

CHAPTER 13

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The northern Scandinavian Viking hall: A case study from Viklem in Ørland, Norway

ABSTRACT

Our aim with this paper was to discuss two possible Viking Age and Early medieval wooden hall buildings from Viklem at Ørlandet in relation to the Scandinavian Viking Age halls. To do this we analysed the buildings from Viklem to see to what extent they meet well-established criteria for Viking Age halls in Scandinavia. Since the Viklem halls are the northernmost known examples of such freestanding hall buildings, we have to take local and regional conditions into consideration, such as fundamental geographical factors, political demands and its physical manifestations at Ørlandet and the surrounding areas. Our results showed that the large buildings at Viklem meet many of the criteria that have been established by research in southern Scandinavia. However, we see that the Viklem halls are smaller, and lack the large number of prosperity items that are associated with most in most of the known halls in the south. We discuss these differences in the perspective of Viklem's location, close to the sailing route that connected it to the international Viking world. In conclusion, we argue that the large buildings at Viklem must be seen as halls, in view of their size, building technique, location and other factors that distinguish them from contemporary buildings in the same area. Since they also stand out as being markedly different from the southern Scandinavian material, we conclude that the Viklem halls should be interpreted as the first known examples of a northern type of Scandinavian Viking Age hall.

INTRODUCTION

Until recently, there were no clear traces of late Iron Age and early medieval free-standing hall-type buildings in the archaeological material in northern Scandinavia. An important reason for this is that there have been very few archaeological investigations of buildings and farms from the Viking Age and early Middle Ages, and, prior to

2014, hardly any were known outside the medieval urban settlements (Sauvage & Mokkelbost 2016). One that was known, and that has been investigated, is a rare indication of a hall-like building; it was found in Trøndelag at Mære, and it has indeed been referred to as an indisputably important find in Scandinavia (e.g. Jørgensen 2009). Mære is one of very few examples of a cult site that the Norse

sagas clearly mention, and the possibility that there was a hall there cannot be ruled out. Archaeological investigations below the church at Mære have revealed traces of two pre-Christian buildings, and the discoveries of gold votive offerings (*gullgubber*) can be linked to ritual activity and a possible hall (Lidén 1969). However, archaeological traces of the building itself are very fragmentary (Lidén 1969), and therefore little is known about what type of building this may have been.

In recent years, we have investigated extensive traces of parts of a farmstead dating from the Viking Age and the Middle Ages, on the present-day farm at Viklem, which is strategically placed at Ørland by the important hub in the sailing route along the Norwegian coast – the *Norvegr*. Two visible monuments located centrally on the farm, a very large Iron Age burial mound with a diameter of at least 50 m, and a medieval stone church, display the status of the farmstead in the Iron Age and the Middle Ages. Archaeological investigations have revealed two free-standing, possibly hall, buildings, one overlapping the other, almost 18 m and 30 m in length and dated to the Viking Age and early Middle Ages.

The localisation near the *Norvegr* meant that Ørlandet was closely connected to the international Viking world. Because of this, it should be possible to interpret the large buildings on Viklem as belonging to the group of buildings classified as “Scandinavian Viking Age halls”. However, they stand out from most of the known hall buildings in several ways: they are smaller, they appear quite late in the Viking Age and they do have supporting posts outside one of the walls. If these buildings should be interpreted as halls, they are the northernmost free-standing hall buildings known from the Viking Age.

The hall concept has been deduced mainly from the Northern European sagas and heroic poems. In the sagas the hall was an important building as a

focal point for kings, chieftains, and royal retainers (*hirden*), and as a meeting point between the farm owner and the wider social sphere (e.g. Herschend 1993, 1997, 1998, 2009, Jørgensen 2002, 2009, Söderberg 2005, Gansum 2008, Carstens 2015). Numerous free-standing Viking Age halls are known from southern Scandinavia, but in Norway only one has been proven until now, at Husby in Tjølling in the county of Vestfold (Skre 2007), but two more possible halls have been revealed by GPR (ground penetrating radar) at Borre, also in Vestfold (Gansum 2008). In addition, a possible Migration Period hall has been suggested at Avaldsnes recently, in the county of Rogaland (Skre 2017a). Two of the sites with Viking halls are located in or near Oslofjorden, which then formed the district of Viken, where the political connections with southern Scandinavia were strong. The most substantial suggested hall at Avaldsnes, is dated to the Migration Period and thus outside the scope of this paper.

Houses 3 and 4 at Viklem were large buildings, one of which replaced the other. Both houses consisted of just one large room with a high roof. They were located in an environment in which symbols of power indicated the farm’s status both in earlier and later times. Currently, the definitions of halls are based solely on material from southern Scandinavia, and thus do not take into account geographical and regional variations that might occur in other parts of Scandinavia. In other words, we lack an understanding of the free-standing halls in northern Scandinavia from the Viking Age and/or early Middle Ages – that is, in the areas north of the southern Scandinavian Viking age complex, including the Oslofjord region. If we do interpret these building as halls, we might be able to point out some local attributes, which could be the beginning of an understanding of a “northern type” of the Viking Age hall.

In this paper we discuss to what extent Houses 3 and 4 at Viklem meet the criteria existing for the southern Scandinavian Viking Age halls, and compare similarities and differences. The landscape at Ørland, the farms' strategic position along the main sailing route, and the Viklem monuments as political and symbolic communications in this landscape, are an important point of departure.

We use the term "northern Scandinavia" as a means of distinguishing western, central and northern parts of Norway, and northern Sweden, from the southern Scandinavian Viking age complex. We use "southern Scandinavia" to define the area of Denmark, southern Sweden, and southern Norway surrounding the Oslo Fjord. We only consider free-standing hall-type buildings, which rules out longhouses with hall-like sections as seen in Borg in Lofoten.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

A number of researchers (e.g. Herschend 1998; Carstens 2015) have tried to determine what criteria can be used to identify halls in archaeological remains. The best known criteria have been established by Herschend (1998). He points out that a hall should be located on a large farm, have originally consisted of one room constructed with a minimum number of posts, have a prominent location on the farm and have hearths that were not used for cooking or crafts; further, he maintains that the artefacts found within it should differ from those found in the dwelling house. It is important to be aware that this definition is based on archaeological material spanning a long period and covering an assumed course of development from the Early Iron Age to the early Middle Ages. Furthermore, the definition covers both three-aisled longhouses with hall-like open spaces that formed an integral part of the buildings and halls that were detached constructions. Among researchers who have most recently studied

this subject, Carstens (2015) has focused on the Viking Age in her investigation of Scandinavian halls and identified certain features that they have in common. We will look at these features more closely, and, through a discussion of Houses 3 and 4 in relation to her criteria, assess to what extent the houses fit the definition of halls.

One problem with proposing general definitions is that there is a risk of looking for common features across large geographical areas, which are then generalized to fit other places. In order to understand the halls at Viklem, we consider it necessary to take into account both local and regional conditions. In this regard, factors such as geographical assumptions and political demands become relevant.

The landscape surrounding Ørland contains a number of archaeological manifestations of political power, and these are particularly evident in monumental burial mounds (Berglund & Solem 2017). Such large mounds have visual impact and were intended to signify power and a sense of belonging at a time when it was important to visualize status and rights. Their visibility from the sea and from routes travelled on land would have served to visualize the farm owner's status as being clearly above that of others who lived in the area (Carstens 2015:16, Skre 2017a). Medieval stone churches are another political feature in the same landscape, and the first stone church at Viklem was probably built in the mid-1100s, when the latest hall building was still in use. The construction of the stone churches can be seen in the context of both national politics and Church policy (Røskoft 2005:192). By considering the political landscape of which the halls at Viklem form a part, we will be able to perceive them in a larger chronological and geographical framework, which in turn may enable us to gain better insight into the halls in central Scandinavia and the criteria for understanding them.

