory protruding northwards into the rivermouth.
4. The settlement expanded vigorously throughout the entire 11th century, covering a minimum area of 7.4 hectares by around 1100; roughly two hundred years

later it occupied *ca.* 16.3 hectares. Up until *ca.* 1050, settlement expanded in a broad belt along the river to as far south as Kannikestretet (today's Broveita). The southward expansion stopped at this point, which was later to mark the boundary between the cathedral area and the profane urban settlement. This boundary may have marked the mid-11th century limits of Harald Hårdråde's royal estate, and it is possible that, in its original form, it may have represented the extent of Nidarnes farm's infield.

5. Considering that the main thrust of expansion prior to *ca.* 1050 was directed along the western riverbank, it might be inferred that this area was completely at the king's disposal, on the strength of regal shore rights. If so, this would have enabled the king to avoid disputes over ownership of the land at Nidarnes; however, one still has to account for the fact that part of the cultivated area to the west of the inlet was included in the earliest land division.
6. While the rate of urban expansion was governed by population growth, intensification was to a certain extent determined by the more complex factors concerning the functions associated with the various properties. From a long-term perspective, the 11th century seems to have been the most intensely active period in the town's history, with regard to the growth and development of settlement, population and activity. In addition, the evidently uninterrupted nature of the 11th century developments surely implies that the underlying processes were initiated and controlled by some kind of strong, coordinating authority.

THE ROLES OF KING AND CHURCH IN THE EARLY URBANISATION

The 11th century was a time of vigorous growth for the urban settlement at Nidarnes, with the Church (strongly supported by the monarchy) taking an ever more active part in its development, especially from the end of the period onwards. Under king Olav III Kyrre (1066–1093), Trondheim became one of Norway's most important ecclesiastical centres, not least due to the growing popularity of the cult of Saint Olav, which drew a constant stream of pilgrims. The town's importance is indicated, among other things, by the fact that it contained no fewer than 7 churches by the end of the 11th century. With the creation of Norway's archbishopric see at Trondheim in 1152/53, the town's ecclesiastical supremacy was finally assured.

That Trondheim achieved the status of one of Scandinavia's most important ecclesiastical centres was no mere coincidence, and the cult of Saint Olav played an significant part in this process. However, king Olav's canonisation and the veneration thereafter accorded to him as St. Olav, has to be seen in terms of more

than ecclesiastical policy alone. In fact, it was very much a result of political requirements: the establishment of royal supremacy depended heavily on the Church's support, since the ideological justification of the king's right to rule was based on Christian doctrine. No other case gives a better demonstration of the intimate relationship between king and Church. Olav's canonisation not only confirmed the monarchy's commitment to the Christian faith, but in effect pronounced divine approval of the royal supremacy. Situated more or less at the heart of a hostile, pagan region, Trondheim was the ideal centre for a religious cult of this nature, whose promotion was calculated to undermine the structure of pre-Christian beliefs and traditions on which the political and economic power of the local chieftains and leaders was largely based. Thus, in political terms, the establishment of the cult of St. Olav at Trondheim was an integral part of the joint royal and ecclesiastical strategy for the subjugation of "the most important part of the realm", and the town's subsequent development as an ecclesiastical centre, particularly during the latter part of the 11th century, can be seen as a continuation of this policy.

Hence, it is no accident that the town of Trondheim developed into one of the most important religious centres in the North. It seems a paradox since the opposition against Christianity was exceptionally strong in this district but the very paradox explains the importance that this town gained as a centre for Christian faith and cult: there, Christianity and the church were seen distinctly and clearly as the king and his allies' most important weapon in their struggle to gain control of the province. The cult of St. Olav was an important factor in this process because Olav's sainthood was **also**, or perhaps first of all, a strong manifestation of the fact that royal power was deeply rooted in the Christian church and the divine principle of power structure.

