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3 Rulership and Ruler's Sites in 1st–10th-century Scandinavia

This chapter's discussion of rulers and polities in 1st-millennium Scandinavia is based on evidence on the upper echelon of 'central places', those that may arguably be regarded as ruler's sites, as well as on written evidence, primarily the Old English poem Beowulf *and the Old Norse skaldic poem* Ynglingatal.

The Roman expansion into continental Europe amplified interaction between Germanic peoples as well as with the Roman Empire, mainly through military campaigns and trade. The intensified mobility triggered deep cultural and societal integration processes within 2nd to mid-6th-century Germanic Europe. This interaction and integration is evident in martial proficiency and in the rise of a new type of leaders, the dróttinn *(army commanders), among many Germanic peoples. Challenging the authority of tribal rulers, the* kindins *and* þiudans, *some of the* dróttinn *became de facto rulers.*

In southern and middle Scandinavia, where a southern and a northern economic zone overlap, some dróttinn *of the 3rd century established economic and political centres that also served as ritual and communal assembly sites. Sites such as Uppåkra, Gudme, Helgö, Åker, and Avaldsnes appear to have constituted the nodes where the* dróttinn's *networks into the two economic zones intersected. Commodities obtained through one network were conveyed into the other, and at the sites, raw materials were worked into commodities. At the core of each site was the residence and hall of the* dróttinn; *they were ruler's sites.*

In the decades around AD 500, royal lineages were initiated in several Germanic polities, the Merovingians the most prominent among them. In contemporary Scandinavia, the Skjǫldungar, the Skilfingar, and other royal lineages were initiated. In the same period, the number of tribes was reduced from the plethora of the 1st–6th centuries to predominantly three: the Danir, the Svíar, and the Norðmenn. The 6th century also saw the downfall of several ruler's sites and the emergence of new such sites. It is suggested that these three parallel developments were related to the introduction of kingship and the establishment of kingdoms.

Following the downfall of southern long-distance networks and societal and climatic upheaval in late 6th to early 7th centuries, Scandinavia became less economically and culturally connected to the west and south. In the same period, most continental and British kingdoms were Christianised. No longer deeply integrated with the latter, Scandinavian kingship came to follow its own trajectory. Within the pagan universe, the heroic warrior ethos of the past was developed and refined, only to recur overseas in the 9th–10th centuries, embodied in sea-borne warrior bands. After a turbulent two centuries, Scandinavia was reintegrated among what was now the west-European normality: the Christian kingdoms.

In the first volume from the Avaldsnes Royal Manor project (Skre 2018d), Avaldsnes was discussed in the context of the sailing route along the western coast of the Scandinavian Peninsula – the manor lies at a bottleneck at the route's southern end. Drawing on the wide array of evidence published in the 2018 volume it was suggested that Avaldsnes in the 3rd–10th centuries AD was one of several residences and supply-bases for sea kings who had taken on the task of securing safe transport

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https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110421101-003

along the route, in particular the shipping of commodities. It was also suggested that the first king of Norway (Old Norse *Noregr*), Haraldr hárfagri[1] (reign c. 872–932), emerged as paramount from this sea-king milieu, and that he extended his authority from the sea route to the land and thus created the kingdom (Skre 2018b).

The suggested connections between polities, rulers, commodity production, and trade embedded in these conclusions need to be substantiated and discussed within a wider context, and revised as appropriate. In a recent paper (Baug et al. 2019) they have been set in the context of the 7th–9th century surge in production and trade around the southern North Sea and English Channel, the early urbanisation in southern Scandinavia and the Baltic, and trade in Arctic products transported along the west-Scandinavian coast. In the present chapter, the 2018 conclusions are set in the context of the development of rulership and polities in first-millennium Scandinavia and, to some extent, western Europe.

The scholarly debate on early medieval rulership and polities in Scandinavia has primarily focused on the emergence in the 9th–12th centuries of the three relatively stable and institutionalised kingdoms of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. In addition to their respective principal sites – Jelling, Avaldsnes, and Old Uppsala (Fig. 3.1) – identifications of kings' manors from this period have mainly been based on information on royal landholding recorded in the 12th–17th-century literary and documentary evidence (e.g. Andrén 1983; Lindkvist 2003b; Iversen 2008, this vol. Ch. 4).

The debate on the nature of rulership and ruler's sites prior to the 9th century has been less intense than in continental and insular north-western Europe, clearly a result of the paucity of written evidence that might clarify which rulers and polities existed where and when. While high-status settlements and graves are abundant in the Scandinavian archaeological record throughout the first millennium AD, identifying manors that were inhabited by rulers and graves that entombed them has – since the antiquarian tradition faded in the early 20th century (e.g. Brøgger 1916; Nerman 1942) – been carried out only with hesitation.

Since then, combined studies of written evidence, settlement patterns, and artefact distribution have produced commendable results regarding how the three kingdoms emerged from the *gens* ('peoples', 'tribes') mentioned by 1st–6th-century classical authors such as Tacitus and Jordanes (Myhre 1987, 2003; Callmer 1991; Hedeager 1992; Näsman 1998, 1999, 2006; Brink 2008; Sindbæk 2009; Iversen this vol. Ch. 4). During the same period, research on settlements has revealed numerous so-called 'central places', some of them in existence through most of the first millennium, others more short-lived (Adamsen et al. 2009; Jørgensen 2010b; Skre 2010, 2018b; Ljungkvist et al. 2011; Christensen 2015a; Clarke and Lamm 2017; Jörpeland et al. 2018).

1 In the following, ancient Nordic words and names of individuals are written in their Old Norse spelling, except when referring to specific sources. For instance, Bēowulf, the name of the protagonist in the Old English poem *Beowulf*, is written in the Old English spelling. Names of sites, islands, and regions are written in their current native spelling.

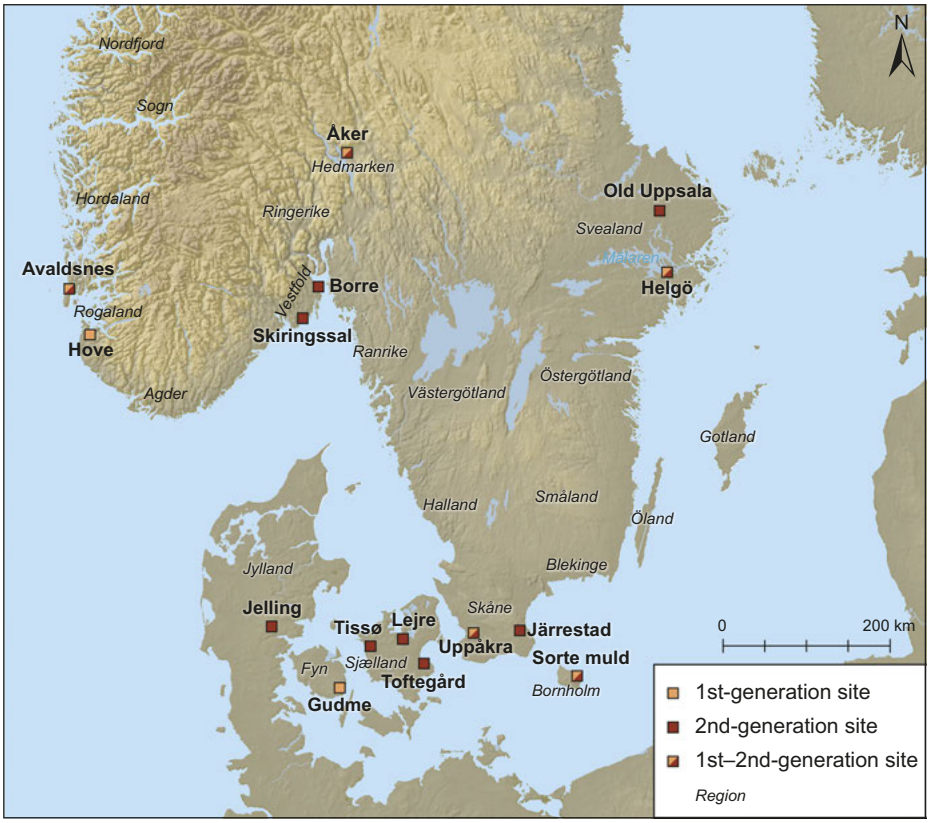

Fig. 3.1: Probable ruler's sites in 1st–10th-century Scandinavia. Those of the first generation date from the 1st–6th centuries and those of the second generation the 6th–10th (section 3.4.1). Several other sites could have been included in the second generation, but the aforementioned appear to be the most prominent. Although many sites surely remain undiscovered, the map suggests the parts of Scandinavia for which they are likely to be most numerous. Regions and islands mentioned in the text are indicated. Illustration by I. T. Bøckman.

Somewhat surprisingly, though, these two areas of research, rulership and central places, have only been loosely connected in the scholarly debate. Aiming to suggest more explicit connections, this chapter will first discuss which terms for rulers were in use through the first millennium AD in Germanic-speaking polities, and indeed in Scandinavia (3.1). Thereafter, the main evidence and recent contributions on Scandinavian rulership and polities in the first millennium AD are discussed (3.2). The tentative conclusions from these considerations will be brought into a discussion of which types of polities and rulers may have existed, which types of 3rd–10th-century sites may arguably have been rulers' sites, and which changes have occurred in types of polities, rulers, and sites (3.3 and 3.4). Finally, a synthesis is proposed (3.5). Writing this chapter has led the author rather far from

his earlier position on the history of rulership in the 1st millennium AD, and some afterthoughts are offered (3.6).

First, however, a note on terminology. In the following, 'rulership' is preferred instead of the commonly used 'kingship' as a general term for political leadership of this period. The term 'king', Old Norse *konungr*, appears to have been introduced in the late 5th–6th centuries as the term for the leader of a polity (3.1). In the following, 'king' and *konungr* are used in this narrow sense. Secondly, since it was introduced in archaeology (Hodder and Orton 1976; Grant 1986), the term 'central place' has been applied to a wide variety of Scandinavian sites that display some feature not found in most farms or villages. In the present context, the term is too imprecise, and I suggest the terms 'ruler's site' and 'ruler's residence' for the types of locations and hall complexes discussed here (Fig. 3.1).

3.1 Germanic ruler terminology in the first millennium AD: *þiudans*, *dróttinn*, *konungr*, and monarch

Germanic rulership terms underwent certain changes through the first millennium, and interaction with the Roman Empire played a role in this development (Wallace-Hadrill 1964; Wolfram 2009). Some 150 years after Caesar's campaign in the 50s BC, Tacitus wrote in a much-debated phrase (ch. 7) that Germanic peoples had two types of leaders: kings by birth, generals by merit (*reges ex nobilitate, duces ex virtute sumunt*). The Germanic term in Tacitus' time was probably not *konungr* ('king', the equivalent of rex), but rather *kindins* or *þiudans*, both meaning ruler of a people or tribe (de Vries 1956; Wolfram 2009); the latter term is derived from *þiuda*, 'people' or 'tribe'. The Germanic equivalent to Tacitus' *dux* would probably be *dróttinn*, meaning 'leader of a military unit' (Heinertz 1925; Green 1998:121–40). The word is derived from the Germanic *druhti- meaning 'troop' or 'army' (Bjorvand and Lindeman 2007:187).

While all three terms appear to have existed in parallel within their respective domains from Tacitus' time until Bēowulf's lifetime (early 6th century, below 3.1.1), several scholars hold that they came to replace each other as terms for rulers. First, *dróttinn* replaced *kindins*/*þiudans* as the term for ruler, suggesting a shift from rulership based on the tribe's consent to rulership emanating from military command (Schlesinger 1965; Green 1998:124–30; Wolfram 2009). This apparent shift was probably associated with the extensive reshaping of migrating Germanic groups that occurred in the 1st–5th centuries. While moving and settling, the army that made up the core of a group recruited warriors and included other groups. Thus, it was ones inclusion in the army, not the tribe in which one was born and raised,

that determined one's belonging among the army-commander's subjects. The contemporary occasional forming of confederations between neighbouring tribes, often with the intention of joining military forces, will have had the same effect: the army rather than the tribe was at the core of the polity, and military leaders came to be rulers (Wenskus 1961; Schlesinger 1965; Wolfram 1971, 2008; Steuer 2006).

The ostensible subsequent shift from *dróttinn* to *konungr* as the term for a ruler may signify a movement from political leadership based in individual accomplishments and military rank to one based in belonging to certain lineages (Green 1998:134–9; Wolfram 2009). Originally, the term *konungr* signified 'man of the royal kindred', suggesting that several contemporary men of the same kin may have been called kings although they were not rulers (Green 1998:130–4; Bjorvand and Lindeman 2007:592–4). Classical authors recount that some Germanic peoples had multiple kings, others selected their king among candidates from the royal lineage, while some had no kings at all (Green 1998:121–2). Evidence from continental and insular successor kingdoms from the 5th century onwards shows the same variation. In some instances, two contemporary kings appear to have ruled separate regions within a realm, in others, they seem to have exercised joint rulership, and finally there are instances of one over-king and several sub-kings (Wood 1977:17–23; Wolfram 2009).

Thus, a monarchy on the high medieval model with a single sovereign is not necessarily implied by the use of the term *konungr*. Kings were members of royal lineages that were associated with lands and peoples, but their authority and polity type varied. The diverse meanings of the term *konungr* suggests that no uniform idea of kingship existed among Germanic peoples at the time, and that the emergence through late 5th–9th-century Europe of widespread monarchy was not a linear and uniform development. Under shifting conditions, kings as other types of rulers before them, will have navigated between personal ambitions, acute constraints and opportunities, their polity's legal tradition, interests among the aristocracy, popular consensus expressed at assemblies, possible rivals within royal lineages, and the like; thus constantly modelling and remodelling the institution of kingship.