RESULTS

The landscape and the monuments

The farmstead at Viklem was historically in the care of priests at Ørland and had a strategic location at Brekstad, a present-day trading centre on the edge of Trondheimsfjord. Ørland is situated on Fosen peninsula at the mouth of Trondheimsfjord, opposite Agdenes on the other side of the fjord (Figure 1). Several researchers have pointed to the importance of the area, which linked with all coastal traffic, and to the fact that all routes into and out of the rich agricultural communities in Trøndelag passed through it. Hence, those who

controlled the areas around the mouth of the fjord exerted most power over that traffic (Henriksen 1997, Berglund & Solem 2017). Large monumental burial mounds are part of the archaeological landscape there. Apart from very large concentrations of burial sites in the inner parts of the fjord, Ørland and the neighbouring areas have the highest density of large mounds around Trondheimsfjord (Berglund & Solem 2017:209, Forseth & Foosnæs 2017:55). In Ørland, there are large mounds on the Hovde, Viklem, and Opphaug farms. Originally, there were numerous burial mounds, especially along the higher parts in the landscape where the majority of the settlements were also concentrated

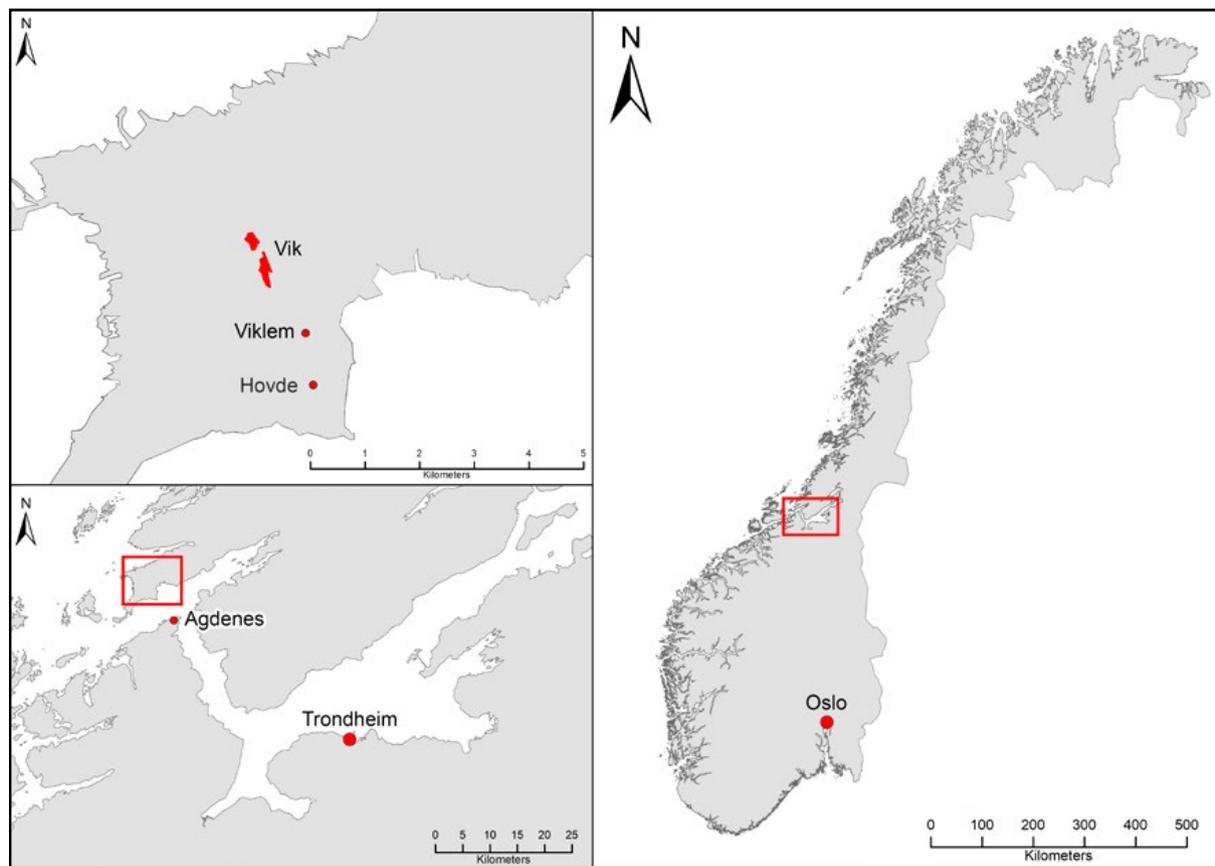


Figure 1. The outer area of Trondheimsfjorden and the location of Ørland with Viklem and key sites. Illustration: Magnar Mojaren Gran, NTNU University Museum.

(cf. Ystgaard, Preface). Many of them disappeared when the German occupying forces had an airport constructed in Ørland during World War II; the NTNU University Museum in Trondheim does not contain any objects from those burial mounds. Despite this, a number of high-status Late Iron Age artefacts (Berglund & Solem 2017:211) give some indication of Ørland's general status during that period. Since most of the burial mounds are associated with the higher parts across the otherwise rather low or flat landscape, even smaller burial mounds would have been clearly visible from the sailing lanes to the east.

Viklem forms a plateau with some rocky formations (Figure 5), that lies elevated in the flat landscape of western Ørland. The area is clearly visible from the surrounding countryside and, conversely, it has commanding views of the surrounding landscape, as well as of the route ships took when entering the fjord. As mentioned elsewhere in this volume, the shoreline changes in the flat Ørland landscape had a major impact on the location of settlements and led to changing harbour conditions (Ystgaard, Gran & Fransson, Ch. 1). In the Early Iron Age there was an archipelago between Viklem, Vik, and Opphaug, in the location where there is dry land today. During the Iron Age, the rising land led

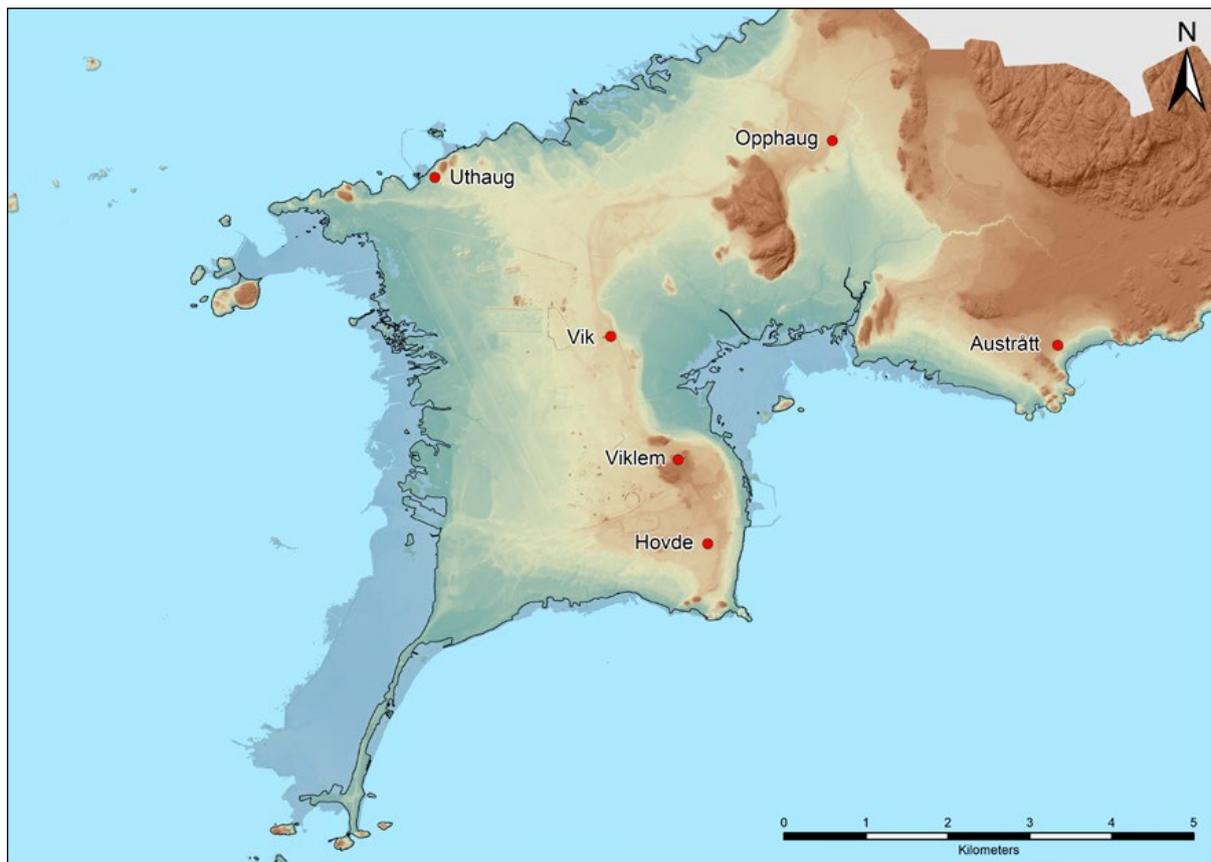


Figure 2. Ørland with the position of the shoreline at 3 m asl. Map by Magnar Mojaren Gran, NTNU University Museum.

to the shoreline shifting to a new position to the south and east, and by the Viking Age there would have been a good harbour in an area c.500–600 m northeast of the Viklem plateau (Figure 2). Today, two monuments in a central position on the farm at Viklem indicate the farm's status in the Iron Age and the Middle Ages: the burial mound and the church. The halls were located close to the cemetery and must have been similarly visible monuments in the landscape. In the following, we review these monuments from the landscape perspective presented in the Introduction.

