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8 Avaldsnes' Position in Norway in the 14th Century

The article's point of departure is Pope Clement V's privilege for King Hákon V Magnússon in 1308. The pope granted the king the right to organise his own chapel clergy, relatively independent of the regular ecclesiastical administration, under the leadership of the king's dean in Bergen. The papal privilege provided for a royal chapel organisation including St Ólafr's Church at Avaldsnes. The article discusses Avaldsnes' position in the royal administration of Norway during the 14th century based on the preserved source material from the period, primarily diplomas. In opposition to the traditional view, the article claims that the domestic kingdom existed beyond 1319 and at least until the death of Hákon VI Magnússon in 1380. The article goes against the view that Oslo was made the capital of Norway by King Hákon V. The Norwegian kings continued to be mobile in the 14th century, and Avaldsnes continued to be of vital importance as a royal stronghold. Avaldsnes and Karmsundet were also of vital importance for outsiders, especially the Hanseatic League; during the first half of the 14th century, these German merchants acquired control of the trade between their own region and Norway, as well as the trade between Norway and England. The established a Kontor (office) in Bergen around 1360. The route from the south to Bergen passed through Karmsundet, where the Hanseatic merchants established an intermediate port between North-Germany and Bergen called Notow. The port continued to be important throughout the 15th century. Relations were not always peaceful; in 1368, during the Second Hanseatic war, a Hanseatic fleet burned down the royal buildings and farms at Avaldsnes. There are indications that the royal complex at Avaldsnes was never rebuilt after 1368. This was probably due to the end of the domestic medieval kingdom in Norway occurring shortly thereafter.

The erection or at least the completion of the masonry building at Avaldsnes is viewed as a result of the establishment of the royal chapel organisation in 1308. Pope Clement V (1305–14) granted King Hákon V Magnússon (1299–1319) the right to organise his own chapel clergy, relatively independent of the regular ecclesiastical administration, under the leadership of the king's dean in Bergen. The papal privilege opened the way for a royal chapel organisation consisting of fourteen churches, four of which were collegiate, including St Ólafr's Church at Avaldsnes. The chapel organisation was led by the provost of the Church of the Apostles in Bergen, who received the title *magister capellarum regis*. The royal collegiate churches had their roots in the king's *jus patronus* (right to patronage) to certain chapels and clergy in his household. Pope Innocent IV had granted King Hákon IV Hákonsson (1217–63; Fig. 8.1) this right to three churches, two of them in stone, at the king's farms already in 1247. The pope also granted King Hákon *jus patronus* for new churches built at the king's farms as long as the king granted the churches sufficient estates (DN I no. 43; Bagge 1976:27; Helle 1999:54–5). Furthermore, in 1246, King Hákon IV had obtained from Pope Innocent IV the same right to churches built in the north under the auspices of

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the Christianisation campaign against the heathens (DN I no. 37). Furthermore, in 1247, the pope granted permission to Queen Margreta (c. 1210–70) and her sons to retain *jus patronus* to three chapels in Stavanger diocese that had been subject to a disputed between the queen and the bishop (DN VIII no. 6). These three chapels might have been among the four in the diocese subsequently included in the royal chapel organisation. In any case, King Hákon IV probably began construction of St Ólafr's Church at Avaldsnes shortly after 1247 (Helle 1999:56).



Fig. 8.1: Great seal of King Hákon V Magnússon (1299–1319), obverse and reverse. Photo: National Archives of Norway. Seglsamlingen, Kopisamlinger RA/EA-4048/F/Fc/Fca/L0029.

In so doing, King Hákon V therefore took up a process initiated by his grandfather, Hákon IV, and continued by his father, Magnus VI the Lawmender (1263–80), in 1308 (Helle 1999:71; Sand-Eriksen and Nordlie this vol. Ch. 6). Avaldsnes had probably served as Hákon IV's administrative centre in south-western Norway after the king had confirmed the bishop's authority over Stavanger (Helle 1999:64–5). The Avaldsnes masonry building – or at least part of it – might therefore have been erected already in King Hákon IV's reign. Nevertheless, the investment in the royal chapels in the beginning of the 14th century indicates King Hákon V's ambitious plan for the expansion of the royal administration (DN I no. 113; Bagge 1976:11, 2010:263–7; Bauer 2018:278; Helle 1974:113–15, 1999:67–84). The source material, though meagre, nonetheless provides clear evidence of the importance of the chapels in the royal administration: in 1349 King Hákon's successor, King Magnús VII Eiríksson (1319–55/74; Magnus II in Sweden), demanded that the chapels be exempted from the papal tax levied on ecclesiastical institutions, arguing that the chapels were not ecclesiastical institutions and that their clerics were rather officers in the royal administration (DN VI no. 192; Bagge 2010:264). Thus, there was a state-building process underway, even if 14th-century royal administration is hardly comparable to a modern administrative system.