The evidence for shifts in terms for rulers from *kindins*/*þiudans* to *dróttinn* and on to *konungr* does not appear to be altogether conclusive. The three former terms seem to have been used in parallel within the same polity, sometimes as mere hailing epithets, elsewhere with distinct meanings to dissimilar social roles, such as 'ruler' and 'warlord' (below 3.1.1). Conceivably, depending on the migrations and ethnogenesis of the group, military leaders may have ascended to rulership in some polities while ancient rulers' lineages may have maintained their position in others. Whether such shifts at all occurred and, if so, which, where, and when, needs to be discussed empirically in each case, as will be a theme in the following discussion of the Scandinavian evidence. Before entering into that discussion (below, 3.1.2), however, a certain category of evidence needs to be discussed.

3.1.1 The poetic evidence on Scandinavian rulership

While the use made in the following of other types of written evidence should be rather uncontentious, the uses to which the poetic evidence is put deserves consideration. Employing the two Old English poems *Beowulf* and *Widsith* and the Old Norse poem *Ynglingatal* as historic evidence regarding the periods they claim to deal with – the late 5th–6th centuries and the 3rd–9th respectively – cannot be done without detailing the types of information extracted from them and some criteria for its use. This evidence is also used in additional sections of this chapter (3.2–3.5), and the basis for that use is discussed here.

Whereas some information on 5th–10th-century Scandinavian peoples, rulers, and lineages was committed to parchment in Britain and the continent (below, 3.2.1–3.2.3), the only contemporary Scandinavian evidence is a handful of relevant runic inscriptions (2nd–11th centuries) and skaldic verse (9th–11th centuries). The kings' sagas deal with the same period as the skaldic verse, but neither genre was committed to writing until the 12th–14th centuries. However, while the metrical foot of the skaldic verse guarded against alterations (Jesch 2001:18), the oral traditions upon which the sagas were based were more malleable. The sagas are therefore less reliable as evidence of the past with which they deal. Thus, one may assume that the skaldic poem *Ynglingatal* as written down in the 1220s was rather close to the composer's original version c. 900.[2]

Whereas the composition of *Beowulf* and *Widsith* was until the 1980s conventionally set to the 6th–early-8th centuries, thought to reflect oral traditions from the 5th–6th centuries (e.g. Klaeber 1950:cii–cxxiv; Malone 1962:116; Klaeber et al. 2014: clxii–clxxxviii), the early date has since been heavily contested. Recently, however, the early dating has attained renewed support. Regarding *Widsith*, the philologist Leonard Neidorf contends that although the early dating "has become unfashionable, nothing has rendered it improbable" (Neidorf 2013:179–180). He concludes that the "weight of probability [. . .] is firmly on the side of an early date of composition" (Neidorf 2013:180), in his opinion, the 7th century; he sets *Beowulf* to c. 700 (Neidorf 2014c, 2014b:56, 2017).

The main basis for these early datings of *Beowulf* and *Widsith* is that certain features of the Anglo-Saxon language and spelling that occurred in the 8th–10th centuries are not represented in the text, whereas more ancient features are present (Neidorf 2013:167–71, 2014a; Fulk 2014:24–32). While these arguments seem convincing, two aspects are of particular interest in the present context. Firstly, they are *ante quem* arguments, and thus do not provide an earliest possible date of

2 Claus Krag's (1991) claim that *Ynglingatal* was composed in the late 12th century has been rebutted by Bjarne Fidjestøl (1994), Bergsveinn Birgisson (2007), Klaus Johan Myrvoll (2014), and the present author (Skre 2007a).

composition. Secondly, they aim at identifying the time when the poems were first written down. The evident time gap between the persons and events mentioned in the poems – they are of the early-6th century (below) – is explained (e.g. by Biggs 2014) by suggesting that oral traditions regarding the persons and events were conveyed through the century and a half that separated them from the scribes that composed the poems and wrote them down.

Bo Gräslund (2018) addresses these two aspects in a recent book; he explores the hypothesis that *Beowulf* was composed in a pagan environment and adapted c. 700 to a Christian Anglo-Saxon environment. He argues that many of the objects mentioned in the poem, in particular gold collars and bangles, were abundant in early 6th-centry south-eastern Scandinavia, but did not occur at all in 6th–7th-century England. The entire material setting in the poem is unmistakably Scandinavian. While an Anglo-Saxon poet c. 700 could not possibly have knowledge of such issues, a Scandinavian early 6th-century poet would, and that is when and where he dates the poem. Gräslund analyses the changes that will have followed from its adaption in a Christian Anglo-Saxon environment c. 700 and finds that they have not affected the substance of its historic content.[3]

There is no doubt that both poems refer to persons and events in the late 5th–6th centuries. *Widsith* lists several peoples, rulers, and heroes, some of them in Scandinavia; the latest identifiable is Elfwine, King of the Langobards, who died in 572 or 573. As pointed out by Malone (1962:108–10, 126–216), several of the persons and lineages that occur in *Widsith* also appear in *Beowulf* and other writings that deal with the 5th–6th centuries. The death c. 520–30 of Hygelāc, one of the central culprits in *Beowulf*, is well testified in continental evidence (below, 3.2.2) (Biggs 2014). The poem mentions individual kings of Svíar, Gautar, and Danir as well as members of their lineages and retinues. A link between all three poems may be found in *Ynglingatal* stanzas 14–16, which mention the two subsequent rulers Óttarr and Aðils; they are likely *Beowulf*'s Ōhthere and his son Ēadgils, subsequent kings of the Svíar in Beowulf's time (Marold 2012). In *Ynglingatal* stanza 16 Aðils is called Ála dolgr, 'Áli's enemy', a reference to the conflict between Ēadgils (Aðils) and his paternal uncle Onela (Áli) outlined in *Beowulf* (Gräslund 2018:150–8). *Widsith* (31) also mentions Ongenþēow, King of the Svíar (Malone 1962:188), in *Beowulf* named as Ōhthere's father and predecessor as king.

Thus, clearly, certain stanzas and episodes in these three poems are based on the same pieces of tradition. Over time, oral tradition is altered; its credibility depends on how long it remained in transmission before being included in a poem.

3 Gräslund's hypothesis was discussed in early scholarship, but rejected by Frederic Klaeber (1950: xlviii–li). The editors of the revised edition of his monumental work take more recent scholarship into consideration and, although maintaining his conclusion, emphasise the difficulties of precisely distinguishing between pagan and Christian values, a distinction that was essential in Klaeber's rejection (Klaeber et al. 2014:lxvii–lxxv).

The skald could not present his audience with information they knew to be false; that would bring shame rather than the intended honour to the heroes of the poem and to their descendants who were probably part of his audience. Details of ruler's genealogies were, writes David Dumville (1977:87), normally remembered for 4–5 generations in non-literate societies; that is, some 100–150 years.[4]

Ynglingatal was composed by the skald Þjóðolfr ór Hvíni in or near Vestfold c. 900 in praise of Rǫgnvaldr, the last of the 27 consecutive rulers of the Ynglingar lineage listed in the poem; the latter six in and near Vestfold (Fig. 3.1), the former 21 among the Svíar. The link between the Svíar and the Vestfold Ynglingar is probably constructed by the skald by including information from an existing poem that listed the Ynglingar rulers among the Svíar (Sundqvist 2002:47) – in *Beowulf* this lineage is called Skilfingar. The date and content of this supposed poem remains conjectural, Þjóðolfr's selection and adaption of the poem's information is unknown, and the timespan between its composition and the persons mentioned cannot be assessed. In any case, the distance in time and space from Vestfold c. 900 makes the information on the Ynglingar among the Svíar less credible than that that on the six Vestfold Ynglingar. The time that elapsed between Aðils of the 6th century and Rǫgnvaldr who lived c. 900 is far too long to take as reliable evidence, for example, *Ynglingatal*'s listing of Óttarr and Aðils' predecessors and successors. Still, as will be discussed below (3.3), some pieces of the information regarding the Vestfold Ynglingar's alleged predecessors among the Svíar is supported by other evidence and thus more reliable. For instance, the sequence of these two rulers, testified in two poems, and in *Beowulf* said to be contemporaries of Hygelāc, makes it likely that Ōhthere and his son Ēadgils are historical persons of the Skilfingar lineage and rulers of the Svíar some time in the early 6th century.

The composition of *Widsith* and *Beowulf* may have happened within living memory of the events and persons mentioned (Klaeber 1950:xxix-xxx; Klaeber et al. 2014:clxii-clxxxvi). If Gräslund is right that *Beowulf* was composed in the first half of the 6th century, that definitely strengthens the poem's credibility regarding the types of information that will be discussed here. A 7th-century date of *Widsith* and *Beowulf* would set their composition towards the end of, or possibly slightly beyond Dumville's 4–5-generation period. Based on the recent revival of the poems' traditional early date, the following section will make use of certain types of information from the three poems: genealogy and succession of rulers as well as their titles and

4 This accords well with the listing of seven subsequent fathers and sons named on the early 11th-century Malsta stone in Hälsingland (Hs14) and the six named on the contemporary N. Sandsjö stone in Småland (Sm71). It also resounds with the *oðal* regulations in the two west-Scandinavian *Gulaþing* (ch. 266) and *Frostaþing* (XII 4) law codes written down in the late 12th century but containing more ancient legal traditions. They stipulate that land became *oðal* once it has been inherited from father to son in six and four generations respectively; thus implying that ancestors normally could be traced that far back (Zachrisson 1994, 2017a).

epithets. Regarding the latter, heed must be taken of the words' contexts. The quite rigid metric of the poems will have incited poets to choose titles and epithets that provided alliteration. Thus, it is necessary to assess whether any occurrences of the words in question produce alliteration, in which case their value as evidence of actual titles in use at the time is weakened.

3.1.2 Scandinavian rulers' terminology in the first millennium AD

In *Beowulf* there is no indication of a shift from *dróttinn* to *konungr* as the term for the ruler; the two terms are used with distinct meanings. For instance, Hygelāc, Bēowulf's warlord and maternal uncle, was the son of Hrēðel, *konungr* (*cyning* in *Beowulf*) of the Gautar, and ascended to *konungr* following the death of his two elder brothers, both of whom were *konungr*, one after the other (Hall 2006). From early on in the poem Hygelāc is called *dróttinn* (*dryhten* in *Beowulf*) multiple times (lines 436, 1484, 1824, and 1831); he was indeed the leader of a retinue. The two instances where he is titled *konungr* (lines 1925, 2148) occur late and seem to refer to the time after he became *konungr* of the Gautar. In none of these occurrences do the terms in question produce alliteration, and the poet's choice to use them thus seems to be grounded solely in their meaning.

A *konungr* was also a *dróttinn*, though; still, the two terms occur in contexts alone and in compounds which suggest that they had distinctly different meanings. The first elements in compounds where *-konungr* constitutes the second suggest that such rulers had a wider basis than the retinue; e.g. *þeodcyning*, *lēodcyning* (both meaning 'people's king', lines 2 and 54), and *eorðcyning* ('king of the land', line 1155) (Klaeber et al. 2014:362). The first elements in compounds with *-dróttinn* include the first elements *frēa-* ('lord'), *gum-* and *mon-* (lord of 'men'), *sige-* ('victorious'), and *wine-* ('friendly'); they are either laudatory epithets or they expand on the role as retinue leader (Klaeber et al. 2014:365–457).

Thus, both in connection to Hygelāc and generally in the poem it seems that *dróttinn* was a military term and *konungr* was the title of the ruler of the people, seemingly also of the land. There is nothing in *Beowulf* to indicate that a *dróttinn* became a ruler solely because of his military competence. Evidently, in the *Beowulf* universe, the ruler, the *konungr*, needed to be of a royal lineage.

In *Beowulf*, the term *þiudans* (*þēoden* in *Beowulf*) occurs numerous times to characterise kings and members of royal lineages. The term does not seem to signify a distinct type of ruler, though, but occurs as one of numerous laudatory epithets for prominent men, some of which are kings. Klaeber (et al. 2014:316) lists 25 epithets applied to kings in *Beowulf*, and he groups them under five headings, namely the king as, respectively, lord and leader, protector, guardian or keeper, army-leader, and giver of rings; *þiudans* belongs to the first (Feldman 1975:101–3).

Indirectly, *Beowulf*'s listing of the current kings' ancestors seems to suggest that a shift to *konungr* happened among the Gautar, Skilfingar, and Skjǫldungar no more than two, one, and three generations before Bēowulf's lifetime respectively. The first Skjǫldung king, Skjǫld, is explicitly said to be the lineage's ancestral father (lines 4–52). Based on Hygelāc's death c. 520–30, this would set Skjǫld in the mid- to late 5th century.

This dating of the shift to *konungr* may correspond well with the time of the same shift among some continental Germanic tribes, for instance the Franks. Tellingly, neither *konungr* nor *dróttinn* are used in the 4th-century Wulfila's Bible, although there was ample occasion to use it to characterise God, Christ, or worldly kings. Instead, Wulfila used the term *þiudans* for these purposes (Green 1998:124–8). The two terminological shifts resulting in *konungr* becoming the dominant term for a ruler may have happened in the 3rd–6th centuries, probably at different times in the various Germanic polities where they occurred. In the time of *konugr* rulers, the terms *þiudans* and *dróttinn* appear to have been in continued use as, respectively, a hailing epithet and the term for a retinue leader.