The 'Viklem mound', c.60 m north of the medieval church, is the most prominent archaeological cultural monument in Viklem today. It has been surveyed with the latest topographical and terrain models based on airborne laser scanning (LiDAR), and is c.50 m in diameter and c.6 m in height ([Hoydedata.no](https://www.hoydedata.no) 2018). The mound has a number of traces of earlier excavations, and earlier aerial

photographs show traces of a *potetkjeller* (a partly stone-built construction for storing potatoes and other root vegetables) in the northwest, as well as traces of trenches dug across the mound (Figure 4). We do not have any information about who dug the trenches or whether there were any finds from them. However, in 2002, a square exploratory trench measuring 1 m² was dug at the base of the mound (Berglund & Solem 2017:224). A possible burnt layer was found at the base of the mound, above which a row of three stones was visible, and interpreted as possibly forming part of a stone circle. Charcoal from the bottom layer was dated to the Bronze Age and pre-Roman Iron Age (BC 800–555 (Tua-4202, 2550 +/- 50 BP) (Berglund & Solem 2017:224). The excavation only afforded a brief insight into the edge of the burial mound. Notably, no clear connection was established between the burnt layer and the burial mound. The latter point has also been emphasized by Berglund & Solem (2017:224), who think that



Figure 3. The church and the large burial mound at Viklem. Photo: Kristian Pettersen.



Figure 4. Aerial photo from 1969 showing Viklem farm, church, churchyard and the burial mound (Norgesbilder.no).

the burnt layer should be seen in relation to activity prior to construction of the mound. However, the possible remains of a stone circle indicate that the burial mound might have originated from the Early Iron Age, or possibly either the Roman period or the Migration Period. We find it somewhat problematic to conclude that three stones aligned in a 1×1 m row can be interpreted as being part of a

circle around the entire mound. Thus, the dating of the Viklem mound must be regarded as uncertain. Earlier investigations have shown that large mounds were often the result of a number of events over time, which often represented different burials. The oldest are likely to have dated from the Roman or Migration Period, when they would have appeared as low mounds (e.g. Ellingsen & Grønnesby 2012;

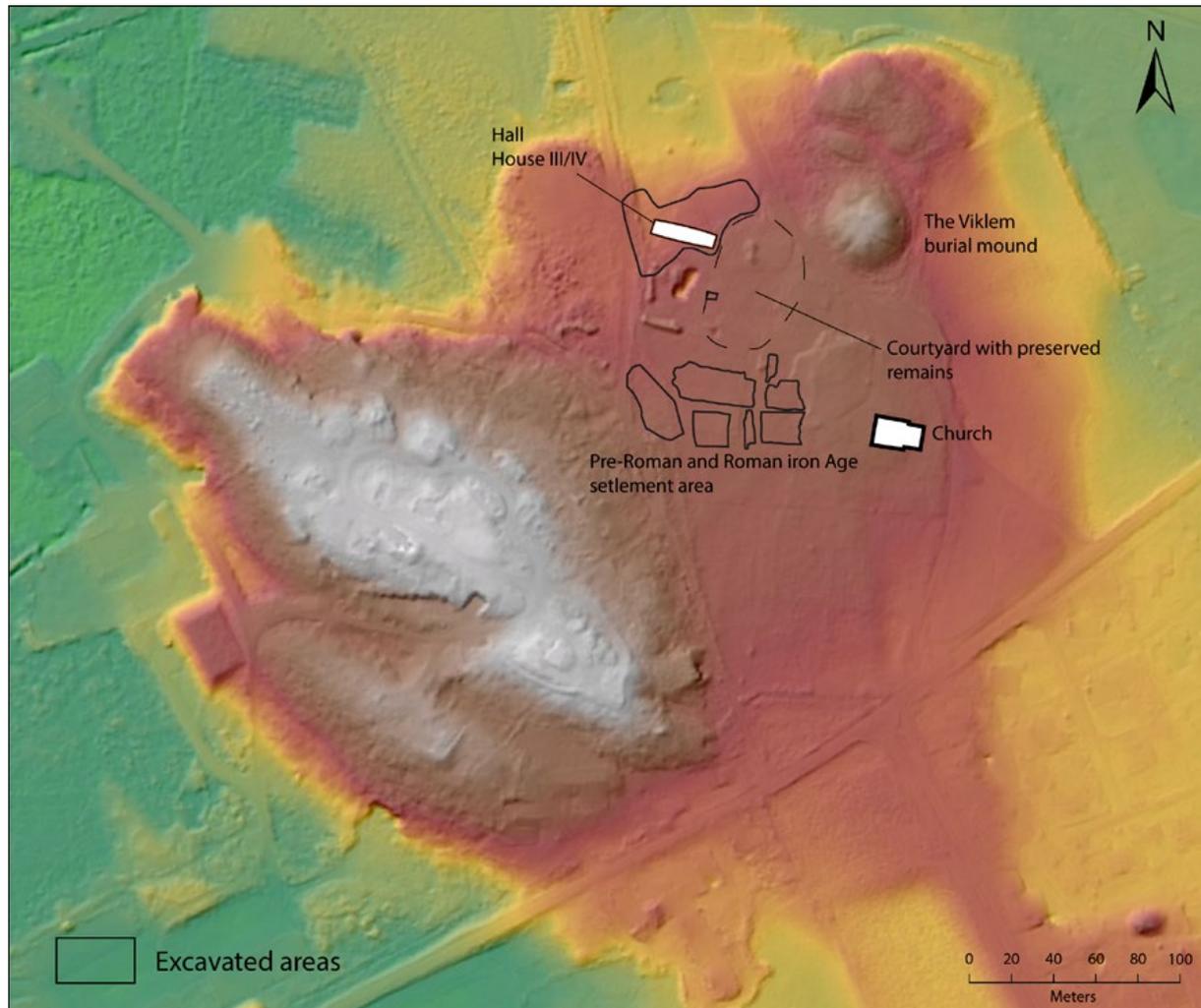


Figure 5. The Viklem plateau with the main monuments and archaeological observations. Map by Raymond Sauvage, 3D data by Hoydedata.no/Kartverket.

Østmo & Bauer 2017a). Thereafter, they were rebuilt a number of times, with extensions and additions, and eventually ended up as large mounds in the late Iron Age.

In their time, Houses III and IV would have been clearly visible monuments at Viklem. They were located c.50 m west of the large burial mound, and oriented roughly east–west. When their location is plotted on a modern map of the Viklem plateau

(Figure 3), it can be seen that they were on the periphery of the occupied area, just on the edge of the plateau to the north. Traces have been found of several possible buildings associated with the Viking and medieval farmstead to the west and east, and thick layers of cultural deposits from the medieval farm are known to exist within the courtyard of the modern farmstead just to the southeast. The halls clearly lie within the northern boundary of

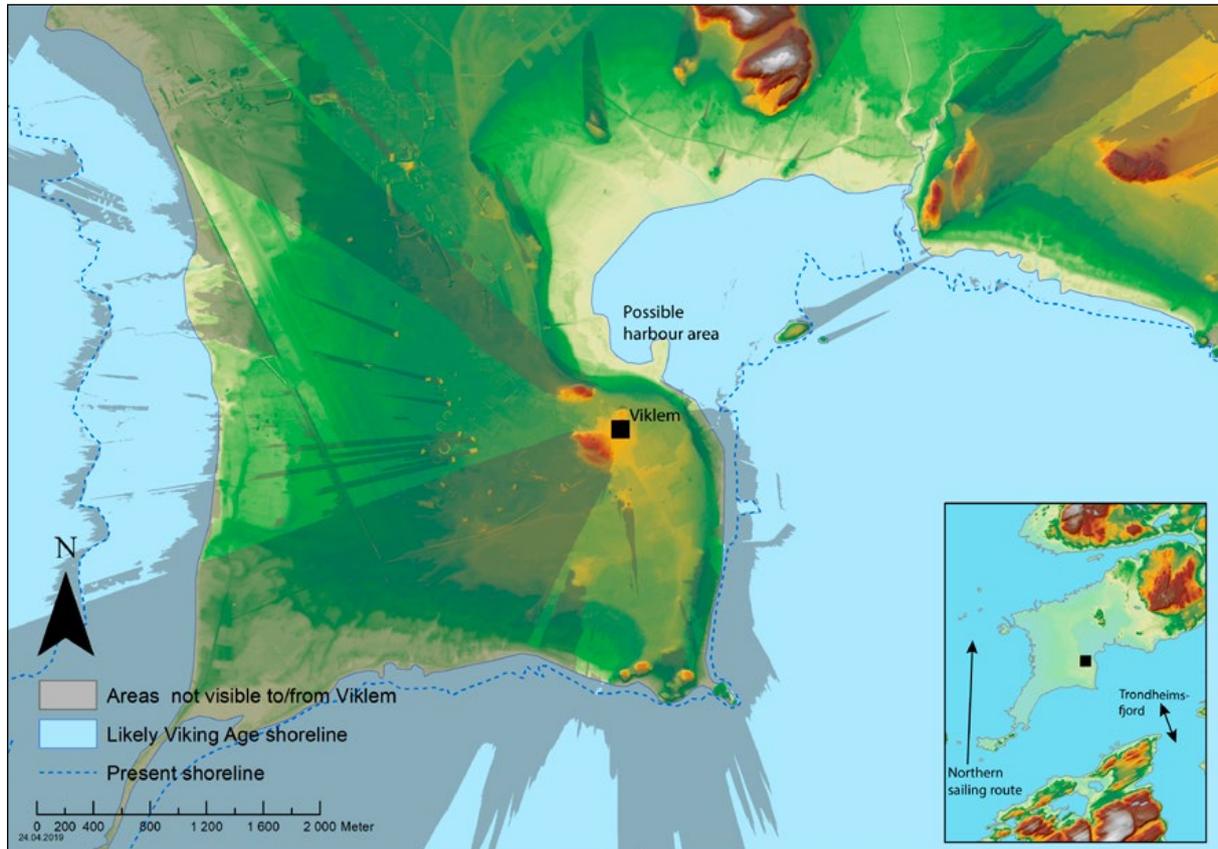


Figure 6. Viewshed analysis of Viklem. The monuments could be seen from the green areas in the map. The possible harbour area lies to the north. GIS application by Raymond Sauvage, NTNU University Museum, 3D data by Hoydedata.no/Kartverket.

the farm (Figure 5). We suspect there was a harbour c.500–600 m to the north of Viklem (Figure 6), and, if that were the case, the halls would have been highly visible due to their orientation. Thus, for those travelling from the harbour and up to the Viklem plateau, the halls and not least the nearby burial mound must have been clearly in view as prominent monuments in the landscape.