King Hákon V probably began construction or enlargement of the masonry building at the same time that changes were made to St Óláfr's Church. The larger complex was completed most likely under King Magnús VII (Fig. 8.2; Bauer 2018:278; Lidén 1999:130–1). If so, this would not be the only building complex initiated by Hákon V and completed by his successor. The masonry building is possibly a result of the papal letter of privilege from 1308 and demonstrates that Avaldsnes was a site for the royal collegiate. We do not know the precise number of the collegiate. St Óláfr's Church ranked fourth of the collegiate churches and at maximum would have consisted of a dean, four canons, and two deacons (Helle 1999:80; Lidén 1999:107). There might also have been a school at Avaldsnes, as at the collegiate at St Mary's Church in Oslo and the Church of Apostles in Bergen (Bauer 2018:279). The masonry building most likely served as the collegiate's dwelling at Avaldsnes; although it cannot be ruled out as the king's residence, the king most likely resided in private buildings elsewhere in the complex (Bauer 2018:297). A historical interpretation of the building complex at Avaldsnes must take as its point of departure the interpretation of St Óláfr's Church as a royal collegiate church and Avaldsnes as a royal stronghold or geographic point of support. Both have their origins in the Norwegian kingdom's character and function in the 14th century.

8.1 The Norwegian kingdom in the 14th century

Two historical myths concerning Avaldsnes in the 14th century have to be dispensed with from start: that King Hákon V was the last national Norwegian king in the Middle Ages, and that Hákon V made Oslo the capital of Norway.¹ Hákon V's death in 1319 has traditionally been viewed as the beginning of Norway's long period of unions with neighbouring countries. King Hákon's three-year-old grandson, Magnús VII Eiríksson, inherited the Norwegian throne the same year he was elected king of Sweden. As a result, the two countries were joined in personal union from 1319. In the traditional view, the country lost its full independence in 1319, and did not regain it until 1905; King Magnús VII is considered a foreign king; the royal court and household, the core of the central government in the 14th-century Europe, were moved out of Norway. By contrast, the view among Norwegian intellectuals from the 16th century until the late 19th century was that the Norwegian domestic kingdom existed until Hákon VI's death in 1380 (To norske historisk-topografiske skrifter fra 1500-tallet:21; Kraggerud 1991:88–9; Storm 1881:165–6; Aschehoug 1866:174; Aubert 1897:2). The 20th-century interpretation of Norwegian

¹ This section relies heavily on Opsahl (2014); see also Opsahl (2002, 2003a); Moseng et al. (2007: 140–232, 321–33).



Fig. 8.2: Upper picture: Avaldsnes today with St Óláfr Church. Lower picture: reconstruction of how the royal complex at Avaldsnes might have looked around AD 1300. Photo: KIB Media. Reconstruction: R. Børsheim/Arkikon.

dependency following the royal succession in 1319 was probably inspired by the more recently experienced Swedish-Norwegian personal union between 1814 and 1905, in which only the king and the foreign policy were shared. That Norway regained its full independence by the re-establishment of a domestic kingdom in 1905 influenced the interpretation of Magnús VII Eriksón's reign (e.g. Ibsen 1898; Koht

1956; Castberg 1964:80; see also Bjørge 1995:94–5; Rian 2000; Opsahl 2002). In that light, upon his arrival in Norway in November 1905, the newly elected King Haakon VII (1905–57) was welcomed by Prime Minister Christian Michelsen with the words: “For nearly six hundred years the Norwegians have not had their own king ... today it is otherwise”² (Heiberg 1906:1014–19).

Despite the deep resonance of these words, this is nevertheless a problematic, not to say anachronistic interpretation. While there is no doubt that Norway drew closer politically to Sweden in 1319, the Norwegian–Swedish personal union throughout the 14th-century did not permanently deepen the political union between the two kingdoms (Fig. 8.3). On the contrary, from the mid-14th century Norway again had a king of its own, King Hákon VI Magnússon (1355–80), the youngest son of King Magnús VII Eiríksson. Admittedly, King Hákon became the Swedish king in 1362, but was de-throned two years later. Thereafter he controlled some western regions of Sweden; several Swedish aristocrats remained loyal to him, and for the rest of his reign he was preoccupied with the goal of regaining the Swedish throne. Nevertheless, King Hákon’s main base was his Norwegian kingdom, and his reign must be regarded as a continuation of the Norwegian domestic kingdom. Even his father’s reign in Norway had more in common with the domestic kingdom than the later union monarchy from 1397, when the three Scandinavian kingdoms were united in the so-called Union of Kalmar. King Magnús was in his minority until 1331/32, and Sweden and Norway had separate regencies from 1322/23. It is true that when Magnús came of age, he resided more often in Sweden than in Norway; nevertheless, he is documented with a degree of certainty as visiting Norway during the majority of the period 1330–42. The order of succession was settled both in Norway and in Sweden in 1343/44. King Magnús’ youngest son Hákon was acclaimed as Norwegian king, while his older brother, Eriík, was designated to become king of Sweden upon his father’s death.