Beowulf contains no genealogy for the Skilfingar lineage prior to the three *konungr* that ruled in Bēowulf's lifetime: Ongenþēow, his son Ōhthere, and his grandson Ēadgils. Although *Ynglingatal* and other more recent literary accounts refer to named rulers of the Skilfingar before and after these three, their historicity is dubious. Still, a possible distant echo of a shift from *dróttinn* to *konungr* among the Skilfingar and the Skjǫldungar may be found in Snorri's Ynglingar saga (ch. 17). Snorri writes that Dyggvi, the ninth of the Ynglingar rulers, was the first of them to be called *konungr*; those before him were called *dróttinn*. Dyggvi's wife was the granddaughter of Rígr, *konungr* of the Danir, who was the first among Scandinavians to be called *konungr*, Snorri writes. These individuals, and Rígr's shift to being called *konungr*, are also mentioned in the Eddic poem *Rígsþula* and in Arngrímur Jónsson's 17th-century summary of the since lost late 12th-century Skjǫldungar saga. All three texts were written several centuries after the events and persons – if at all historical – they mention. In the present context, they serve only to suggest that a shift from *dróttinn* to *konungr* as the term for ruler may have taken place among the Danir and the Svíar sometime prior to the time of Ongenþēow, in what was for the Icelandic saga authors the very distant past.

These tentative conclusions suggest that a shift in terms for rulers from *dróttinn* to *konungr* occurred in the south in the mid- to late 5th century. The few generations between Bēowulf's lifetime and the ancestor of the Skjǫldungar lineage, Skjǫld, lends some credibility to considering him a historical person of the mid- to late 5th century, although already in Bēowulf's lifetime clearly heavily shrouded in legend. In addition, from *Beowulf*, it seems that kings needed to come from a certain lineage and that the older brother was the stronger candidate. Still, personal prowess might strengthen the candidature of a member of the lineage. Evidently, this was the case when, following the Skjǫldungar King Heorogār's death, he was not succeeded by

his son Heoroweard, but rather by the deceased king's younger brother Hrōðgar. Succession did not always happen in an orderly and peaceful manner, as when the Skilfingar King Ōhthere died and his brother Onela seized the throne and drove Ōhthere's two sons, Ēanmund and Ēadgils, into exile among the Gautar. Soon after, Onela attacked the land of the Gautar, killed his nephew Ēanmund and the Gautar King Heardrēd. Subsequently, Ēadgils successfully attacked and killed Onela, thus becoming King of the Svíar (Hollis 1983; Canitz 1986:117; Klaeber et al. 2014:li-lxiv). These events resonate with the continental evidence on similar types of dynastic conflicts in the mid- to late first millennium AD.

While the position as *dróttinn* most likely was based on competence and virtue rather than belonging to a specific lineage, the etymology of the word *konungr* ('man of the royal kindred') implies that belonging to a certain kin was a condition for becoming king. This was hardly a new component of rulership; more likely, it was based on traditions from the time when rulers were titled *kindins*/*þiudans*, the meaning of which suggest that the polity they ruled consisted of a tribe.

In 10th–12th-century Scandinavia, when the details of royal succession are more firmly evidenced, it is clear that all sons of the deceased king, born within or outside of wedlock, as well as sons of the former king, were candidates for becoming the new king. The new king was chosen from among them in a process that culminated in a series of regional *thing* meetings where the choice of king was confirmed. This procedure, which prevailed until the late Middle Ages (Taranger 1934; Jørgensen 1965:262–4; Sawyer 1991:47), probably reflects earlier practices.

More light may be shed on these hypothetical shifts between types of rulers by involving additional evidence. Firstly, the evidence regarding the three ethnonyms that in the 9th–12th centuries came to be included in the names of the three Scandinavian monarchies is outlined (3.2). From the discussion of that evidence emerge some tentative conclusions regarding a shift in types of rulers and polities around AD 500. Thereafter it is discussed whether the suggested shifts in types of rulers and polities may resonate with contemporary changes within the highest echelon of aristocratic sites, those that may arguably be connected to rulers (3.3).

3.2 Peoples, lands, and rulers

In addition to *Beowulf*, *Widsith*, and *Ynglingatal*, scattered mentions of Scandinavian peoples and rulers in continental and insular sources constitute the only written evidence composed or written down within a limited timespan after the recounted events. Although scarce, they suggest a profound late 5th- to 6th-century shift in the nature of rulership and polities.

3.2.1 Svíar and Svíþjóð

Since the first mentions by Plinius (ch. IV:96) c. AD 79, by Tacitus (chs. 44:2, 45:1, 45:6) c. AD 98 (Reichert 1987:646, 1990:620), and Claudius Ptolemy (ch. II:11, 16) c. AD 150, the ethnonym Svíar is quite consistently used for denoting the people of present-day central-eastern Sweden. The ethnonym is probably derived from 'self' or 'own' to mean something like 'we ourselves' or 'one's own people' (Brink 2008:102; Sitzmann and Grünzweig 2008:261–4). The extension of the Svíar's authority over Gotland, Öland, Småland, and Blekinge is first attested in Wulfstān's account c. 890 (Bately 2009) but may well have happened earlier.

Rulers of the Svíar are mentioned in *Ynglingatal*, *Beowulf*, *Widsith*, and *Vita Anskari*; the latter is written c. 875 and recounting events c. 829–865. In *Beowulf* their realm is called Swēorice; in more recent sources, Svíþjóð (literally 'Svíar people') is prevalent. Prior to the 9th century, both terms probably designate what was later to be called Svealand, the land around Lake Mälaren, the modern provinces of Uppland, Södermanland, Västmanland, and parts of Närke in central-eastern Sweden (Sundqvist 2016:35–6).

3.2.2 Danir and Danmǫrk

Based on the manuscript *Ravennatis Anonymi Cosmographia*, written c. 700 by an unnamed author (Schnetz 1990), Kasper Andersen (2017:187–91) argues that the Danir were mentioned by several authors working in Ravenna around 500 and in the early 6th century. He holds that their manuscripts were available to the anonymous author two centuries later, but have since been lost. The earliest preserved mentions of the Danir are found in Procopius' *History of the Wars* (6:15:3) written AD 545–551, in Jordanes' *Getica* (ch. 2:23) written AD 551, and in the late 6th-century *Historia Francorum* by Gregory of Tours (Reichert 1987:236, 1990:24, 495). Procopius (ch. 6:15) refers to them in connection with two events that from the chronology of his history may be dated to c. 495 and c. 520–30 respectively (Andersen 2017:181, 227–30). Gregory recounts that Chlochilaicus, the King of the Danir (*rege Dani*), was killed while leading an ambush on lands along the lower Rhine. The leader of the victorious force was Theodebertus, the son of the Frankish King Theodocius. The battle happened during the latter's reign (511–533/34); the current near-consensus is c. 520–30 (Biggs 2014; Gräslund 2018:35–9).

Danir and their kings are mentioned both in *Beowulf* and in *Widsith*. In the former, Chlochilaicus is called Hygelāc; there, he is called the King of the Gautar, the Gotlanders (Gräslund 2018:55–77). Gregory's mistake in calling him King of the Danir is amended into *rege Gotorum* in the slightly younger *Liber Historia Francorum* (c. 725) which is based on information from Gregory's *Historia* and from Frisian oral tradition (Biggs 2014:140–2). In *Beowulf*, kings of the Danir – they are of the Skjǫldungar lineage

– are named in three generations before Bēowulf's lifetime. *Widsith* names Alewih as ruler of the Denum (35) and Sigehere as ruler of the Sædenum ('Sea-Danes', 28); the poem also mentions the Suþdenum ('South-Danes', 58; Malone 1962:136–7). Sigehere appears from more recent evidence to be of a different royal lineage among the Danir, the Siklingar, probably residing in Sjælland (Malone 1962:200). Danir probably means 'people of the low-lying land' (Bugge 1889; Svennung 1974:217; Sitzmann and Grünzweig 2008:108).

The missionary Willibrord's visit to Angantyr (Ongendus), King of the Danir, c. 710 is testified in his *Vita* (Talbot 1954:9). In the late 8th century, the Royal Frankish Annals mention Sigfred and, after the turn of the century, Gotfred and several subsequent kings of the Danir. Precisely which territories these late 8th- to 9th-century kings ruled remains uncertain; however, southern Jutland seems to have been the centre of Gotfred's and his sons' realm, which also appears to have included Vestfold (Lindkvist 2003a; Sawyer 2007). Not until the end of the 9th century, in the accounts of Ōhthere and Wulfstān, is the realm more clearly defined. Ōhthere said that Denamearc was on his port side when sailing from Vestfold towards Hedeby, which would imply that Ranrike and Halland were parts of the realm (Fig. 3.1). Also, the two travellers indicate that it included parts of Jylland, Skåne, and the islands between. The realm's name is first attested in these two accounts, as well as in the *Annals* of Regino of Prüm from 884 (Bately 2007:47, 52, 2009:15; Sindbæk 2009).

3.2.3 Norðmenn and Noregr

In Ōhthere's account c. 890, *Norðmenn* designates those who lived in the land on his port side when sailing from his home in Hålogaland to Vestfold (Bately 2007:46); that is, inhabitants of what was then the nascent kingdom of Noregr. From the same decades is the skaldic poem *Haraldskvæði* that calls Haraldr hárfagri *dróttinn Norðmanna* ('lord of Northmen', stanza 5).

In other writings, however, *Norðmenn* has a more general meaning; it first occurs in the Royal Frankish Annals for 777 (*Nordmanniae*, Rau 1955:36), thereafter in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles for 789 (MS B–F, Whitelock and Douglas 1979:180). In *Vita Caroli* from c. 830 Einhard writes about Charlemagne's war against 'those Northmen who are called Danes' (*Nortmannos, qui Dani vocantur*, Einhard 1845:14). In Anglo-Saxon sources *Danir* and *Norðmenn* are used synonymously (Swanton 1996:54 note 4). The unspecific meaning of the word *Norðmenn*, 'men from the north', and the limited need for continental and insular chroniclers to indicate the specific origin of Scandinavians, are probably the main reason for the two ethnonyms' use outside Scandinavia as general terms for 'Scandinavians'. Among Scandinavians, though, they appear to have signified specific peoples.

Jordanes is the earliest to mention a ruler that may have come from the western Scandinavian Peninsula. Immediately after the listing of peoples on the western coast, Jordanes (*Getica* 4:24) mentions Roduulf (*rex*) who rejected his realm there and was received by Theodoric (reign 475–526). The last six rulers of the Ynglingar lineage lived in or near Vestfold (Fig. 3.1), probably in the 8th–9th centuries (Skre 2007a); three of them are called *konungr* in the poem. Snorri portrays them as the ancestors of Haraldr hárfagri, who created the kingdom of Noregr in the late 9th century. However, his heartland was clearly not Vestfold, but rather Rogaland and Hordaland on the western coast (Fig. 3.1). Although interregional dynastic connections cannot be ruled out, his connection to the Ynglingar lineage is probably the invention of 12th–13th-century Icelandic saga authors.

Colmán Etchingham (2014) and Arne Kruse (2015) have argued that the mid- to late 9th-century kings of Laithlinn, who arrived in Ireland from overseas, came from the west-Scandinavian coast, while Donnchadh Ó Corráin (1998) has argued that Laithlinn was in Scotland. What was to become the name of the realm is first attested c. 840 in the Durham *Liber Vitae* (*Nortuagia*) and in Ōhthere's account (*Norðweg*, *Norðmanna land*). Notably, the land-name's occurrence c. 840 predates Haraldr hárfagri's reign by more than three decades. Evidently, the name of the realm is derived from the sheltered sailing route along the western coast of the Scandinavian Peninsula, the -weg ('way') in *Norðweg*. Except for a few short stretches, the sailing route from Rogaland in the south to Hålogaland in the north is sheltered from the brutal winds and waves of the Atlantic Ocean in the west by innumerable islands, islets, and skerries. Einar Østmo (this vol. Ch. 1) discusses in detail the two possible interpretations of the name, 'the way to the north' and 'the narrow way' as well as the significance of the route.

3.2.4 Tribes, amalgamation, and monarchies, the 1st–10th centuries

In the present context, three observations regarding the chronology, types, and number of ethnonyms are relevant. Firstly, among the three ethnonyms that came to be included in the names of the three kingdoms, Svíar is first mentioned much earlier than the remaining two, Danir and Norðmen; in the 1st, early 6th, and late 8th centuries respectively.

Secondly, it seems that the name Svíar is of a different type than the other two. The former probably means 'one's own people', while the latter seem to be named after topographical characteristics of their territories: respectively, 'the low-lying land', and 'those living in the north' or 'along the northern route'.

Thirdly, in post-6th-century writings, the many tribal names previously recorded by Plinius, Tacitus, Jordanes, and others predominantly gave way to three – Svíar, Danir, and Norðmen. Up to the 6th century, the realm of the Norðmenn was

the likely location of Augandzi, Rugi, Ulmerugorum, Arochi, Þrōwendum, Adogit, and others (Iversen this vol. Ch.4.2.1 and Tab. 4.2). The same is the case in southern Scandinavia, where tribal areas may be identified in the settlement pattern from around 300 BC (Rindel 1998:46). There, by AD 600, the plethora of tribes mentioned in pre-600 writings – for example, Cimbri, Hermiones, Teutones, Charudes, Ambrones, Angles, Heruli, Jutes, and others (Lund 1993; Sitzmann and Grünzweig 2008) can more or less securely be sited there – predominantly give way to one: the Danir. In post-6th-century evidence, these early names more or less cease to be used as names of collectives and are mostly found in names of regions (below, 3.2.5) used, for instance, when stating the geographic origin of individuals (Malmros 1999:345–6; Jesch 2001:107–18).