Besides the Viklem burial mound, the white-washed church is the only early monument visible in Viklem today (Figure 4). The church has a complex construction history. The building that exists

today was probably built around AD 1450–1520 (Brendalmo 2006:336), but some sections of the building indicate that parts of an earlier stone church were used when the present church was built. Brendalmo (2006:241, 301) is of the opinion that the oldest church dated from the period AD 1140–1160, at a time when there was a lot of stone church construction activity in Trøndelag, and the country in general. It is probable that this was a planned development as part of the wider organization of the Church in Norway in the High Middle Ages (Røskoft 2005:192). The farm at Viklem

might have eventually been incorporated into that process, since priests were associated with the farm, according to written sources dating from the mid-1300s (Brendalsmo 2006:425). The construction of the stone church on the site indicates that Viklem probably became incorporated into a context of politics and church politics at a high level in the Middle Ages. However, the dating of a possible earlier stone church to the mid-1100s indicates that the latest of the two halls would have existed while that church was under construction (Tables 1 and 2). We also note that the church has been built farther to the east on the Viklem plateau and thus would also have been visible from the sea, located adjacent to the burial mound and the later of the two halls (Figure 2).

Previous investigations

Investigations carried out at Viklem prior to c.2007 indicated that the area was inhabited throughout the Bronze Age (Berglund & Solem 2017), after which there was continuous settlement on the farmstead until the Middle Ages. The earliest traces of settlements in Viklem have been found in an area west of the church and the cemetery, where three wooden, three-aisled longhouses dating from the pre-Roman Iron Age and early Roman period have been excavated (Berglund & Solem 2017:217). In both design and size, the houses are reminiscent of other houses known from the pre-Roman Iron Age (e.g. Grønnesby 2005:99, Henriksen 2007:73). There are far fewer traces of buildings from the late Roman period and the Migration Period (Berglund & Solem 2017:218). In the area to the west, there was a distinctive group of cooking pits and postholes of unknown function. A number of the cooking pits were quite large (Mokkelbost & Sauvage 2015:98, Fig. 68).

New investigations in 2014

In 2014, new investigations were conducted at Viklem in connection with a planned expansion of the cemetery. They resulted in the first securely dated Viking and early medieval finds from the farm. A total of five buildings were excavated: four single-aisled buildings with earth dug posts and one pit house (Figure 7). The site was 20–40 m west of the large burial mound, and farther north than where finds had previously been made. The present-day farm in Viklem is located between the main area investigated in 2014 and the area investigated earlier (Figure 3). Exploratory investigations on the site, including those carried out in 2016, revealed cultural layers dating from the Middle Ages (Eidshaug & Sauvage 2016). It is likely that the area contains further traces of the Viking and medieval farmstead, and that the area discovered in 2014 was part of a larger complex.

Description of all buildings and finds from 2014 have been published (Sauvage & Mokkelbost 2016), and are only treated superficially here; an overview of them is presented in Figure 7. A rectangular single-aisled house measuring 12.5 m × 6 m (House 1) dated to approximately AD 975–1030, and a large pit house measuring c.6.5 m × 6.5 m (House 2) with a large, stone-lined hearth in one corner, dated to AD 970–1164. Several finds from the pit house will be discussed later (in the section headed '*Artefacts from the 2014 investigations*'). In addition, a rectangular single-aisled house was discovered (House 5). Stratigraphically, it was later than Houses 3 and 4 and differed from them in orientation, and has therefore been interpreted as a later element.

The two buildings that we focus mainly on in this article are the single-aisled Houses 3 and 4, which we think may be examples of central Scandinavian halls (Figure 8).

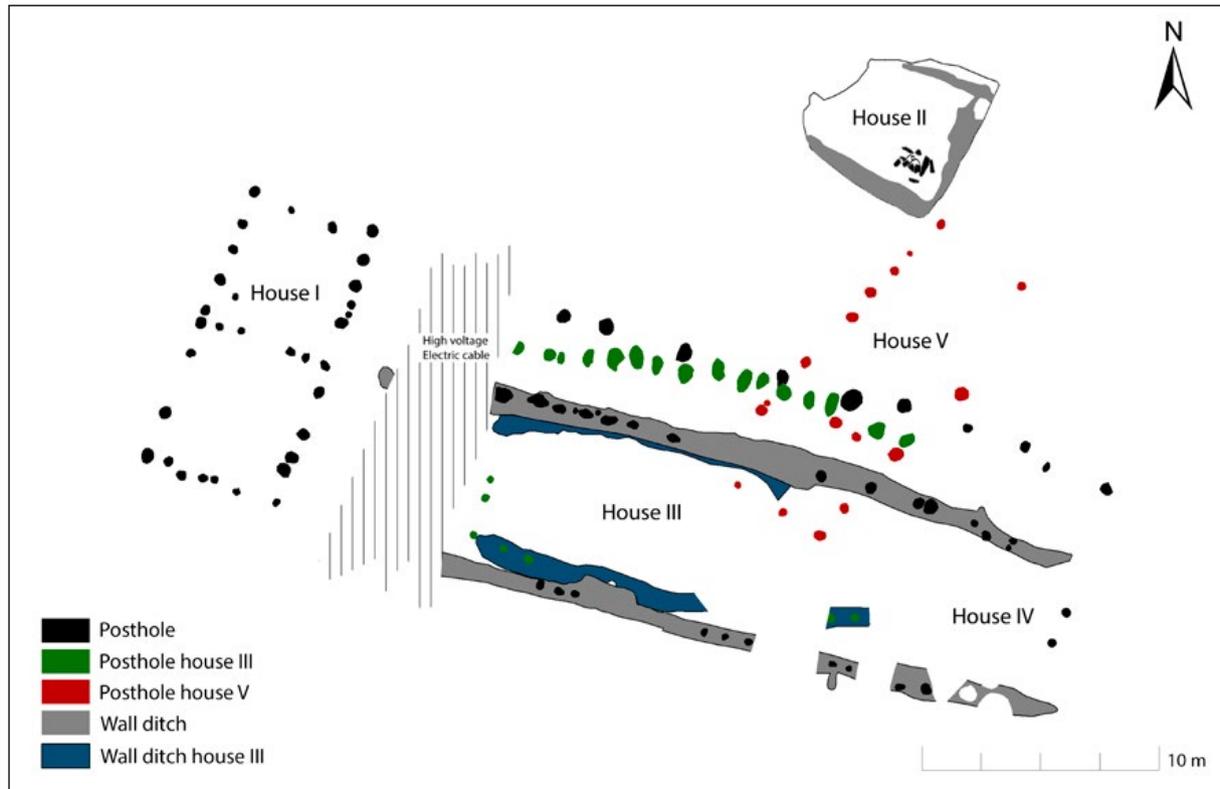


Figure 7. Plan of buildings excavated in 2014. Illustration by Raymond Sauvage, NTNU University Museum.