Until Hákon (born 1340) came of age in 1355, King Magnús was to rule Norway, which he is documented as visiting every year between 1344 and 1350. In 1350, King Magnús designated the knight Orm Øysteinsson as steward (“drottsete”) in Norway. When Hákon VI came of age in 1355, King Magnús continued to rule some regions in Norway in addition to his Swedish realm. After 1355, Magnús’ Norwegian realm consisted of the landscapes on both sides of the Oslofjord, the so-called Viken, probably Jemtland (today Swedish Jämtland) and Hålogaland in the north, and the tributary countries in the west, among them Iceland. Orm Øysteinsson continued as steward in Magnús’ part of the Norwegian realm; for reasons unknown, Orm was executed in 1358 or 1360, whereupon King Magnús’ wife, Queen Blanche (d. 1363), resided in Norway as his representative. Still, King Magnús is documented as visiting Norway half of the years between 1350 and 1363. When King Magnús was released after six

² “I snart 600 år har det norske folk aldri havt sin egen konge ... I dag er det annerledes”.



Fig. 8.3: Scandinavia in the 14th century. (After Moseng et.al. 2007 p.319). Illustration: I. T. Bøckman, MCH.

years of captivity in Sweden in 1371, he returned to Norway, where he took part in the reign of Norway together with his son, King Håkon VI, travelling around the country quite frequently until his death in 1374, which will be discussed in greater detail below.

Overall, these details cast the period between King Magnús VII's ascendance to the Norwegian throne in 1319 and King Håkon VI's death in 1380, and even the late

period between 1380 and 1397, in a different light regarding the question of domestic rule in Norway: it clearly represents a continuation of the domestic kingdom in Norway rather than the beginning of united monarchy under which Norway held an inferior position. This conclusion is bolstered when the analysis includes other representatives for the royal dynasty besides the king and stewards. After the establishment of the Union of Kalmar in 1397, union monarchs besides Queen Margaret (d. 1412) seldom visited Norway. The shift, it must be said, took place in 1397, not 1319 – an accurate grasp of the timeline is crucial when looking at Avaldsnes' position in the 14th century.

Likewise, for the question of Norwegian kings' mobility in the 14th century: even as certain towns or cities became the most prominent places of residence for European monarchs throughout the Middle Ages, every European monarch remained mobile. In Norway as in the rest of Europe, this mobility was necessary for several reasons: control of representatives and the population throughout the country; building legitimization by meeting the subjects; and the logistics of supplying food for the court, as most food had to be consumed where it was produced. A pattern of travel developed for Norwegian kings during the 13th and 14th centuries between a few central towns and castles (Fig. 8.4). Bergen was the most prominent royal residence in the last half of the 13th century and continued to be an important residence and administrative centre throughout the 14th century, though less dominant as a royal residence.

As mentioned above, a widespread misunderstanding holds that King Hákon V made Oslo the capital of Norway, or that the town was his main residence (e.g. Bauer 2018:297). The concept of a "capital" should in any case be avoided for the Middle Ages. It produces too much modern connotations of stability, dominance and function which no town or city held in Europe in the Middle Ages. Furthermore, Oslo was not Hákon V's main residence according to the preserved sources. While Hákon did characterise Oslo as his dukedom's most prominent town when he was a duke (1284–99), he is nevertheless documented as visiting Bergen as often as Oslo while he was a duke (DN V no. 15). Tønsberg with the castle Tunsberghus was also an important residence for him (Fig. 8.5; Helle 1972:605–14). Hákon's dukedom consisted of Oslo and environs ("Osloherad"), the interior of south-eastern Norway ("Opplanda"), Ryfylke in the south-west, a region bordering Haugalandet where Avaldsnes is situated, the Faroe Islands, Shetland ("Hjaltland"), and probably Agder (Blom 1972:39–40; Helle 1974:249). As king, Hákon V in 1314 decided that the dean at St Mary's Church in Oslo would henceforth hold the post of royal chancellor (DN I no. 143). Doubtless, this decision strengthened Oslo as a royal residence, yet Hákon did not intend to settle himself permanently in Oslo or establish a central administration there. On the contrary, the decree from 1314 presupposes the king to be mobile, and therefore called for a vice-chancellor to be appointed to accompany the king on his travels because the dean's responsibilities as dean required him to remain at St Mary's Church. The 1314 decree will be discussed further below; at this point, it is noteworthy that Hákon V is documented as residing in Bergen approximately twice



Fig. 8.4: Known royal castles or fortresses in medieval Norway and royal castles built in Norwegian-controlled western Sweden during the second half of the 14th century. Illustration: I. T. Bøckman, MCH.

as often than he is in Oslo. A significantly greater number of royal letters from his reign are issued in Bergen (Bagge 1976:141; Nedkvitne and Norseng 1991:152). Furthermore, he is documented as residing in Tønsberg or Tunsberghus almost as often as in Oslo.³

³ I have set up the main itineraries mentioned in this article. My numbers for Hákon V's letters differ slightly from Bagge's, but the conclusion remains the same.