These three observations support the assumption that some time before the earliest recording of the Danir, probably in the mid- to late 5th century, two larger polities were formed from the numerous ancient tribes, one of the Norðmenn on the western coast of the Scandinavian Peninsula and one of the Danir in southern Scandinavia.

The process of formation of the latter polity has been proposed by Ulf Näsman (2006) based on other types of evidence. He calls it a tribal confederation ('stammeforbund') and identifies the military threats encountered in the extensive 3rd–5th-century warfare, witnessed in the period's numerous war-booty sacrifices, ship blockages, and fortifications, as the reason why the many tribes of that period chose to merge into a larger polity. In the 6th century, the archaeological indications on warfare drop dramatically, and in the 7th century they are not found at all – the forming of the Danir confederation resulted in a *pax Danorum*, he suggests. Näsman's suggestion that the process of forming the larger polity was a merging of tribes into the confederation, which through the 7th century was transformed to a kingdom, will be addressed towards the end of this chapter (3.5.1).

No contemporary names of the two larger polities of the Norðmenn and the Danir are known. Norðmenn is not recorded until the late 8th century, and not until the late 9th does it specifically refer to people living along the sailing route to the north. However, supported by new evidence of long-distance trade in Arctic commodities, Irene Baug and co-authors (2019) have argued that political integration of the many regions along the coastal sailing route that connected them was well underway in the 7th century, possibly even earlier.

The topographical features that the two ethnonyms are based on would have been common across in the tribal areas within each larger polity, while also distinguishing them from the rest of Scandinavia. The Norðmenn lived along numerous fjords, on island, and in valleys connected only by the sailing route, whereas the Danir lived on islands and districts separated by fjords and marshes in the low-lying land. Indeed, when describing Willibrord's AD 710 voyage to the Danir, Alcuin states that they were composed of several peoples, (Talbot 1954:9; Malone 1962:136, 172–3; Näsman 2006:223; Sindbæk 2009:171). *Beowulf* mentions East-,

West-, North-, and South-Danes, and *Widsith* South-Danes and Sea-Danes (Malone 1962:136; Klaeber et al. 2014:465–6), indicating that although distinct regions existed, the old tribal names were indeed considered obsolete. However, the Jutes in Jylland are a possible exception. The earliest occurrence of their ethnonym is contested; they may be the Eudoses in Tacitus (ch. 40:2), and the Euthio mentioned c. 580 as a tribe in the north by the Merovingian court poet Venantius Fortunatus (*Carmina* 7:7:50), but both are contested (Sitzmann and Grünzweig 2008:118–9; Andersen 2017:204). However, Bede's reference to the Iutae as one of the tribes that settled Britain must refer to the Juts (Rix 2015:93; Andersen 2017:210–12). They may have been included into the polity of the Danir somewhat later than other tribes.

Svíar is the only of the three ethnonyms that is repeatedly attested well before the 6th century. The ethnonym's type is different from the other two; it is an autonym, that is, it is coined by the people themselves (Brink 2008:102). The extension of the Svíar's realm beyond the Mälaren landscapes appears to have resulted from the expansion of their territory, probably through conquest and subduing neighbouring peoples. That expansion is not recorded until the late 9th century, but may have begun earlier. The Svíar's expansion appears to have stretched into the 1100s when the Götar of Östergötland and Västergötland were included (Lindkvist 2003b).

It seems, therefore, that the mid- to late 5th century saw the beginning of a process by which at least two of the three main Scandinavian polities were initiated. However, there is no direct line from these to the three monarchies of the 10th–12th centuries. For example, the 9th–10th-century kingdoms of the Danir and the Norðmenn were more or less dissolved for periods of several decades, and the latter realm was periodically subject to the king of the Danir.

While the Svíar expansion probably involved conquest, the trajectories towards the 10th–12th-century monarchies among, respectively, the Danir in the south and the Norðmenn in the west may have included different processes of polity formation and expansion; the forming of tribal confederations or otherwise. The nature of these processes and polities will be discussed towards the end of this chapter (3.5.1), following surveys of rulers' residences (3.3) and of the profound societal upheaval c. 536–650 (3.4). For now, 'tribal amalgamations' will be provisionally applied as the term for the larger polities that were formed in the mid- to late 5th century from the many tribes of earlier times.

3.2.5 Polities and territories, 1st–10th centuries

The paucity of written evidence from the 7th–8th centuries provides few or no indication as to the chronology of the territorial aspect of the process from tribal areas to the three kingdoms, and opinions have indeed differed. While Ulf Näsman (1998, 1999, 2006) and Lotte Hedeager (1992) contend that a kingdom of the Danir was

formed in the 6th–7th centuries – Näsman suggests a contemporary kingdom of the Svíar – Johan Callmer (1991:269) is reluctant to date it earlier than the 8th. In addition, in contrast to Näsman and Hedeager, Callmer emphasises the political weakness of the central power and, correspondingly, the strength of local and regional polities within the kingdom. Resonating with the latter view are results from Fredrik Svanberg (2003a, 2003b), Bengt Söderberg (2005), Peter Sawyer (2007), and Anna Lihammer (2007) who have emphasised that regional polities were maintained into the 9th–11th centuries; some 20 years ago, the present author concluded in the same vein (Skre 1998).

While Sawyer predominantly based his conclusions on written evidence, the remainder of these latter studies rely heavily on settlement patterns and toponymical evidence. Näsman speaks of cultural territories ('kulturområder', Näsman 1998:4–7) and defines them in terms of shared material culture; each territory comprises several tribal areas ('stamvälden'). He holds that from c. 500 to 700, three south- and east-Scandinavian cultural territories were transformed into kingdoms – he calls them Danish, Svea, and Götic, while west-Scandinavian tribal areas were joined to form a number of 'Norwegian kingdoms' (Näsman 1998:figs. 5–6).

However, as argued by Svanberg and Lihammer, Näsman's assumption that homogeneous material culture corresponds with polities is hardly viable. Analysing chronological and spatial distribution patterns of 3rd–10th-century brooch types in Rogaland and southern Hordaland, south-western Norway (Fig. 3.1), Mari A. Østmo (this vol. Ch. 2) finds that they were created by diverse processes, communication prominent among them. Søren Sindbæk (2009) has demonstrated that distinct differences in the distribution of material culture – some regional, other spanning several regions – existed within Viking Age Denmark; some were maintained throughout the Middle Ages. Interestingly, some of the distribution areas correspond to the three *land* of the high medieval period Jylland (including Fyn), Sjælland, and Skåne, others to the contemporary subdivision in *sysler* in Jylland and *herader* in Skåne, both of which appear to correspond to tribal areas from the time before 600. Indeed, each of the three *land* in high medieval Denmark had their own law that was upheld in 13 legal assemblies; such assemblies were held in *sysler* and *herader* too (Jørgensen 1965:232–51). Sindbæk points to *thing* assemblies as the context where material culture within each of these units was homogenised. He contends that from the sharing of legal tradition and the frequent face-to-face meetings in the assembly sprang a shared identity that found expression in various aspects of material culture.

Thus, rather than theorising the increased size of polities as accompanied by a homogenisation of material culture, it appears that ancient polities, each with their own law and assemblies, were fossilised in territorial units maintained within the Danish kingdom of the 11th–16th centuries. Some of these units kept their assemblies as lower-level courts, and in some cases, the shared aspects of material culture that correspond with each unit and level appear to have been fossilised along with

the unit. The two levels of units, *sysler*/*herader* and *land*, may reflect two stages in development of polities and rulership, the *sysler*/*herader* in pre-6th-century tribes, the lands in subsequent tribal amalgamations.

Such processes of homogenisation of material culture and fossilising of ancient territorial units may also be traced in Sweden (Brink 2008:111–12; Sundqvist 2016:37–40 with refs.) and Norway (Indrebø 1932; Iversen this vol. Ch. 4). The names of unit types vary across Scandinavia, though, and the chronology of the formation and fossilisation of the various types of units is difficult to assess. Telling is the fact that several regional names are compounds where the first elements are ethnonyms, some of them mentioned in Jordanes' *Getica* or in *Widsith*, while the second element signifies 'territory' or 'realm'. Examples of such names are Södermanland, Hälsingland, and Ångermanland in the east, Jylland and Halland in the south, and Hedmark, Ranrike, Ringerike, Rogaland, and Hordaland in the west (Svennung 1964; Callmer 1991; Brink 2008).

Summing up, two phases of polity development may be identified prior to the institutionalised kingdoms of the 10th–12th centuries onwards: a 'tribal' phase and an 'amalgamational' phase, the shift starting in the mid- to late 5th century. Surely, some tribes joined forces prior to the 5th century to overcome threats or accomplish ambitions, only to be dissolved when the acute situation passed. Moreover, some amalgamations probably continued to expand in the second phase. Still, since the names of two amalgamations, Danir and Norðmen, were perpetuated into the names of the 9th–10th-century monarchies, a marked shift appears to have taken place through the 6th century. Territorial aspects of these processes may be glimpsed by combining territorial names on various levels with other types of evidence, a research avenue that is explored by Frode Iversen (this vol. Ch. 4). In the following, the territorial aspect will mostly be left aside; instead, discussion will focus on the sites that appear to have been inhabited by rulers (3.3–3.4).

3.3 Residences of the Skilfingar, Skjǫldungar, and the Vestfold Ynglingar

According to the 12th–13th-century Icelandic saga tradition, the two 5th–10th-century royal lineages, the Skjǫldungar of the Danir and the Skilfingar of the Svíar, gave rise to all three dynasties that ruled the Scandinavian monarchies that were formed in the 9th–11th centuries. By creatively linking lineages, the saga writers connected Haraldr hárfagri, the first King of the Norðmen, to the Vestfold Ynglingar, whom Þjóðolfr ór Hvíni when composing *Ynglingatal* already had connected to the Skilfingar.

Members of the Skilfingar and the Skjǫldungar play central roles in *Beowulf*, where the hall Heorot in Sjælland is identified as the latter's residence. This is

where the hero Bēowulf relieved the Skjǫldungar King Hrōðgār of the monster Grendel and his terrifying mother. Heorot is also mentioned in *Widsith* (45–9) in connection with King Hroðgar. More recent scholarship names Lejre in Sjælland as the Skjǫldungar residence (Niles 2007; Osborn 2007; Christensen 2015a:15–29), and the poem's description of Bēowulf's journey there matches that identification quite well.[5]

Ynglingatal points to Old Uppsala in Svealand as the Skilfingar residence; three of the rulers (stanzas 13, 16, and 21) are mentioned in connection with the site (Fig. 3.1). Several place names in the vicinity are also mentioned, such as the River Fyris (Fig. 3.2; stanza 6), which passes through the manor (Sundqvist 2002:48). *Ynglingatal* also mentions several burial sites for the six Vestfold Ynglingar; among them, only Borre and Skiringssal can be securely identified (Fig. 3.1; Skre 2007a, 2007f:463–6).

In the following will be presented the main evidence on hall complexes and prominent burial monuments from excavations and surveys in Lejre, Old Uppsala, Borre, and Skiringssal (Fig. 3.1).

3.3.1 The Skilfingar in Old Uppsala

The five huge grave mounds in Old Uppsala (Fig. 3.2), built in the late 6th–7th centuries, have diameters of 35–75 meters and heights of 4–11 meters (Ljungkvist and Frölund 2015:fig. 6; Seiler 2018:291). The building-up of at least three artificial house terraces also took place in the late 6th century. On the southern and highest of them, a hall building was erected around AD 600; c. AD 800 it was intentionally cleared and burnt down. This hall was c. 50 meters long and 12 m wide at the centre with a 26 m long central hall room. The terrace was built up several times, and two earlier phases appear to have had a building on them, likely extending the sequence of halls back into the 6th century, possibly the 5th (pers. comm. John Ljungkvist, March 2019). Just south of the southern terrace, postholes and a possible terrace within the post-11th-century Christian cemetery suggest that a hall may have been standing there, possibly in the Viking Period (Andrén 2002; Ljungkvist et al. 2011).

The northern terrace, lower and smaller than the southern, has been less extensively excavated, but appears to have been the site of at least four successive building phases, the two latest in the 14th and 9th centuries respectively. Preceding those were two c. 40 m long 6th-7th-century buildings where craft activities took place; in

5 Gräslund's (2018:134–41) argument that Heorot was to be found in eastern Sjælland instead of near the southern end of Roskilde Fjord does not seem altogether convincing.

Fig. 3.2: Old Uppsala displays extraordinary monuments: five huge late 6th–7th-century mounds, three house terraces built in the 6th century, the largest of them with the 7th–8th-century hall, and two linear post rows built in the late 6th century. Illustration by I.T. Bøckman based on Jörpeland et al. 2018, fig. 174 and Ljungkvist and Frölund 2015, fig. 6.

addition to slags, worked antler and remains from bead production, some 600 production-waste garnets were found, suggesting high-status jewellery production.