Houses 3 and 4 have been described in detail by Sauvage & Mokkelbost (2016:280–283) and in the excavation report for the 2014 investigations (Mokkelbost & Sauvage 2015). These houses differ significantly from the buildings excavated at Viklem, especially in terms of their size, the fact that they had the same orientation and were similar in design and construction method, and the fact that one overlapped the other. The earliest house, House 3, was 18 m in length and 7 m wide, and its long walls were convex in plan. In the long walls, roof-supporting wall posts were set in wall trenches up to 50 cm deep. Although the trenches had been disturbed by later activity, it was still possible to observe postholes at intervals of c.80 cm. Outside the northeastern wall trench there was a slightly curved row of 16

posts set in oblique-angled postholes, which have been interpreted as supporting posts (*skårder*) for the northern long wall. Postholes at the gable ends marked the position of the end walls. There were no clear traces of internal divisions, and thus all remains indicated that the building had only one room, with an area of 140 m². Radiocarbon dating of charcoal from an internal posthole (Table 1) securely linked the posthole to the house, but since there were no traces of other internal posts, it is not interpreted as part of an internal partition. Because of this the post must have been erected in connection with other activities. The strong roof-supporting wall elements and the external angled supporting posts suggest that the house had a strong foundation and therefore was probably a tall building. Remains of



Figure 8. Plan of the hall buildings, Houses 3 and 4. Illustration by Raymond Sauvage, NTNU University Museum.

burnt and unburnt animal bones were found among the macrofossils in two of the roof-supporting postholes in the wall trenches. Additionally, the postholes contained a lot of charcoal, which may indicate that the house was burnt down at some stage. Charcoal from the base of one of the wall trenches has been radiometrically dated to AD 778–995, while charcoal from a small post found inside the house has been radiocarbon dated to a slightly later period: AD 895 – 1021. Charcoal from a roof-supporting posthole in the northern wall trench has been dated to AD 897 – 1024. The dates thus fall within the range AD 780–1024, and therefore the house can be dated to the Viking Age. On the basis of this material, it is difficult to give a closer estimation of the construction year

or when the burning occurred, but we return to the question of dating in the discussion of the next building.

House 4 was built immediately after House 3 had been burnt. The new house was at least 27 m in length and 8.8 m in width. To the north, the excavated area of the house was disturbed by a modern cable trench, and therefore the total length of the house is somewhat uncertain. However, the possible end of the northern wall trench was observed just west of the modern trench and may indicate that the house was originally 30 m in length. In common with its predecessor, House 4 had strong foundation posts set in two parallel wall trenches. However, unlike the long convex walls in the previous phase, the long walls were quite straight. The

Context	Dated material	Lab. ID	Date before present (BP)	Calibrated age (68.2% probability)	Calibrated age (95.4% probability)
Wall trench 425	Charcoal	BETA-389188	1120±30	893–970 AD	778–995 AD
Internal post 230	Wood, Pinus	BETA-401518	1070±30 BP	905– 1016 AD	895–1021 AD
Roof-supporting Posthole 372 in wall ditch	Charcoal, Pinus	BETA-401516	1060±30 BP	970–1019 AD	897–1024 AD

Table 1. ¹⁴C dates from House 3.

spaces between the posts in the wall trenches were relatively small, which may indicate that many of the posts were replaced during the time in which the house was in use. The spacing may also suggest that the house has had a longer phase of use than House 3, if posts were replaced when they rotted. A number of postholes on the north side of the building could be interpreted as having contained angled support posts (*skårder*) for the roof structure. The strong foundations, roof-supporting wall elements, and external angled supports indicate that House 4 must also have been a tall building. Several postholes found inside the house have been interpreted as belonging to the building, but were not arranged in such a way that suggested they were the remains of internal partition walls. This building, too, probably consisted of one room, with a total area of 237 m² – almost 100 m² larger than its predecessor. Additionally, burnt and unburnt animal bones were found in a wall trench, both in the remains of an internal post and in a posthole belonging to one of the end walls.

It is difficult to establish the exact transition date of the burning of House 3 and the construction of House 4. The last dates from the earlier House 3 lie within the range of 897–1024 AD, and charcoal from the bottom of the eastern wall trench of the younger house 4 has been radiometrically dated to

AD 1041–1218 (Table 1 and 2). This large range in the later date is caused by a plateau in the calibration curve in the late Viking Age and early medieval period that makes it difficult to establish which part of the centuries the last dates represent. However, since House 4 is superimposed on top of, and cuts into the remains of, house 3, and the later building was raised in the same style as the previous one, it is reasonable to assume that house 4 was quickly constructed after House 3 burned down. Our opinion is that this action took place within the earliest part of the range of the latter date. Based on the range of the last dates from House 3 we assume this took place in the first half of the 11th century.

The last dates from House 4 come from two posts in what might have been the remains of end walls. Their range indicates a later date for this construction, in the late Middle Ages. We are uncertain how this should be interpreted, but we think that such a late dating may reflect a long phase of use, during which the posts were replaced a number of times. This evidence was observed in the long wall trenches as multiple post-holes that represent several replacements of wall posts during the life of the building. With a construction phase in the first half of the 11th century and a last phase in the later middle ages, we suggest that the building had a long lifespan of at least 300 years.

Context	Dated material	Lab ID	Date before present (BP)	Calibrated age (68.2% probability)	Calibrated age (95.4% probability)
Wall trench 345	Charcoal	BETA-389188	890±30	1050–1206 AD	1041–1218 AD
Roof-supporting posthole 6620 in wall ditch	Charcoal	BETA-401518	590±30	1313–1403 AD	1299–1413 AD
Post 6609 from the end wall	Wood, Pinus	BETA-401516	570±30	1320–1411 AD	1304–1423 AD

Table 2. ¹⁴C dates from House 4.

Houses 3 and 4 were undoubtedly large buildings, although they are a lot smaller than their south Scandinavian relatives. This is pointed out in a review of all known building remains from central Norway from the same period (Sauvage & Mokkelbost 2016), as well as by Berglund & Solem (2017), who emphasize that they are the largest Viking and early medieval buildings discovered in Trøndelag. It has previously been argued that, as single-aisled buildings, Houses 3 and 4 must have been built using stave construction methods without internal roof-supporting posts (Sauvage & Mokkelbost 2018). The method is known from archaeological contexts throughout much of northern Europe (Christie 1974, Hauglid 1989, Jensenius 2010), but is probably best known from the later stave churches, of which the oldest ones – known as post churches (e.g. Jensenius 2010) – had earth dug posts, often with corner staves and intermediate staves in the walls. Traces of such buildings have been found below a number of medieval churches (Jensenius 2010). The closest example in Trøndelag is an earlier wooden church in Sparbu, the remains of which were found below the church at Mære (Mære kirke) (Lidén 1969). A further example is a profane building with preserved wooden remains, found at the public library site in Trondheim (Christophersen & Nordeide 1994:164). The excavated elements in

those buildings were similar to the building traces dating from the AD 900s and later at Viklem. The style of building was introduced around the AD 900s, as it was elsewhere in northern Europe (Sauvage & Mokkelbost 2016:289). The technique makes it possible to build higher structures than those with three aisles, and therefore larger and more open internal spaces would have been possible (Olsen 2009:130). In the case of Houses 3 and 4, this resulted in open rooms, or halls, of 140 m² and 237 m² respectively.

Houses 3 and 4 had deep wall trenches in which roof-supporting wall posts were set. A parallel is known from Omgård in west Jutland, where a number of sequential buildings have been interpreted as halls, three of which resemble Houses 3 and 4. The houses at Omgård had supporting stave walls – 22–26 m in length and 6–7.8 m wide – set in wall trenches similar to those at Viklem (Nielsen 1980:194–197, Figs. 19 and 20). Another parallel in terms of construction method is the stave-built church found below the Mariakirken in Oslo, where both of the long walls were set in trenches, as in Houses 3 and 4 at Viklem. At the bottom of the trenches, the staves rested on timbers that had been split lengthwise (*halvkløyving*) (Jensenius <http://www.stavkirke.info/>). It cannot be ruled out that Houses 3 and 4 had a similar construction. Terje Gansum (2008:207–208) points out that the need

for such a strong foundation was clearly due to the fact that the buildings were tall. Another striking feature, previously unknown in Trøndelag, is the angled exterior posts (*skårder*). Such posts have been found in specific circumstances, such as in contexts with harsh climates or with tall buildings such as Møre-type stave churches (Christie 1978). Ørland is exposed to wind and harsh weather conditions, and given the prevailing often strong winds from the south-west at Ørlandet, it seems reasonable to assume that the construction method was used at Viklem.

Artefacts from the 2014 investigations

The material excavated at Viklem primarily relates to activities that can be expected to have taken place on a Viking or early medieval farmstead. Can any of the finds shed further light on the possible halls and features associated with them? Most of the artefacts were found in association with the pit house to the north-east of Houses 3 and 4 (Figure 9). The finds came from different contexts, indicating that they were deposited in different phases. A group of finds was discovered associated with the phase in which the pit house was in use, including a spherical copper alloy weight with two opposing flattened poles and weighing 24.92g from the floor layer. Other findings from the same phase included two spindle whorls, loom weights, an arrowhead, slate needle sharpeners with holes at one end, nails, and needles (Mokkelbost & Sauvage 2015:79–83). Especially the latter artefacts are typical in textile production the Viking Age, probably the late Viking Age (Mokkelbost & Sauvage 2015:94).