Central monarchy was dependent on stable alliances with leading figures in different parts of the country. For all pretenders to the throne it was of crucial importance to be on speaking terms with Trøndelag's peasants because only then they could expect to be paid homage to at Øretinget and get the regal title and all the privileges that followed. An interesting phenomenon that should be mentioned here is the so called "Miklagildet" established by king Olav III Kyrre at the end of the 10th century. The guild comprised the king himself, prominent land owners and Trondheim's celebrities (probably the very same persons). Miklagildet in Trondheim is parallel to Knudsgildet in Naestved: Gilkær (1980) and Cinthio (1982) explain the king's membership and protection of the guild as an attempt to strengthen royal power in the local community. This point of view is identical with Blom's (1956:442) interpretation of the king's role in Miklagildet as "an endeavour to cooperate with the chieftains of Trøndelag on friendly and free terms".

The establishment of Miklagildet must be also seen in the broader context of the growth of guilds and corporations in the Early Middle Ages. The Russian historian Aron Gurevich (1979:136) interprets this development as an attempt to

replace the old relations of a family society with new social relations that **cut across** the old and binding family obligations. From this point of view the king's membership in Miklagildet seems obvious: the king places himself in the centre of a new social network that cuts across the geographical and social relations based on family and clan loyalty. The establishment of the guild can also be regarded as the king's additional attempt to strengthen the control of the district by virtue of his presence.

Miklagildet was established as late as the second half of the 10th century but by that time monarchy had already been accepted by Trøndelag's notables. Some of them returned to power as royal vassals and faithful servants in the local community. Stability was restored in the province of Trøndelag, built on **new** social relations and **new** religious and ideological conceptions of loyalty and execution of power. The disintegration of old power structures was total and irreversible.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

On the strength of the available evidence, there is every reason to believe that the emergence of urban settlement at Nidarnes in the later Viking Period was due to royal initiative. It is virtually certain that only persons of royal rank would have had the requisite authority, motivation and access to resources. It is therefore quite natural - and fully in accordance with the sagas - to identify Olav Trygvasson and Olav Haraldsson, two of the early monarchy's foremost representatives, as the principal agents in this process.

Nevertheless, while there is no denying the importance of these king's efforts, the main purpose of this article is to emphasise that the town's development during the 11th century can only be fully understood in the context of the profound changes that affected the fabric of society during the late Viking and early medieval periods. In this respect, the emergence of a centralised monarchy and state in Norway represents the final stage of a process of considerable duration and far-reaching implications.

In their capacity of centres of administration and power, the towns had an important part to play in the implementation of royal policy. Thus, throughout the 11th century, the monarchy's representatives made various attempts at strengthening and consolidating the position of these centres. However, the actual ways in which this was done varied from centre to centre, and depended almost entirely on the particular socio-political situation within each region. This is what gives the process of urbanisation its regional and chronological variability. One of the distinctive features of the urban centres that appeared during the first half of the 11th century is that they were situated in important regions that were already showing signs of "incipient state formation". Towns such as Trondheim, Sigtuna,

Lund, Roskilde and Viborg provide good examples of centres whose emergence was largely due to royal action, the monarchy thereby gaining a foothold in, and a measure of control over, the surrounding districts. The co-operation of the Church, for reasons expounded above, was a decisive factor in the early monarchy's bid to achieve social and political ascendancy. As a result, these towns came under strong ecclesiastical influence, some later developing into religious centres of national importance. The archaeological and documentary sources allow us to glimpse the workings of a marked and unambiguous process of development in Trondheim from the late 10th to the end of the 11th century. A number of researchers have argued that the latter part of the 11th century, with its new towns, economic growth and vigorous development of the existing centres, constitutes a period of general urban expansion. Trondheim, however, appears to have experienced its most energetic phase of expansion in the **first half** of the 11th century. There are two possible explanations for this: first, Trondheim was unique in this respect, or, second, it was part of a general pattern of development comprising a particular category of "urban settlements of royal foundation, with political/administrative primary functions". It is my contention that the problem's solution can only be achieved by an approach based on more systematic regional studies of urbanisation in Scandinavia.

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