On the third terrace, just west of the southern, have been found remains of a variety of late 6th- to 7th-century craft activities, among them high-quality metalcraft in silver and gold as well as cloisonné cell work (Ljungkvist and Frölund 2015; Ljungkvist et al. 2017). Preceding this there was a pre-6th-century building of unknown function and date (pers. comm. John Ljungkvist, March 2019).

Recent excavations in the Uppsala village, which may be traced back to c. 200 BC, revealed a substantial increase in the number of farms and sizes of buildings around 600 (Göthberg and Sundkvist 2018). It appears to have been a royal demesne through the following period; in the 12th century it was one of the largest villages in Sweden and gave its name to the crown's land *Uppsala auðr* ('the wealth of Uppsala'; Rahmqvist 1986). North and south of the village, these excavations have uncovered two monumental linear rows of posts erected during the last two decades of the 6th century (Wikborg 2018:272). The distance between the posts was c. 6 meters; the northern row of c. 862 meters consisted of 144 posts and the southern of c. 725 meters had 126 posts; the eastern end of the latter has not been found. Posts are assumed to have projected some six meters above ground. The northern row appears to have adjoined the main road from the north while the southern row probably marked the southern edge of the assembly site, with the row of monumental mounds and the village forming the two remaining boundary edges. After approximately half a century, both post rows were destroyed. They may have been erected for a special event, possibly the funeral that included the building of one of the mounds (Sundqvist 2018; Wikborg and Göthberg 2018).

Evidently, the late 6th to 7th centuries saw the establishment of extensive monumentality in Old Uppsala: a prominent hall building on an elevated built-up terrace, five huge mounds, and two rows of posts. Scattered evidence suggests that halls existed both before and after the well-documented hall; thus, the full chronological range of the manor complex remains uncertain, but it appears to go back to the early 6th, possibly the 5th, and up to the 11th. North of the village and the terraces have been found extensive remains from craft production; probably a seasonal marketplace was situated there (Ljungkvist et al. 2011).

3.3.2 The Skjǫldungar in Lejre

In two sites some 500 meters apart in Lejre (Figs. 3.3 and 3.4) have been excavated seven, possibly eight, successive halls spanning the early 6th to early 11th centuries. The earliest hall, built on the northern site, was 45 meters long and 7 meters wide. Possibly, this hall was replaced by a similar hall that was demolished in the early 7th century. At that time, a strikingly similar hall was built on the southern site. Here, six successive halls were built, three on each of two neighbouring ridges. They were 45–48 meters long and 10–12 meters wide. The last hall was demolished shortly after the turn of the millennium. In

Fig. 3.3: Lejre seen towards the north-east. The reconstructed outlines of some of the seven or eight 6th–11th-century halls are seen in the lower left of the photo. East of the halls and the present village, across the brook, can be seen the remains of the ship settings and mounds by the road. In the far background, some 3–4 kilometres as the crow flies, is seen the town Roskilde and Roskilde Fjord. Photo: Malling Fotografi & Film.

addition to each of the halls there were up to six buildings close by; in the later phases the complex was surrounded by a fence (Fig. 3.4; Christensen 2015a, 2015b).

Three monumental mounds and four ship settings of raised stones lay on an elevated ridge some 300 meters to the east of the halls (Fig. 3.3). Only one of the mounds has been excavated – the 6th–7th century Grydehøj, which measured 40 meters across and 5 meters in height. The ship settings appear to date from the 9th–10th centuries (Andersen 1995:103–16; Lund 2009:235–6), but they may be of an earlier date. Between the halls and the cemeteries lies the current village where finds have been made of late 10th-century pithouses and remains from craft production. The extent of the excavation was too limited to assess whether the production exceeded the manor's needs (Sørensen 1982; Christensen 1991:53–4).

3.3.3 The Vestfold Ynglingar in Borre and Skiringssal

The 12 monumental mounds at Borre (Fig. 3.5) measure 32–45 meters across and 5–7 meters above ground. The first probably dates from c. 600 while the last was built in

Fig. 3.4: The second to last of the 7–8 Lejre halls was surrounded by four buildings enclosed by a fence. This hall (phase 5) was probably built in the late 9th century and stood into the 10th (Christensen 2015b:245–6). Illustration by I. T. Bøckman based on Christensen 2015a, fig. 5.12, by Lars F. Thomsen, Roskilde Museum.

the early 900s. While the latter date is quite firm, a late 6th-century date cannot be ruled out for the two early mounds (Myhre 2015:87–93).

Recent geophysical prospecting has revealed the remains of four buildings just west of the cemetery, at least three of which appear to be hall buildings or long-houses with a hall section. The two northern buildings measure 33 by 11 meters and 40 by 12 meters. The remains of the southern appears to stem from several building that are hard to disentangle from the geophysical data. They appear to be at maximum 63 meters long, but their number and widths remain uncertain. Based on house typology and radiocarbon dates from limited excavations, the Borre halls appear to have been in use at different times in the 7th–10th centuries, but a 6th-century date cannot be ruled out (Gansum et al. 2018).

The mound cemetery borders on the beach from where two boulder ridges, 170 and 180 meters long and 220 meters apart, extend into the sea. While the coast here is littered with boulders, the area between the ridges is almost free of them; it appears to have been dredged. The boulders may have been used to produce the two ridges, which are assumed to be jetties made to protect a harbour on the otherwise unprotected coastline at Borre. The date of the harbour is hard to determine, but the top level of the jetties corresponds to sea level c. AD 600 (Draganits et al. 2015).

Fig. 3.5: Monuments in Borre in Vestfold: 12 huge mounds built c. 600 to mid-10th century, three hall buildings of a probable 7th–10th-century date, and an extensively constructed harbour built around 600. The site of the southern hall may in fact consist of the remains from several consecutive hall buildings. Illustration by I. T. Bøckman based on Draganits et al. 2015, fig. 10, Gansum et al. 2018, fig. 1.

Some 45 kilometres as the crow flies south of Borre lies the 9th- to mid-10th-century town Kaupang in Skiringssal (Fig. 3.6). Just north of the town has been excavated on an built-up terrace the remains of a mid-8th- to early 10th-century hall building, 35 m long and 11.7 m wide (Skre 2007c, 2008). Surface surveys in the ploughed field surrounding the rock on which the terrace was built suggest that it was part of a manor; no firm evidence of buildings have been found. Along the ancient road between the town and the hall lies an extensive cemetery of c. 150 mounds, originally probably c. 250, for the most part excavated in 1867. Dated graves span the 9th to mid-10th centuries; however, an 8th-century date is likely for the four monumental mounds, 22.6–25.1 m in diameter and 2.2–2.7 high (Skre 2007e; Stylegar 2007).

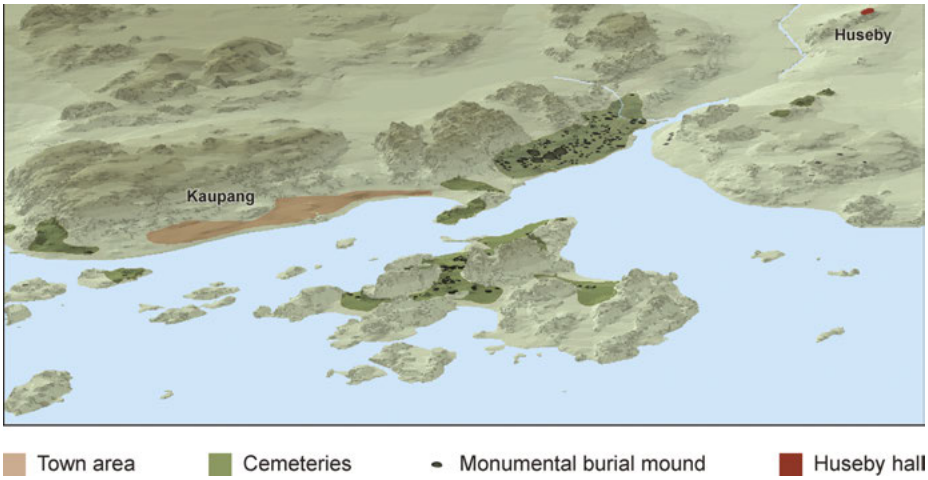

Fig. 3.6: Monuments and sites in the Skiringssal complex include the mid-8th–9th-century hall at Huseby, the 9th–mid-10th-century town Kaupang, and cemeteries surrounding the town. The four monumental mounds, probably of the mid–late-8th century, are seen in the cemetery between Kaupang and Huseby. Illustration by I. T. Bøckman based on Skre 2007d, fig. 1.3.

3.3.4 Three royal lineages, four royal sites

Summing up the evidence from the four sites, the date of the first of the Lejre halls corresponds well with the date of the events in the hall of the Skjǫldungar described in *Beowulf*. According to the poem's chronology, Bēowulf's fight in Heorot occurred prior to Hygelāc's death c. 520–30 (above, 3.2.2), and the earliest hall in Lejre dates to the early 6th century (above, 3.2.2).

The date range of the Old Uppsala halls is not as clear cut. Indications of possible predecessors and successors of the 7th–8th-century hall have been found, but are not sufficiently well dated. Thus, it cannot be decided whether there was a hall in Old Uppsala during the lifetime of Ongenþēow, Ōhthere, and Ēadgils, the kings of the Skilfingar lineage mentioned in *Beowulf*.

The earliest Borre hall clearly predates the Vestfold Ynglingar; the first of them, Halfdan hvítbeinn appears to have lived in the first half of the 8th century (Skre 2007b:435). Both Halfdan's burial site and the dating of the Skiringssal hall corresponds well with what may be derived from *Ynglingatal* concerning the date of his arrival in Vestfold. Bjørn Myhre (2015:124) has suggested that the pre-8th-century hall and mounds at Borre were built by kings of a lineage other than the Ynglingar. However, since the connection between the Vestfold Ynglingar and Old Uppsala probably was a construction by Þjóðolfr ór Hvíni, Halfdan, or possibly his somewhat obscure father Óláfr trételgja, may be the ancestral father of the Vestfold Ynglingar lineage. Indeed, Snorri writes in Ynglingasaga (chs. 44–6) that the first

two Vestfold Ynglingar married into existing royal lineages: Halfdan to the daughter of a king in the inland to the north, their son Eysteinn to the daughter of the Vestfold King Eiríkr Agnarsson; Eysteinn became king there after him. As noted above, the historicity of Snorri's account of events that had taken place five centuries previously is doubtful; however, such an alliance would explain why, according to *Ynglingatal*, Halfdan was buried in Skiringssal while Eysteinn and his son were buried at Borre.

Since the sequences of Lejre halls is better known and more firmly dated than those at Old Uppsala and Borre, it is difficult to assess whether or not hall-building at the three sites began around the same time. More easily identified and dated are the monumental barrows at these sites. Both at Uppsala and Borre their construction was begun in the late 6th century or around 600, while Grydehøj at Lejre is less firmly dated to the same period. This is also the time when the monumental rows of posts at Old Uppsala were built and, apparently, when the harbour at Borre was constructed. At Old Uppsala, the level of the largest platform was raised and the large hall was built. At Lejre the first hall was built on a site some 500 meters further south, and the earliest known hall at Borre appears to have been erected at this time.

Consequently, at Lejre, the only site with a well-dated beginning for the hall sequence, the first hall was built as the Skjǫldungar, after 2–3 generations, may be said to have formed a royal lineage. As suggested (above, 3.2.5), this period also saw the forming of the tribal amalgamation of the Danir. Resonating with the contemporary creation of Germanic kingdoms on the continent and in North Africa (Wood 2013), all three south–Scandinavian developments may be aspects of one and the same transformation: the creation of a new type of polity – the kingdom – led by a new type of ruler – the *konungr*. Following a widening of the perspective to incorporate profound transitions c. 536–650, the emergence and development of Scandinavian kingship will be discussed in greater detail and scope (3.5).

3.4 The societal transition c. 536–650

The decades around 600 saw the building of monumental mounds of hitherto unseen sizes as well as other ambitious construction projects in Old Uppsala (elevated hall plateau, rows of posts) and Borre (harbour). At least one monumental mound was built in Lejre around the same time, and four appear to have been built in Skiringssal following the erection of the hall there. These developments occurred in a period of profound societal changes, and thus cannot be explained within the parameters of the above discussions. Therefore, in the following, the perspective is extended to include contemporaneous developments in other Scandinavian ruler's

sites (3.4.1) as well as an extensive economic and climatic upheaval from the mid-6th century onwards (3.4.2).

3.4.1 Two generations of ruler's sites

The highest echelon of sites with a hall at their core includes a far greater number of sites than the four discussed above. The sites display a distinct chronological phasing with a shift from the early to the late in the late 6th to early 7th century – Lars Jørgensen (2009) has called them 1st- and 2nd-generation sites, respectively. The 1st-generation sites commence in the 2nd–3rd centuries and the 2nd-generation sites end around the turn of the millennium. Some sites span both generations (Fig. 3.1).

Most 1st-generation sites have a much richer archaeological record than those in the second; for example, Gudme in Fyn, the largest of all 1st-generation sites, has a wealth of buildings with the huge hall at its centre and a high number of high-quality finds in precious metals (Jørgensen 2010a). While Uppåkra in Skåne spans both generations, the 1st-generation finds are undoubtedly the richest. The site has the deepest deposits of all ruler's sites, in some areas exceeding 1 metre, and extends over some 40 hectares (Callmer 2001). The vast quantities of artefactual finds from metal-detection campaigns and excavations include several unique objects of exquisite quality. Most extraordinary are the remains of a cultic building rebuilt seven times on the same spot from the 3rd to the 8th century. Finds in the building include 115 gold-foil figures, several other gold items, and shards from 10 glass vessels. In the final phase, a unique glass bowl and a metal beaker with embossed foil bands from c. 500 were deposited in a pit dug into the clay floor; these likely ritual vessels were some 400 years old at the time of burial. A large number of weapons had been deposited around the house (Larsson and Lenntorp 2004).