Another group of discoveries was made higher up in the infill in the pit house. These included a bronze alloy ringed pin (Mokkelbost & Sauvage 2015:85). The pin is 8.2 cm long, with a flat head with linear decoration on both surfaces (Figure 9). The head is 1.6 cm long, has an uneven diamond

shape, and appears to have lost a number of protrusions. The upper 2.5 cm of the shaft below the head has linear decoration in the form of crossing lines. The ring was originally c.1 cm in diameter and was undecorated. The ringed pin probably belongs to a type called flat-headed ringed pins and might have been 'link-ringed' (Fanning 1994:109–110, Fig. 92). There do not seem to be any parallels in Norway; the nearest parallels have been found in Hedeby, Dublin, and Schleswig (Glørstad 2015:85). Another discovery from the same phase at Viklem is a finger ring 2–3 cm in diameter and made of braided silver threads (Figure 9). The ring was initially thought to have been made of bronze (Mokkelbost & Sauvage 2015:95), and the fact that it was silver was only revealed during conservation (conservator Leena Airola, pers.comm. March 2015). The ring is similar in appearance to a Viking gold ring from Waterford in Ireland (Bøe 1940:105, Fig. 72).

A third group of finds comprises surface finds from the ploughsoil, found by metal detection in advance of the archaeological investigations in 2014 (Figure 10). They consist of four possible weights, and one or two possible lead seals. Other surface finds include a pendant (the shape of which is reminiscent of Thor's hammer), a conical lead spindle whorl, a copper alloy fitting, and some unidentified copper alloy fragments (Mokkelbost & Sauvage 2015:89–92). The four possible weights and lead seals are difficult to date typologically, as they do not have any distinguishing characteristics. A parallel for the spindle whorl was found in the pit house, and may date from the Viking Age or early Middle Ages. All of the finds came from north of the occupied area, where the terrain starts to slope down away from the site. Exploratory archaeological surveys there have only revealed two possible postholes (Mokkelbost & Sauvage 2015). Although the findings cannot be more closely related to contexts, buildings, and periods, they nevertheless reflect activities on the



Figure 9. Metal objects from the pit house. Photo: Åge Hojem, NTNU University Museum.

farm in the Late Iron Age and the Middle Ages. One possibility is that the objects were moved down the slope from the more central occupied area as a result of later farming activities.

The artefacts from Viklem derive from two different types of activities. The first group can be related to crafts and manufacturing at a time when the pit house was in use. They include objects that might have had different functions on a farm. For example, the weights might have had various uses, particularly in connection with textile production and fine metalworking (Pedersen 2001:24–27). Others, such as the loom weights, needles, and needle sharpeners with a hole pierced at one end, can also

typically be associated with textile production. A stretched interpretation of pit houses is that they were linked to crafts such as textile production, due to the artefacts found in them (e.g. Fallgren 1994; Milek 2012), and the pit house at Viklem fits with this interpretation.

The second group of artefacts was found in the destruction layers in the pit house. These finds were not necessarily related to activities in the pit house, but might have been deposited there at a later date from elsewhere on the farm. The group of finds may thus be indicative of other activities on the farm. Dating of the last burning of the hearth in the pit house and the associated finds suggests that the pit



Figure 10. Finds made by metal detection, with the possible Thor's hammer. Photo: Åge Hojem, NTNU University Museum.

house was dismantled in the early Middle Ages (Mokkelbost & Sauvage 2015:94) and the artefacts might have been deposited in connection with that event. Interestingly, neither the ringed pin nor the finger ring has close parallels in Norway, but they seem to have had a southern Scandinavian or insular origin. Some of the finds made by metal detection cannot be related to specific activities, but they reflect activity on the farm at some time between the Iron Age and Middle Ages. In the absence of a secure context, it is difficult to date some of the other items. The weights and the lead seal may indicate that exchange or trading took place to some extent (cf. Skre 2007:343, Sindbæk 2011:41–43, Pedersen

& Rødsrud 2013:119), but the finds are too few and random to be able to make any further suggestions, with the exception of the possible Thor's hammer pendant that can be linked to religion and must date to the Viking Age.

DISCUSSION

In the following we discuss Houses 3 and 4 further in the light of the criteria proposed earlier for the definition of halls, in order to consider more closely how they should be interpreted. It is undoubtedly challenging that the criteria are based solely on southern Scandinavian contexts, but to this date we have found no other examples of similar free-standing hall

buildings along the western coast, in central Norway or northern Scandinavia at all. In the absence of close parallels for Houses 3 and 4 at Viklem, we can only rely on the southern Scandinavian material available for comparison. However, the strategic position of Ørland and Viklem along the main coastal sailing route, clearly ties this area as we have noted, to the international Viking world. In such a context, relations and similarities to southern Scandinavian free-standing halls should probably be expected. In the following three subsections, we review criteria that Carstens has established for the Viking halls in southern Scandinavia in order to assess to what extent Houses 3 and 4 at Viklem meet them.

Criterion 1: All Viking halls were established at one height in the terrain

Carstens's claim that Viking halls were established at similar raised altitudes (Carstens 2015) applies also to the hall-type buildings at Viklem, as they were situated at a height at which they would have been clearly visible from the sailing routes. The Viklem plateau is also one of the highest places in Ørland, and therefore we can assume that tall buildings such as Houses 3 and 4 were visible from long distances. Thus, those living in Ørland in the Late Iron Age would have been reminded of the power held by the farm at the entrance to Trondheimsfjord every day. In addition, the hall-type buildings were situated close to the large burial mound, as is the church, which might have related to the latest of the two buildings. Visual relationships between the farm and/or church and the fjord indicate that the burial mound, the church, and the probable halls were perceived as symbolic forms of communication by those sailing on the fjord (Guttormsen 2002:44). The large burial mound, the halls, and later the church all faced towards the sea and the sailing route, as well as towards the land routes across Ørland. A parallel can be found at Avaldsnes,

where Dagfinn Skre (2017b) claims that the Iron Age aristocracy used visible structures such as large burial mounds, boat-shaped stones, and a possible hall building as monuments to clearly communicate the large farm's status and strategic position in Karmøysundet. The monuments were constructed in a way that primarily conveyed information to those on the sailing route, a pattern repeated throughout the Iron Age and later in the Middle Ages, with the construction of a stone church and a royal manor. In our opinion, there are signs of a similar situation at Viklem, where the monuments would have marked and communicated the power and status of the place. All those who entered the fjord would have known that there were powerful people at Viklem.

A number of the southern Scandinavian halls, such as Lejre, Tissø, Omgård, and Uppsala, are associated with royal power and wider international networks (Christensen 2010: 238-239, Herschend 1998:17, Nielsen 1980, Söderberg 2005:109, 183, Jørgensen 2002, Ljungkvist & Frölund 2015). The possible hall buildings found at Viklem are somewhat smaller, but indisputably large in a regional context and clearly stand out in many ways. The situation at Viklem thus resembles the situation known from large farms in southern Scandinavia.

Criterion 2: All Viking halls have traces of cultural activity in or near them

According to Carstens (2015), with the exception of Boeslunde in Denmark, all Viking halls have traces of cultural activity either in them or near them, or they have been described as cult places in written sources from the Middle Ages. This cultural aspect seems to have become more important over time, usually culminating in churches (Carstens 2015:22, with references to Anglert 1989).

In a number of structures in and around Houses 3 and 4, some osteological remains from animals,

both burnt and unburnt, were found. Such finds are often interpreted as traces of ritual sacrifices and cult activity, which formed part of the big feasts held in Viking halls (Gansum 2008:205, Carstens 2015:17). Carstens points out that the cultural activity in the halls would have strengthened the power of the halls' owners when they organized sacrificial feasts and when the gods were worshiped on their farms (Carstens 2015:17). Previous investigations indicate that bones are more likely to be connected to ritual activity if the bones found are of a special kind (Nielsen 1997:384-385). The animal bones at Viklem have not been analysed, but both the number of bones and the amount of material indicate that they represent food waste as well as traces of ritual activity. Still, only a very small number of the roof-bearing posts at Viklem was excavated and emptied, so the actual quantity of animal bones in the posts is an unknown factor.

Another exciting find is the possible Thor's hammer made of lead (T26288: 121), which was found by metal detection in the vicinity of the halls. The pendant was found in the ploughsoil and should therefore be considered an isolated find. However, its wider context means it is worth closer examination. According to Norse mythology, Thor's hammer Mjølne was made by dwarfs, and always hit any target. A Thor's hammer was the best protection that Åsgård (the home of the gods) could have had against the jotuns (giants), who were Thor's arch enemy (Steinsland 2005:203). The 'Thor's hammer' from Viklem is not a prestigious object and appears to have been home-made, but its symbolism was still the same – it would have afforded protection against evil forces. This symbolic item was in common use among the elite up to and including early Christian times (Steinsland 2005:203). The Norse sagas mention a Thor cult in Trøndelag, and, according to monk Oddr Snorrason's saga of Olav Tryggvason, Thor was worshiped at

the pagan temple at Mære (Steinsland & Sørensen 1994). Nine examples of Thor's hammer artefacts are known from Norway, only one of which was found in Trøndelag, although the circumstances of its discovery are somewhat unclear. Furthermore, few place names are associated with the cult of Thor in Trøndelag (Nordeide 2006:219). Moreover, given our uncertainty about whether the find from Viklem should be interpreted as a Thor's hammer, and bearing in mind the fact that it was an isolated find and lacked a secure context, we do not wish to place too much emphasis on it. However, since it was found just outside the halls we still consider it worth mentioning.