Exceptionally rich finds have also been made in Helgö in Mälaren (Arrhenius and O'Meadhra 2011; Clarke and Lamm 2017), Sorte Muld in Bornholm (Adamsen et al. 2009; Jørgensen 2009:336–7), Åker in Hedmarken (Pilø 1993; Teigen 2007), and Hove (Myhre 1997; Bjørdal 2017) and Avaldsnes in Rogaland (Skre 2018a; Stylegar and Reiersen 2018).

3.4.2 Economic and climatic upheaval

Sites of the two generations differ in one aspect that is of relevance for the following discussion, namely the way in which production and trade were organised at the sites. The assessment of this feature is not altogether straightforward, since the sites within each generation do not form distinct categories. Furthermore, the extent of excavations varies considerably, and therefore the presence or absence of features cannot be assessed at every site.

Still, some near-general similarities and differences can be identified within and between the two generations. The 1st-generation sites Gudme, Helgö, and Sorte Muld, possibly also Åker and Hove, have a number of surrounding farms with extensive traces of artisanal production far beyond household needs (Jørgensen 2009). The only 1st-generation site that clearly differs in this respect is Avaldsnes, for reasons discussed below (3.5.1). Conversely, some of the new 2nd-generation sites (Figs. 3.2–3.5), notably Tissø in Sjælland (Jørgensen 2003, 2010b) and Old Uppsala (Ljungkvist et al. 2011), had seasonal markets where visiting craftsmen and artisans produced commodities to be sold to people who assembled there, most likely for *thing* meetings. Production and trade were organised somewhat differently in Skiringssal: the town Kaupang, not a seasonal market, was established there (Skre 2007f). The remaining new 2nd-generation sites in Figure 3.1, Borre, Lejre, Toftegård in Sjælland (Tornbjerg 1998), Järrestad in Skåne (Söderberg 2005), and Jelling in Jylland, do not seem to have housed production beyond the manor's needs. None of them appears to have had resident craftsmen and artisans who would have produced beyond household needs; rather, they seem to be primarily aristocratic residences with a relatively small number of additional specialised buildings. These sites commenced in the decades around 600; Jelling not until the early 10th century.

The reasons for why production and trade were organised differently in the two generations of sites may be revealed by analysing the changes that occurred around 600 at the sites that span both generations: Uppåkra, Sorte Muld, Helgö, and Avaldsnes. Evidently, some changes occurred at these sites in that period, but they are poorly understood due to limited excavations (Uppåkra, Sorte Muld) or poor preservation (Avaldsnes). Among the 1st–2nd-generation sites, only Helgö has been extensively excavated. In the post-600 phase, buildings there became fewer, goldsmithing and copper-alloy casting ceased, while ironsmithing and glass-bead production continued into the later phase (Clarke and Lamm 2017:14, 72).

Helen Clarke and Kristina Lamm (2017:72) are probably correct in suggesting that prosperity in Helgö was on the wane in the 7th century. However, this was not a local phenomenon, but rather a pan-Scandinavian development. For instance, while 4th–6th-century metal finds in Uppåkra include a range of exotic objects and precious metals from eastern and western continental Europe, 7th–8th-century finds are primarily copper-alloy objects of south-Scandinavian types (Hårdh 2002). This shift to reduced import and less costly raw materials, observable all over Scandinavia, was probably caused by the cutting off of communication from the north along the Danube, Vistula, and Oder to the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. This rather abrupt change around 550 was probably due to the westward movement of the Avars and the pressure on the Byzantine Empire under Justinian (Ellmers 1985:7–8; Ljungkvist 2009:45).

Access to long-distance networks where precious metals and sought-after commodities could be obtained were pivotal for rulers, and their break-off in the mid-6th

century stands out as a prominent reason for the downfall of some 1st-generation sites. The giving of costly gifts to retainers and peers was essential for rulers to maintain their continued support. In *Beowulf*, precious rings are mentioned no less than 44 times (Gräslund 2018), mostly as gifts; indeed, the term *bēag-gyfa* ('ring-giver', line 1102) signifies 'king'. In *Widsith* (lines 73–4) it is said that Elfwine, King of the Langobardi c. 560–572/3, was 'quite unniggardly in giving out rings and gleaming collars' (Bradley 1991:339). Among other things (below), resident artisans at 1st-generation sites were probably producing rings from imported precious metals.

Not only long-distance networks but also local and regional subsistence suffered severe blows in the mid- to late 6th century. In the comparatively marginal agricultural economy of Scandinavia, the so-called Late Antique Little Ice Age c. 536–660, instigated by three major volcanic eruptions in 536, 540, and 547 that injected huge amounts of aerosol into the stratosphere leading to reduced temperatures globally, will have had detrimental effects on food production (Büntgen et al. 2016; Toohey et al. 2016). Furthermore, since the first outbreak in 541, the Plague of Justinian ravaged southern Europe in 18 waves until 750. Doris Gutsmiedl-Schümann and co-authors (2018) list 11 mid- to late 6th-century graves from sites north of the Alps where this plague has been documented, rendering a spread of the plague to Scandinavia quite likely. Further evidence of the plague is sure to come following the increased application of targeted aDNA analyses to identify plague victims.

Probably adding to the strains on rulers from the loss of long-distance networks with the continent, harsher climate and recurring plagues will have had devastating demographic consequences. Thus, popular confidence in rulers may have fallen sharply. Indeed, the initial climatic disaster of 536–7 seems to have given birth to the Old Norse tradition of the Fimbulvetr, the three winters with no intervening summers, which signalled the start of Ragnarǫk, the final battle at the end of the world (Gräslund and Price 2012). While all this may have led to the downfall of some rulers and lineages, the social upheaval also provided opportunities, some of which are explored below (3.5.2).

3.5 A tentative synthesis

The following attempt to formulate a synthesis regarding rulers and ruler's sites in 3rd–10th-century Scandinavia is based primarily on the various aspects that have been explored above. However, because a synthesis inevitably touches on multiple facets of society, research on some additional themes in 1st-millennium Scandinavian societies will be introduced and some continental and British evidence will be involved. A synthesis represents a more general take on the matter, and is therefore more tentative compared to the above discussions.

3.5.1 From *þiudans* to *dróttinn* and *konungr*, 1st–6th centuries

The territorial expansion of the Roman Republic in the 3rd–2nd century BC escalated the martial proficiency and level of armament among neighbouring peoples. In southern Scandinavia, this is evident in grave furnishings from the 2nd century BC, becoming more widespread from the mid-1st century BC, probably in connection with Roman expansion into Gallic and Germanic Europe in the mid-1st century BC. In parallel, the first signs of a more stratified society emerged in southern Scandinavia. Roman imports began arriving in increasing numbers from the 1st century AD, and intimate contact with the Empire is evident in, for instance, weaponry and military organisation, as well as in the creation of runic script in the late 2nd century. Of the c. 400 weapon sets retrieved from Illerup Ådal A, among the earliest of the many south-Scandinavian war-booty sacrifices of the 3rd–5th centuries, 116 sets contained a Roman sword (Ilkjær 2001). Clearly, from the 2nd century onwards, possibly the 1st, Scandinavians had served in the Roman army and had become familiar with the Roman military and state (Jørgensen et al. 2003).

The war-booty sacrifices resulted from conflicts between Scandinavian military units, some small, others of 1,000 men and more. When settling, commanders of such units will have presented a challenge to existing rulers in Scandinavian tribes, who were possibly titled *þiudans* at the time. In some tribes, an army commander, a *dróttinn*, appears to have ascended to become ruler.

The 1st-generation sites of the *dróttinn*

Some features of the 1st-generation Scandinavian ruler's sites suggest that military commanders with contacts to the Empire and intimate knowledge of Roman customs and institutions initiated them. The central hall surrounded by secondary farms – in Gudme and in Uppåkra there may have been up to 50 farms (Callmer 2001:113; Jørgensen 2010b:273) – could reflect the military hierarchy; officers, perhaps soldiers as well, may have resided there. Martial training and military campaigns will have been their main business; overseeing the extensive artisanal and craft production on their respective farms would be another.

Such production was probably partly directed towards manufacturing items for two different networks; the ruler's sites were the nodes that connected the two. Firstly, based on metals such as copper-alloy, gold, and silver obtained in long-distance networks, ornaments and other sought-after items would be produced to serve as gifts and commodities in regional and intraregional networks. Secondly, based on raw material obtained through the latter networks, such as iron, wool, antler, fur, and hides, items were produced to be traded over long distances to the south in exchange for Roman and continental raw materials and products. Military officers trained in organising supplies for their troops, upholding the standard of

their equipment, and enforcing the security of supply lines will have had the competence needed for setting up and maintaining such production sites and networks.

These sites were established in the 2nd–3rd centuries. The widespread military conflicts of the 3rd–5th centuries, testified in the south-Scandinavian war-booty sacrifices, may have been related to conflicts between the *dróttinn* and with their allies in northern networks from where they obtained commodities and raw materials. The period saw an extensive building of hillforts on the Scandinavian Peninsula, c. 1,500 in total. The vast majority them is found some distance from settlements and only suited as easily defended short-term refuges where the local population could flee for their lives while abandoning buildings and most possessions to the ravages of the aggressor. This suggests that the attackers were aiming at taking prisoners, and possibly that slave-taking was a primary objective in such attacks. Thus, slaves may have been a significant commodity exchanged in southern networks.

In time, the four-level hierarchy from army commander to soldier (Ilkjær 2001) will have been transformed to a *dróttinn* and his retinue of fewer and more heavily armed retainers. This change may have taken place before Bēowulf's lifetime. A possible component of this transformation of the military hierarchy into one better adapted to rulership may be the changes observed in the term *irilaʀ*/*erilaʀ*, possibly a title or the name of a particular social role, which occurs in eleven 2nd–6th-century runic inscriptions on stones (5) and objects (6). In five of these inscriptions, he is referred to as the carver or producer of the inscription, and several include laudatory epithets, such as 'swift', 'cunning', and 'skilful'. This resonates well with the term's etymology: *irilaʀ*/*erilaʀ* appears to be associated with connotations relevant for a military officer, such as bravery and valour. The runic script's evident origin in the Latin alphabet suggests that the former was conceived within the primary sphere of Germanic–Roman contact: the military. That is probably also the sphere where an *irilaʀ*/*erilaʀ* belonged. The term does not occur in post-600 inscriptions, but appears to have been transformed into Old Norse *jarl* ('earl'), meaning a ruler subordinate to a king (Iversen et al. in press).

The 1st-generation sites Gudme, Uppåkra, Sorte Muld, Helgö, Åker, and Hove may have been organised in this way; however, Avaldsnes is clearly different. While Roman contacts are evident in the site's 1st-generation phase, the 3rd–6th centuries (Skre 2018c; Stylegar and Reiersen 2018), there are only moderate remains from craft and artisanal production (Østmo 2018), and no such evidence from surrounding farms. Probably, the *dróttinn* at Avaldsnes took a different position in the exchange networks; apparently, he engaged solely in long-distance exchange. His main currency in that exchange was not something he produced from raw materials obtained in regional networks; it consisted of a non-material service: military protection of long-distance transport of commodities from the Arctic. From Hålogaland, the northernmost regions settled by Germanic-speaking people, valuable commodities were shipped along the protected sailing route. Avaldsnes is

situated by a bottleneck at the southern end of the route; there, the early 3rd-century *dróttin* and his descendants seem to have taken on the task of securing the safe transport of commodities originating further north. From these northern regions come exquisite furs enjoyed by the Romans, Jordanes reports (ch. 21). From the perspective of Germanic peers on the continent and his contacts in the Empire, securing the transport of these commodities by suppressing piracy and taking control of the sailing route would have been equally as useful as if the *dróttinn* at Avaldsnes had produced the goods locally (Skre 2018b). The prominent grave monuments at Avaldsnes, including numerous monumental mounds, the two tallest triangular raised-stone monuments in Scandinavia (3rd–6th centuries), and the two earliest Scandinavian ship graves (late-8th century, Bill this vol. Ch. 5), are all exposed towards the Karmsundet Sound (Fig. 3.7), an indication of the site's orientation towards the passing sailing route (E. Østmo this vol. Ch. 1; Skre 2018a).

The 2nd-generation sites of the *konungr*

The time of the *dróttinn* rulers of southern and south-eastern Scandinavia, and possibly in the west and north as well, appears to have ended during the period when tribes were merged into larger polities, the mid- to late 5th–early 6th centuries. While Näsman (1999, 2006; above, 3.2.5) regards the merging of tribes in the south as the forming of a tribal confederation among the Danir, developing over the course of the following two centuries into a kingdom, it should rather be understood as the introduction of kingship and the formation of kingdoms. Apparently, in the early 6th century when the events in *Beowulf* played out, kingship had been established among the Gautar, Svíar, and Danir.

The most detailed information on the shift to *konungr* rulers concerns the Danir. The near-simultaneous occurrence of the ethnonym, the royal lineage, and the ruler's site in Lejre suggests that these phenomena were intimately connected. Also, the royal lineage was bolstered by its own origin myth as recounted in *Beowulf*. The gist of the myth is that as a small child, the Skjǫldungar's ancestral father Skjǫld, was found destitute in a drifting boat (lines 7 and 44–6). After having lived a heroic life and become a ruler, he was buried in a ship set adrift – the poem's description of his burial rite explicitly mirrors the circumstances of his arrival as an infant (Bill this vol. Ch. 5).

Clearly, in the origin myth, Skjǫld's descent is not why he became a ruler; on the contrary, he is portrayed as not having ancestors, implying that he was of supernatural origin. The poem says that he was the "scourge of many tribes, a wrecker of mead-benches, rampaging among foes", and thus, "his worth was proved" (Heaney 2001:3, lines 4–8). Thus, the poem describes his claim to rulership as based in his personal prowess and charisma. Probably, the shaping of the origin myth happened at least one generation later; not until then was the number of

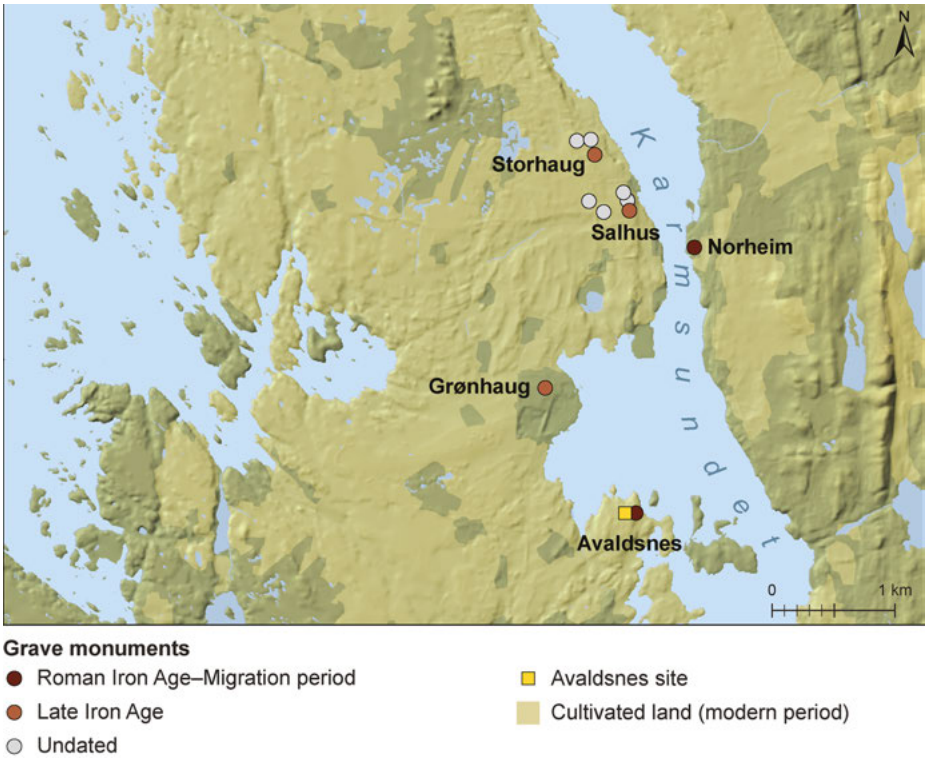

Fig. 3.7: The prominent grave monuments at Avaldsnes span the 3rd–8th centuries AD. The two 3rd–6th-century triangular raised-stone monuments at Norheim and Avaldsnes are the two tallest among the numerous such in Scandinavia. The two late 8th-century ship graves in Grønhaug and Storhaug are the two earliest such in Scandinavia. Apart from the Salhus mound, measuring 43 meters across and built in the decades around 600, the remaining mounds are undated; several may date from the Bronze Age. Illustration by I. T. Bøckman.

royal pretenders narrowed by claiming a certain descent as a prerequisite for rulership. In that sense, kingship was not introduced until somewhat after Skjǫld's lifetime, possibly when Hrōðgār ascended to kingship, around the time when the first hall in Lejre was erected, the early 6th century.

Interestingly, none of the 1st-generation sites that continued into the 2nd was the primary residence of any of the three lineages known from *Ynglingatal*, *Beowulf*, and *Widsith*; all three lineages established new sites only a few generations after the lifetime of their ancestral father. The forming of royal lineages in the early 6th century seems to be connected to the establishment of 2nd-generation ruler's sites. While that time can be narrowly dated in Lejre, Old Uppsala and Borre appear to originate some time in the 6th century. Apparently, this was a period of social mobility when men with proficiency, purpose, ambition, and luck could ascend to

being *konungr*, claim descent from a renowned ancestor, and establish prominent sites. The expressions of royal authority appear to escalate in Lejre, Old Uppsala, and Borre until a climax in the decades around 600. As was the case when the Christian monarchy was introduced around the turn of the millennium (below, 3.5.2), the establishment of new ruler's sites may have been a conscious act to distance themselves from the earlier type of rulers.

Probably the most profound difference between *dróttinn* and *konungr* rulership was that while the former became rulers from personal prowess and charisma, the latter were selected among a small number of candidates; normally, one was the obvious choice (above, 3.1.1). Such exclusivity had certain societal benefits. Firstly, it would prevent a situation in which numerous ambitious candidates in the aristocracy constantly jockeyed for position, thus diverting energy and focus from contributing to shared objectives. Secondly, following a ruler's death, the chance of destructive conflicts would be reduced since the number of pretenders was limited. Thirdly, because ancestry identified every potential *konungr* from birth, they could be groomed for the task from early age. Possibly, a period of *dróttinn* rulers had inspired the wisdom that being a good ruler was not only a matter of personal prowess and charisma, but of being imbued with the appropriate values and understanding of the complexity and finesse of the task – evidently matters of lifelong learning. In *Beowulf* (lines 18–25), Skjǫld's upbringing of his son Bēow is described to have achieved precisely that: "Behaviour that's admired as the path to power among people everywhere" (Heaney 2001:3, lines 24–5).

There may also have been differences in the types and scope of authority between *dróttinn* and *konungr* rulership. Such differences will not be discussed further here beyond pointing to the likeliness of *dróttinn* being more preoccupied with ruler's sites and long-distance transport routes while *konungr*, predominant in a time when long-distance networks towards the south were more or less cut off (above, 3.4.2), were more directed at controlling and defending territories from where surplus could be extracted. To that point, the earliest phase in the Danevirke rampart across the southernmost neck of Jylland is dated to the late-5th century (Tummuscheit and Witte 2018:70), the time of nascent kingship among the Danir.

Germanic Europe: Scandinavia, Britain, and the Continent

The details of the introduction of kingship can only be guessed at, but as pointed out by Näsman (2006; above, 3.2.4), the overlordship over the numerous tribes of earlier times was probably a result of the extensive warfare of the 3rd–5th centuries. The set of near-contemporary novelties – the forming of a new type of polity under a new name, with a new type of rulership, bolstered with a new type of ruler's myth, and residing in a newly established ruler's site – suggest that they were components in a concerted effort which probably also included considerable military

force. However, military means alone will have been insufficient. As pointed out by Walter Pohl (2009:438–9) regarding Germanic armies in continental Europe, their moderate size and the instability of tribal confederations limited the durability and size of the polities they formed; thus, political manoeuvring will have been necessary to establish more stable polities.

The early history of the Franks is an illustrative example of political means and manoeuvres needed when introducing kingship. Franks were mentioned for the first time in the 3rd-century *Panegyrici Latini*; in the 5th, a polity of the Franks appears to have merged numerous tribes on the middle and lower Rhine, including the Amisvani, Chattuarii, and Chatti (Wood 1994:35). Only by extending his authority far beyond his army, violating traditions, and overruling the aristocracy could their first king, Clovis I (reign c. 481–511), unite the Frankish tribes under one ruler, expand his realm to encompass much of present-day France, and establish a kingdom that soon became the most powerful in Europe and lasted for centuries.

Clovis traced his ancestry to Childeric I (reign c. 458–481) and before him to Merovech, the ancestral father of the Merovingian kings. According to Fredegar's mid-7th-century Frankish chronicle, Merovech was conceived when his mother, while swimming, met a sea monster, a Quinotaur. Ian Wood sets the start of Merovech's rule shortly after 450, and concludes that the Merovingian dynasty emerged then and was not rooted in earlier rulers' lineages, therefore hinting at a different type of prestigious ancestry: a supernatural origin (Wood 1994:36–8).

This period also saw the rise of other Germanic successor kings and kingdoms, such as Theodoric the Great among the Ostrogoths, and the kingdoms of the Suebi, Burgundians, and Thuringi on the continent, as well as the kingdoms of Mercia, East Anglia, Kent, and others in Britain – some more long-lived than others. The close contemporaneity with these developments among other Germanic-speaking peoples and the evident parallels between the emergences of the two royal lineages of the Franks and the Danir – for example in their origin myths and the merging of numerous ancient tribes – suggest that the introduction of kingship in southern Scandinavia was an integral part of corresponding developments among several Germanic-speaking peoples.

This perspective has a somewhat different take on the matter than Näsman's (2006). He holds that the gradual expansion of the Franks in the late 5th to 8th century is a better analogy for the development of the kingdom of the Danir than the swift unification of England under Alfred and Æthelstan. What is suggested here is a historical relation rather than one of analogy, namely that the wave of new Germanic kingdoms being established in the aftermath of waning Roman rule through the 5th century was not limited to territories inside the Limes and Hadrian's Wall, but included Scandinavia, at least its southern and south-eastern lands. The polity development of 5th–6th-century southern and south-eastern Scandinavia are probably best conceptualised not as outliers on the fringe of Germanic Europe, but as situated roughly within the scope of variation found

elsewhere in Germanic continental Europe and the British Isles. Apparently, at the time, Scandinavia was more closely integrated in Germanic Europe than was the case in the 7th–8th centuries (above 3.4.2, and below 3.5.2).

However, some aspects of being situated rather far from the Limes would supply Scandinavian ruler's sites with their particular flavour. The territories had not been ruled by the Roman state and military, and Roman buildings, roads, and harbours were not present. This contrast will have been counterbalanced, but far from outweighed, by the consequences of many Scandinavians participating in the Empire's army and bringing their knowledge and experience back to the homelands. Furthermore, contrasts between Scandinavia and the territories of the former Empire will have been more significant on the latter's continental territories than on its British ones, since the latter from the mid-5th century onwards was increasingly dominated by Germanic peoples who originated from lands outside the Limes.

A more significant difference between Scandinavia and the former lands of the Empire was the fortunate position of southern Scandinavia, lying in the intersection between a northern and a southern economic zone. The former would include Scandinavia and parts of the Baltic, while the southern stretched down into Germanic areas and, in Roman times, into the Empire. Both zones supplied raw materials and commodities that were in demand in the other zone. Taking advantage of this difference, some *dróttinn* established the 1st-generation ruler's sites and organised the production and trade. In an economic sense, perhaps the closest parallel in time and space to these sites were the Celtic oppida of the 2nd–1st centuries BC (Collis 1995; Andrén in press); they appear to have been ruler's sites, they connected central-European and Mediterranean networks, and met their end when the Romans expanded into Celtic territories.

The activities in the south-Scandinavian 1st-generation ruler's sites will have shaped some of the 2nd-generation sites in ways that gave them a particular character compared to other north-European ruler's sites. In many of the former, the connection to assemblies, crafts, and markets were upheld. Perhaps the Rendlesham site in East Anglia only 6 kilometres from Sutton Hoo, which started in the 5th century and thrived in the mid-6th–mid-8th centuries (Scull et al. 2016), was modelled on the Scandinavian ruler's sites, with which the Scandinavian immigrants who settled there were surely familiar. The remaining known British great-hall complexes of that period do not appear to have accommodated the same wide spectrum of activities, having rather more in common with 2nd-generation sites such as Lejre and Borre. However, the British were much more short-lived, possibly a consequence of the Christianisation, which seems to have contributed to the downfall of the Scandinavian sites some 3–4 centuries later (below, 3.5.2).

3.5.2 From *konungr* to monarch, 6th–10th centuries

The societal upheaval in the century around 600 appears to have hit Scandinavian societies harder than those further south and west, probably a consequence of the former's more marginal climatic conditions. However, such possible causes for the seemingly separate route that Scandinavian societies took in the 7th–9th centuries as compared with continental and British societies are difficult to disentangle from such that followed from the general conversion to Christianity in the south and west. Both will have contributed to Scandinavian kingship taking a different path than further south and west.

The instability of kings and royal lineages

The evident stepping-up of monumentality in Old Uppsala, Borre, and Lejre in the century around 600 suggests that rulers intensified their display of supremacy – possibly even divinity (Sundqvist 2016) – with the aim of mending the loss of confidence in rulers that may have followed the climatic disaster and the plagues of the mid–late 6th century. Perhaps they portrayed themselves as rulers of a new sort, fit to lead society out of the misery caused by the failure of earlier rulers. The building of exceedingly huge mounds, making ancestors acutely and prodigiously present, suggests that the royal lineages reinforced their position and claim to rulership.

However, some of the 1st-generation sites continued to be rulers' sites. For instance, the cultic building in Uppåkra, probably connected to an adjacent hall (Jørgensen 2009:336), continued to be rebuilt on the same spot from the 3rd until well into the 9th century. This is indicative of an obvious fact: there were more than three royal lineages in 6th–10th-century Scandinavia. Indeed, the main protagonists in *Beowulf* are of a fourth, namely the unnamed royal lineage of the Gautar – probably the Gotlanders (Gräslund 2018). Some of the many unnamed royal lineages may have installed themselves in 1st-generation sites established by the *dróttinn* of the past; others may have established 2nd-generation sites.