Thus far, we have no further indications of any other cultural activity at Viklem, other than the fact that the church was built there in the Middle Ages. The main challenge in this regard is that only parts of the farm have been investigated archaeologically.

Criterion 3: All Viking halls are associated with production sites

According to Carstens, with the exception of the hall in Alby, Sweden, each of the well-known Viking halls has been found in association with a production site with traces of fine metalwork (Carstens 2015:22). No such finds have been made at Viklem. The closest feature to a production site is the pit house, where textiles were produced (Sauvage & Mokkelbost 2016:283). Weights were found within the pit house, and although weights have earlier been found in contexts associated with fine metalworking (Pedersen 2001) the fact that only one weight was found and no other traces of metalworking were discovered does not provide grounds for assuming that any such activities occurred in the Viklem pit house. However, the pit house at Viklem falls within a pattern similar to that seen in southern Scandinavia. Pit houses are common features on large Viking farms, such as Tissø in Denmark, and Toftegård in

Sweden. This observation supports our assumption that Viklem was an important farm in the Viking and early Medieval phase, where some degree of production for local consumption took place beyond what would have been needed on a smaller farm. However, it cannot yet be claimed that there was a production site at Viklem. That said, we do have to consider that only parts of the farmstead and the surrounding area have been investigated. Traces of production could therefore still remain within the un-investigated areas.

Other factors

Although Houses 3 and 4 do not meet all of the criteria for Viking halls suggested by Carstens, we nevertheless claim that they were halls, for several reasons. First, we assume that there were regional differences: ‘There were no DIN standards and no building authorities’ (Carstens 2015:14). Since, to date, we do not have any other material from central Scandinavia, it may be equally important to argue the case for the halls on the basis of local and regional circumstances. Accordingly, we take as our starting point the fact that the buildings were distinct: their size and design, location, and the uninterrupted continuity in the existence of buildings of the same type. We have not found similar parallels for this feature of Houses 3 and 4 in Ørland or elsewhere in northern parts of Norway and Sweden. However, a number of other features in common with the southern Scandinavian halls have been found at Viklem, and must therefore be included in the discussion.

A distinctive feature of Houses 3 and 4 is their unusual size (140 m² and 237 m² respectively) within their geographical area: no other house types from the same period had a similar large open space, and therefore the need for such a large space may be questioned. Apart from the fact that it could have held a large number of people at the same time, it

might have been intended to impress visitors by its monumental scale. Such large spaces with high ceilings must have made a considerable impact on people who were used to much smaller and simpler buildings (Carstens 2015:6). The contemporary dwelling buildings at Viklem were much smaller, with smaller spaces indoors, and we have not seen any indications that their walls needed extra support, in contrast to Houses 3 and 4. This may mean that the roofs were lower on the dwelling houses, and thus, Houses 3 and 4 would have appeared as significantly different from contemporary houses on the farm. The fact that the halls were built in an entirely different style from the other houses must have created the impression that they were special in some way. In her discussion of halls found in southern Sweden, Maud Cecilia Andersson (2001) points out that the halls would have had large dimensions, with short distances between the roof-supporting posts across their width, but long distances between the posts along the length, to create the effect of a large open space. The same impact would have been achieved at Viklem – or an even greater impact, since the halls did not have internal roof-supporting posts. This fits well with Andersson’s argument, despite the difference in construction style. The halls at Omgård in west Jutland had a similar architectural style (Nielsen 1980:187–188).

The external angled support posts on the east side of Houses 3 and 4 suggest there were problems with the stability of the roof structure. They were evidently placed to counteract the force of the prevailing winds from the south-west. Similar support posts on one side of the hall at Omgård have been interpreted as signs of repair and stabilization of the construction specifically in relation to the direction of prevailing winds (Nielsen 1980:88). The same might have been the case at the halls in Phases 3 and 4 at Tissø, where there was an absence of roof-supporting posts in the interiors (Jørgensen 2009:342, Fig. 14). In our view,

it is not unthinkable that, in an early phase of the single-aisled building tradition, there was a need to resort to such solutions when there was a desire to construct tall buildings, although such construction methods were not customary. Further, the single-aisled style of building was not introduced until the Viking Age (Sauvage & Mokkelbost 2016), a relatively short time before the halls were built at Viklem.

Another interesting observation is that we did not find any traces of hearths within the Viklem halls. A commonly applied criterion for halls is that they did not contain hearths used for cooking, but only as sources of light and heat (Herschend 1993:8, 1998:16, Andersson 2001:73). The houses at Viklem might have had hearths when they were in use, but the investigated area had been ploughed and cultivated for many years, and therefore archaeological finds and structures might have disappeared during that time. A further possibility is that raised hearths were used in the halls, in which case traces of such hearths would have disappeared even faster, as the result of intensive ploughing. Given their size, such buildings must have had some form of heating for them to be used most times of the year at this altitude. In any case, since hearths are not always found in hall-type buildings (Andersson 2001:81), we need not place too much emphasis on the absence of traces of hearths at Viklem.

As several researchers have pointed out, a very important aspect of the discussion of halls is the principle of continuity (Andersson 2001, Carstens 2015). A number of the Viking halls either replaced earlier halls or were replaced following fires. House 3 was built in the late Viking Age and appears to have burnt down at some time late in the AD 900s. Subsequently, House 4 was built on the same site and its walls overlapped those of the earlier building. The two buildings were identical in construction style: both had stave walls set in wall trenches, were tall, and lacked internal partition posts. The

continuity in their building sequence and their spatial relationship is rather distinctive, but seems to have similarities with some of the known hall localities (Söderberg 2005, Carstens 2015). For example, the hall at Tissø was built in the same place twice (Jørgensen 2009:342). Similarly, the hall at Järrestad (Sweden) was rebuilt at least three times on the same site (Söderberg 2005). If the hall was an important aspect of the owner's expression of status, perhaps rebuilding was commonly practised and the remains of such rebuilding activities should be expected. Furthermore, rebuilding the hall on the same site might have been an important symbolic act marking continuity and stability among the local leadership (Carstens 2015:19). In this context, it is interesting to note that House 3 was burnt before House 4 was built on the same site. The burning of halls might have had a special meaning. Hall burning is mentioned a number of times in earlier Eddic poems, in which it is often described as signifying 'the end of a king's dynasty and his family's rule' (Carstens 2015:18). It is difficult to determine from the archaeological material whether House 3 was deliberately burnt, but it is probable that halls were burnt due to rivalry. The hall at Uppåkra has been interpreted as having been burnt down as a result of an attack. Traces were found of the hall having been ritually buried, which supports the suggestion that the attacker was victorious (Carstens 2015:19). However, when the hall was rebuilt in the same place, it could have been an expression that the newly established ruler quickly rebuilt the hall in order to restore the status quo (Carstens 2015:9). Since the phenomenon of ritual or intentional burning is well-known from other halls, Houses 3 and 4 at Viklem fall within a well-known pattern.

Another aspect often emphasized in relation to the definition of halls is that high-status objects are frequently found within or adjacent to them (e.g. Herschend 1998, Andersson 2001:81, Carstens

2015:15). However, there are very few traces of high-status objects at Viklem. Furthermore, having examined a large body of material relating to halls in Scandinavia, Carstens points out that they were ‘Either very exclusive finds or no finds at all’ (Carstens 2015:15). It is possible that the halls might have been cleared before they were abandoned. Although the hall at Fosie IV (Sweden) lacked artefacts of the type normally expected from halls, it has been assumed that they disappeared during the process of uncovering the sites prior to excavation (Björhem & Säfvestad 1993). That might also have been the case at Viklem.

Although few artefacts were recovered from Viklem, a certain amount of information can be derived from them. Both the ringed pin and the silver finger ring lack parallels in Norway. Indeed, the fact that most of the very few objects from the farm are similarly special in character is an important point that may connect Viklem to the political landscape in Viking Age Scandinavia. The finger ring might have been used as payment in silver, but there were no other traces of hack-silver on the farm. Since it lacks parallels in Norway, it can be interpreted as an imported object, either as the result of looting or as a gift from a high-ranking person. Gifting was often a way of expressing alliances. The hall was central to the relationship between the warriors (*birde*) and rulers. Guilds and feasts held in the hall maintained loyalty between them, and gifting was important in this respect (*Beowulf* line 2633, translated by Heaney 1999). The ring from Viklem can be understood in the same context.