It is probably impossible to determine which of the numerous hall sites of the 6th–10th centuries were royal sites and which belonged to lower aristocratic ranks. Surely, both levels are represented in Figure 3.1, and in some of the numerous hall sites that are not included in the map. Only occasionally must resort be made to educated guesses as to the status of a site's lord. Lars Jørgensen (2003:204–7) has suggested that Tissø was a royal site, but, partly due to the lack of graves, the *konungr* probably visited at certain times only, coinciding with the seasonal market there. Potentially, Lejre was this *konungr*'s main residence. The formation of a kingdom, possibly that of the Danir, may have led a *dróttinn* in Uppåkra into a position subordinate to a *konungr*, likely the one residing in Lejre. Finally, some lords of

2nd-generation sites may have been subordinate to a *konungr*. Indeed, Järrestad (Fig. 3.1) means 'the earl's place' (Söderberg 2005:95–7).

Turning to the nascent monarchies of the 9th–11th centuries, the consistent series of six or seven successive halls in Lejre up to the early 11th century are not matched by an equally well-testified succession of *konungr*. The disappearance of the Skjǫldunga saga written c. 1180–1200 and the late date of writings based on that saga, leave an utterly fragmentary picture (Friis-Jensen and Lund 1984). For instance, the series of kings of the Danir between Horik of the mid-9th century and Gormr of the mid-10th is obscure, and the descent of Gormr and his successor Haraldr Gormsson, called Bluetooth, remains in the dark, as does their relation to Lejre (Sawyer 2002:45–8). Still, c. 1016, the German bishop and historian Thietmar of Merseburg, recounting events in the 930s, tells of human sacrifices in Lejre, the country's *caput regni* ('capital' or 'kingdom's main site', Christensen 2015b:239). The proximity to Lejre may have been the main reason why Haraldr's son Sveinn tjúguskegg chose Roskilde as his main seat (Fig. 3.3), but his dynastic connection to Lejre remains dubious. Jelling (Fig. 3.1), which through much of the 9th century was the main site for Gormr and Haraldr, was thus a ruler's site of the two first known *konungr* in the lineage that came to rule the monarchy of Denmark (Jessen et al. 2014).

As among the Danir, the connection between the Skilfingar kings and the 9th–11th-century kings among the Svíar remains uncertain (Lindkvist 2003b). As noted previously, the Icelandic saga authors' claim that Haraldr hárfagri descended from the Yngliga is equally questionable.

Thus, it seems that the purported links between the three 11th–12th-century royal lineages of the Scandinavian monarchies and the three ancient lineages are quite questionable. The richer Scandinavian evidence of royal succession in the 11th–12th centuries suggests a number of pretenders to the crown, for instance the would-be Norwegian King Sverrir Sigurðarson (reign 1184–1202). Although born the son of a comb-maker in Bergen, he claimed that his mother had revealed to him that his true father was King Sigurðr Haraldsson (reign 1136–55). While questionable, his claim to be of Haraldr hárfagri's lineage was the key to gaining support as a pretender to the crown. In all likelihood, such questionable claims were common before the formation of the three monarchies as well.

The well-evidenced 11th–12-century Scandinavian cases of instability in royal succession, malleability of descent, and armed conflicts between and within polies and royal lineages resonate with the contemporary and earlier continental and insular evidence. There is little reason to doubt that such calamities were equally common during the period discussed here. Rulers in first-millennium Scandinavia will have been challenged by opponents within their own polity as well as from without; in some periods more frequently and heavily than in others. That would lead to unstable strength and varying extent of polities, as well as to discontinuity in reign. This apparent instability of rulership and polities stands in stark contrast to the astounding stability of ruler's sites, a paradox reflected upon below (3.6).

Kingship and heroic warrior ideals of the north: the Scandinavian trajectory

The cutting-off of southern trade networks in the mid–late 6th century reduced communication between Scandinavia and the continental and British kingdoms, decreasing the level of social and cultural integration across the divide (M. Østmo this vol. Ch. 2.5). Over time, the Christianisation of the latter kingdoms will have contributed to deepening the divide by limiting communication in arenas other than trade. While the heroic warrior ethos lived on in one form or another within all Germanic aristocracies (Klaeber et al. 2014:lxviii-lxx), in Scandinavia it will have continued to be developed and refined within a pagan as opposed to a Christian universe. Thus, through the 7th–10th centuries, the heroic ethos will have developed along diverging trajectories within and outside Scandinavia. While heroism was much the same in Germanic societies of the 6th century, the heroic ethos at the core of 9th–10th century Scandinavian kingship would be rather different from that of contemporary continental and British kingdoms.

The pagan hero Bēowulf is described in the poem as a man of courage, action, and determined will who defies the mortal danger of combat in order to protect his people and defend others in need of help – while also displaying human weaknesses such as ignorance and stubbornness (Klaeber et al. 2014:lxxviii-lxxix). That very defiance in pursuit of the virtuous, while being subject to one's own weaknesses and the unpredictability and contingency of existence, appears to be the essence of the 6th-century heroic ethos.

Possibly, we may catch some glimpses of how this ethos continued to be refined within the pagan 7th–10th-century Scandinavian universe. Exploring archaeological evidence of that period in light of 12th–13th-century literary evidence on Old Norse beliefs and practices, Neil Price (2002:329–96) finds that certain practices of *seiðr* ('sorcery') were directed at empowering warriors. Thus, it did not primarily protect against a fatal outcome of battle, but served to encourage warriors' voluntarily acceptance of mortal danger. Within this cosmology, although the outcome of battle was uncertain, both death and victory were potentially favourable, given that the warrior fought bravely and fearlessly. Not only would that increase the chances of victory; if he were killed, it would secure him lasting renown in poems and tales of the battle as well as a place among Óðinn's warriors in Valhǫll.

The evident success enjoyed by 9th–10th-century Scandinavian raiders overseas suggest that the hint of fatalism in their heroic warrior ethos and the continued cultivation through the 7th–10th centuries of martial skills gave them an edge over their Christian adversaries. A century or two later, however, their homeland kingdoms were Christianised, and thus, after an interlude of 4–5 centuries, they were re-included in the normality of Germanic western Europe. However, the norm had changed profoundly since the 6th century; now it consisted of the Christian kingdom with its king as God's anointed and the Church as God's intermediary.

3.6 Epilogue: The stability of the rulership institution

In the present author's earlier contributions on rulership and polities (Skre 1998, 2001, 2007f), the instability of the two was taken as an indication that the institution of rulership itself was unstable and only manifested sporadically – leading to the suggestion that it was more of an ad hoc occurrence than an institution. However, the deep continuity at Avaldsnes through most of the first millennium, explored in the 2018 volume, has provided grounds to reconsider that assessment. There, as explored by Einar Østmo in this volume (Ch. 1), that continuity extended some two millennia prior to the period discussed here, and stretched up to the 14th century as explored by Anette Sand-Eriksen and Erlend Nordlie (this vol. Ch. 6), Alf Tore Hommedal (this vol. Ch. 7), and Erik Opsahl (this vol. Ch. 8).

Defying the author's earlier position on the instability of rulership, this chapter's discussions have lifted to the fore the deep continuity of 1st-millennium ruler's sites – several of which endured over nearly the entire millennium, while the remaining were in use for some 400 years. Such site stability is uncommon among Scandinavian settlement sites; they rarely remain fixed on the same spot for more than three centuries. Moreover, while numerous sites may display prominent graves, buildings, and activities for a generation or two, the ruler's sites maintained such features for centuries. How can it be that ruler's sites upheld their position while conflicts between pretenders played out, dynasties came and went, and polities were conquered, split, and united?

Firstly, the stability of the ruler's sites suggests that the site made the ruler, not vice versa. It may seem that obtaining control of the ruler's site was the key to becoming a ruler. If a rival within the ruler's own lineage or a member of a different lineage established himself as ruler, he did not stay in his domicile, but took up residence in the ruler-site's hall, or possibly built a new hall there. The high turnaround of hall buildings at some sites – in Lejre there were 7–8 over c. 500 years – may point to the latter being a common practice.

Secondly, most ruler's sites were interfaces between the ruler and his subjects – not only his retinue, but all free men (Zachrisson 2017b). In the 1st-generation sites, the ruler's armed men probably resided on the farms that surrounded his residence, and they will have joined him in martial practice, feasting, and rituals. Apparently, some 1st-generation sites were assembly sites, probably frequented by all free men in the surroundings. There may also have been market sites, likely in Gudme (Lundeborg) and Uppåkra, but the evidence for such is clearer in some 2nd-generation sites, especially Old Uppsala, Tissø, and Skiringssal, as well as in 2nd-generation Uppåkra. As suggested by Søren Sindbæk (2009) and Frode Iversen (this vol. Ch. 4), such assemblies will have been the essential arenas for agreeing on marriage, reinforcing kinship ties, resolving disputes, maintaining friendships, and the

like. Assemblies thus built and maintained shared institutions, identities, and culture, all of which contributed to social coherence. These features will have given some of the ruler's sites a profound societal and cultural role, which will have contributed to their deep continuity. Not only were they essential for rulers; all free men depended on them. The entire societal and cosmological order was nested within these sites; hence their permanence.

That is not the case at Avaldsnes, which, possibly as at Lejre, Borre, Toftegård, and Järrestad, was essentially a ruler's residence with monumental graves and few or no communal activities. At Avaldsnes, the fortunate position by a bottleneck on the transport route along the west-Scandinavian coast appears to be the main reason for the continuity. Such logistic reasons may have contributed to the permanence of other sites as well; however, the aura imbued in the site by rulers having lived there over generations, as manifested in the monumental graves and in shining halls, was probably even more significant.

A different approach to the longevity of ruler's sites would be to study the reasons for their final downfall. With a few exceptions, those that existed in the 2nd generation ceased to be used as ruler's sites within only a few decades on either side of AD 1000. During the same few decades, towns were established near several sites; many of these towns were ecclesiastical strongholds. This is the case with Uppåkra (Lund), Old Uppsala (Sigtuna), Lejre (Roskilde), Åker (Hamar), and Borre and Skiringssal (Tønsberg).

The apparent reason for kings abandoning ruler's sites is the breakthrough of the Christian monarchy in these years (Berend 2007; Hybel 2018). The idea of the king being God's anointed, conveyed by the clergy, could hardly be reconciled with the rulership ideology that was embedded in the ancient sites. The Old Norse term for the conversion, *siðaskipti*, 'the change of customs', makes it clear that it was not perceived as merely a religious and ideological transition, but one of norms and practices.

The few exceptions to the ruler-site downfall c. AD 1000, notably Avaldsnes and Old Uppsala, support the suggested connection between these sites and rulers being intertwined in the cosmological order that the sites materialised. Avaldsnes, which continued to be a royal manor until c. 1400 (Opsahl this vol. Ch. 8), was never an assembly site with collective rituals (Skre 2018c). Therefore, the site was not reminiscent of such practices, and Christian kings could continue to use the site – as they frequently did up to the kingdom's downfall in the late 14th century (Mundal 2018). Old Uppsala is a quite different story. There, pagan rituals appear to have been practiced until the late-11th century; that is, a century after the town Sigtuna, soon to have multiple churches and Christian grave monuments, was established only 20 kilometres to the south. The pagan rituals ended around the turn of the century, and in 1130 the king granted the Old Uppsala manor as a see for the newly established bishopric of Uppsala.

The profound cosmological and societal transitions that caused the downfall of ruler's sites c. AD 1000 stirs curiosity regarding the c. AD 600 shift between the 1st

and the 2nd generation of ruler's sites. Above (3.5.2), it has been suggested that the downfall of some sites and the rise of others, and indeed the monumentality beginning c. 600, was a royal response to the demographic and economic turmoil beginning with the dust veil in AD 536 and continuing into the early 7th century. However, this suggestion hardly does justice to the societal and cosmological profoundness of the shift. The contemporary alterations in language, runic script, material culture, house construction, settlement patterns, and the like add complexity and scope to this transformational phase, which, evidently, is poorly understood.

In spite of the transition c. 600, many ruler's sites maintained exceptional stability through the first millennium, a testament to the institutional stability of rulership. Although the institution clearly changed through the centuries, possibly most profoundly in the 3rd and 6th–7th centuries, the repeated rebuilding of the hall at the centre of these sites suggests that there was always a ruler. While this institutional stability has been a prevalent theme among scholars studying the history of religion (e.g. Steinsland 1991; Sundqvist 2002) and place-name studies (e.g. Brink 1997; Vikstrand 2001), it seems that the scholarly debates on issues related to ethnicities, polities, and economies, including the present author's own contributions, have yet to take sufficient account of this ever-present aspect of Scandinavian societies of the Roman and early medieval periods.

Acknowledgements: I am deeply grateful for comments to earlier versions of this manuscript by Anders Andrén, Stefan Brink, Tinna Damgård-Sørensen, Frands Herschend, Frode Iversen, and Iver B. Neumann. Information on specific types of evidence has been generously supplied by John Ljungkvist and Lena Beronius Jörpeland (Old Uppsala), Tom Christensen (Lejre), Terje Gansum and Christer Tonning (Borre), Harald Bjorvand (Germanic linguistics), and Gorm Tortzen (Roman philology).

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