The ringed pin is an important item, as such pins emerged as ideological and political status symbols used by men among the elite during the AD 800s. These pins were symbols of their wearers’ alliances and loyalty to the king. There is evidence of their use being especially widespread in western Norway, where Harald Hårfagre had a strong following

(Glørstad 2010:41–249). We know of very few flat-headed ringed pins from central and northern Norway, and therefore it is of particular interest that one is found at Viklem. If it were interpreted as an expression of connection with royal power, it would serve to confirm Viklem’s political role, which in turn would support the suggestion that Houses 3 and 4 should be interpreted as halls. In what way is it possible to link Viklem to royal powers – is it in the form of an alliance or as a decreed protector? This strategic location would have been a key site, providing the opportunity of visually controlling all vessels entering and leaving the Trondheimsfjord.

It is natural to imagine that its commanding position afforded great opportunities to control the traffic, possibly through taxation, offers of protection, or threats of plundering. In addition, a farmer with a large farm close to a large burial mound would have had the advantage that the location itself marked the farmer’s status relative to that of his ancestors, which in turn would have confirmed the need for land and power there (Carstens 2015:7). One way in which petty kings could have gained control in the area would have been to enter into an alliance with the farmer who owned a large farm at Viklem. The ringed pin could therefore be interpreted as confirmation of such an alliance, as was often the case in western Norway (Glørstad 2010).

It is worth noting that, in contrast to a number of other large farms in Ørland, Viklem is not mentioned in the sagas. This is quite strange, considering the results of the archaeological investigations. From written sources, it appears that the farm at Opphaug was the most powerful farm in the late AD 900s (Rian 1992:460). A powerful man named Skjegge Asbjørnsson, also known as Jarnskjegge, had his seat there until he was killed at the pagan temple at Mære in AD 997. Jarnskjegge was the leader of the pagan Trøndelag farmers’ opposition to King Olav Tryggvason, and is traditionally said to have been

buried at Austrått. According to sagas about Harald Hardråde (Harald Sigurdsson, king of Norway in the mid-1000s), Austrått was a large farm in the mid-1000s, and must have been confiscated by the earlier kings (Holmsen 1976:113). There might have been a shift in power after Jarnskjegge's death. During the Late Iron Age, the harbour at Opphaug and Hov was lost due to the land rising (cf. Ystgaard, Gran & Fransson, Ch.1). According to written sources, it seems that Austrått might have acquired a central position during that period, and the archaeological material gives the impression that Viklem, too, was important in that respect. Dagfinn Skre (2017b) is of the opinion that prior to the unification of Norway, the petty kings in western Norway were mainly linked to large farms at strategic points in the landscape, where good harbour conditions and proximity to the coastal routes were crucial. A number of farms may have had differing relationships of dependency on one another – some may have been under the control of one person. It can be assumed that a number of the large farms were seized in connection with the unification of the petty kingdoms. However, Skre indicates that they often continued to have key functions, such as administrative and/or church functions (Skre 2017b:798). We regard Viklem as one of the farms in Ørland that was clearly characterized by such a link, due to its proximity to the coastal sailing route and vessels entering Trondheimsfjord. In this respect, we also see there was a continuation of important functions in the Middle Ages, such as churches and eventually farms managed by priests. According to the sagas, the earls of Hålovg (Lade, Trondheim) conquered the northern coastal areas and Nordmøre in the Late Iron Age, and initially settled in the area around the mouth of the fjord. Two important players were Grjotgard Jarl, who was associated with Selva in Agdenes, and his son Håkon Jarl (Håkon Sigurdsson). Håkon Jarl had a

seat in Ørland before he settled at Lade in alliance with Harald Hårfagre in connection with the unification process (Henriksen 1997:89–90, including references). Could the farmer at Viklem have been in alliance with these key actors? Alternatively, was the farm directly subject to the earls of Hålovg and thus under royal power in connection with the unification of the petty kingdoms. Regardless, why Viklem is not mentioned in the sagas is unclear, but we think it relevant to ask what underlying strategic or political factors could have lain behind its non-appearance there.

A church built on a large farm might have been seen as a political mark of support for the king's power (Skre 1988:8–10). The church at Viklem appears to have been built at the same time as the church on the farm Austrått, and since the construction of stone churches called for skills that were likely to have been sourced externally (Skre 1988), is it reasonable to ask whether there might have been cooperation between the two farms in this respect. Since the farm at Austrått had been subject to the rule of kings relatively early, the construction of the church at Viklem should be seen as a sign that those in authority there were also in league with the kings, which may be confirmed by the ringed pin found at Viklem. Furthermore, although a number of farms in the area probably had wooden churches, there must have been a reason why Viklem had a stone church. Clearly, the circumstances were in place for church construction precisely there: the farm was a focal point, with surpluses in terms of its economy, and it had a central location in relation to the traffic on the fjord. The sense of belonging with the ancestors who had lived on the farm would have been supported and confirmed by the existence of the large burial mound. The drying of the harbour at Opphaug and Hov (and at Vik, as discussed in Ystgaard, Gran & Fransson, Ch. 1) must have had a major impact on the development potential of the two farms. In this

case too, an alliance with petty kings might have led to support for the building of the church, not only making it possible, but also important.

The large monuments at Viklem would have been highly visible in the flat landscape at Ørland, as visualised in the viewshed analysis in Figure 6. The tall hall buildings and the burial mound would have been eye-catching to those who sailed in and out of the Trondheimsfjord in this important junction in the coastal sailing route - *Norvegr*. The visual relationships between the farm and fjord must have been such that both the burial mound and the halls would have been perceived by travellers both on the fjord and the *Norvegr* as symbolic forms of communication. The location itself marks and confirms the status of those responsible for the construction of the halls in relation to their ancestors, and is a strong symbol of the requirements for both land and power there. Later, the stone church was also included as another manifestation and visual monument, and should be seen as a similar expression. At the same time, it also expressed the fact that the medieval farm was part of a larger institutionalized organization, in which the function of the halls eventually ceased.

CONCLUSIONS

In the introduction, we set out to discuss to what extent Houses 3 and 4 at Viklem meet the existing criteria for Viking Age halls, and to try to define some local attributes to better understand the hall as a building in a northern context. The landscape at Ørland, the farms' strategic position along the *Norvegr*, and the Viklem monuments as political and symbolic communications in this landscape were an important point of departure.

Although we know little of how the hall in a northern Scandinavian perspective should be understood, a number of factors indicate that the large houses at Viklem should be interpreted as halls. The reason behind our claim is that the houses differ significantly

from other contemporary houses found at Viklem. Houses 3 and 4 were much larger, with only one large room, and appear to have been very tall, in addition to having an elevated position in the landscape. There are no signs of common farm functions, such as living quarters, barns, or stables. When House 3 seems to have been burnt down, it was replaced on the same site by a larger house. Such continuity in the hall buildings is quite distinct and is well documented in southern Scandinavia. The location is close to an earlier large burial mound and a later medieval church, on a strategically well-positioned farm at the entrance to the Trondheimsfjord, where there were many other special large burial mounds. Thus there was continuity in a landscape over time, manifested by monuments that also expressed the need for consolidation of power – burial mound, hall, and church.

The halls are clearly distinct in their local and regional context, where we have no clear parallels. The halls and the other monuments at Viklem can be seen as manifestations of power at Ørland, that communicate visually with those sailing in and out of the entrance to the Trondheimsfjord and on the main coastal sailing route. We interpret this as grounds for interpreting the large houses at Viklem as halls in the social sense, as an interface between the owner of an important farmstead along the sailing route, the travellers and the locals. However, the houses should also be seen as halls in a political sense, as an expression of practical power in a strategic central landscape, connected back in time through the large burial mound and forward in time through the church.

The halls differ from the southern Scandinavian archetype in several ways. We have found no clear production site associated with Viklem, and the traces of cultic activity are few and are from the medieval church. However, the farmstead is not fully excavated and such activities may lie within

unexplored parts of the area. We also have some hints of cultic activity, such as animal bones in post-holes, and the find of a possible Thor's hammer. The halls at Viklem are built on the same architectonic principles, but they were smaller, and had adopted outside angular supports on their northwestern side. Perhaps this reflects an adaptation to the local environment, because of the harsh climate along the Norwegian coast, where the flat landscape at Ørland is particularly exposed to strong sea winds. This observation suggests that halls in the northern Scandinavian contexts could have been deliberately built smaller and stronger than their contemporaries in the south.

When new material comes to light, we will be able to further explore the northern free-standing halls. The lack of a production area and larger numbers of finds with special features may be among the relevant factors that could be further tested. Also we should investigate the nature and significance of

local adaptations concerning size, architecture and construction. Similarities regarding situation and connection to other monuments, like large burial mounds and medieval churches, seem to be an important factor, and should be taken into consideration. Perhaps the criteria need to be adjusted and adapted to local variations in this part of Scandinavia. In the future we might find other similarities that do not emerge from such a small basis for comparison.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks are due to Marte Mokkelbost for comments on earlier parts of this article, and for her considerable contribution to the interpretation of the finds made by metal detection and the pit house. Additionally, we thank Ingrid Ystgaard and Geir Grønnesby for their comments and discussions. We also forward our thanks to the anonymous referee, for helpful insights in the finishing stages of preparing this paper for publishing.

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