Fig. 8.5: Model of the royal castle Tunsberghus in the 14th century. The castle was one of the most prominent royal residences in the 13th and 14th centuries. Photo: The Armed Forces Museum.

It is clear that while King Hákon V strengthened Oslo's position, he did not replace Bergen with Oslo as the most prominent royal residence. Throughout the 14th century the royal travel pattern in Norway moved between Bergen, Tønsberg, Oslo, and Båhus near Konghelle close to the Swedish border in south-eastern Norway (now in Sweden). According to the preserved sources, the three towns and the castle Båhus seem to have become almost equal in frequency and importance as royal residences. The kings visited Nidaros or Trondheim much less as that town became increasingly the archbishop's residence. The state-building process and consolidation of the kingdom in Norway from the second half of 13th century also included material manifestations of castles and other prominent buildings. The masonry building at Avaldsnes was probably a result of this process.

8.2 The royal travels and royal building complexes in Norway in the 13th and 14th centuries

King Sverrir (1177–1202) built the first masonry castles in Norway in the late 12th century, close to Nidaros and Bergen.⁴ Both were named “Sverresborg”; the castle in Nidaros alternatively was called “Sion” (Fig. 8.6). Sverrir also fortified Nidaros

⁴ This section is mainly based on an unpublished manuscript from a work in progress (Opsahl in prep.). Further references for the details are found there.



Fig. 8.6: Reconstruction of Sverresborg (Sion), near Nidaros (Trondheim), first stone-built castle in Norway by King Sverrir (1177–1202) in late 12th Century. Drawing: unknown. Owner: Directorate for Cultural Heritage.

with a wooden palisade, and wooden and masonry citadels (Ekroll 2007:91–6). Of special relevance to the building complex at Avaldsnes are the citadel and probably a church built by Sverrir in the newly conquered territory of Jemtland (in today’s Sweden), very close to each other, almost wall to wall, in Sunne. The citadel’s entrance was at ground level, indicating that its purpose was not primarily military; taxes and other goods were probably stored in the citadel and its main function was most likely to serve as a symbol of the Norwegian royal power in Jemtland. The fact that the archbishop of Uppsala (Jemtland was part of the Swedish not the Norwegian archdiocese) probably built a similar citadel close to another church in Brunflo, not far from Sunne, strengthens the hypothesis of the citadels as symbols for the two social powers or “state power” in the Middle Ages.

Sverrir’s grandson King Hákon IV Hákonsson repaired and rebuilt the castles respectively in Nidaros and Bergen. His reign witnessed a major increase in royal building activities. New structures include Valdisholm, a small regional castle in Borgarsysla in Southeast Norway, not far from the Swedish border; Mjøskastellet, a citadel at Steinsholmen in the lake Mjøsa; Dyngehus, a small regional castle or fortress in Båhuslen (today’s Swedish Bohuslän); Ragnhildsholmen, a castle close the Swedish border, also in Båhuslen; “Åkeberg”, probably a citadel or small fortress in Oslo. He rebuilt the rampart at Agdenes at the expense of Trøndelag; rebuilt or initiated renovation of the royal palaces both in Oslo and Bergen into true castles and began to convert the natural fortification, “Berget”, near Tønsberg, into a castle,

Tunsberghus. His son and successor, King Magnús VI the Lawmender, continued to upgrade the royal palace in Bergen, which later became Bergenhus, as well as Tunsberghus. Presumably this activity was continued under King Eiríkr II Magnússon (1280–99); a major new step in the royal building activity came during King Hákon V's reign. The most prominent building project was the castle Akershus, close to Oslo. Akershus' building history is complicated, with many uncertain features and questions without clear answers. Nevertheless, it is undisputed that Hákon V did not finish the castle, which rather was continuously rebuilt and enlarged throughout the 14th century and later in the Middle Ages. It is possible that Hákon VI undertook further enlargement of Akershus in spite of the crisis in the wake of the plague epidemics. Such an ongoing building process is also the case for Båhus, a castle of strategic importance close to the Swedish border in south-eastern Norway, not far from the aforementioned Ragnhildsholmen. The first Båhus castle was built of timber, and probably rebuilt as a masonry castle late in Hákon V's reign and into the 1320s. Hákon V also built a small castle or fortress in Finnmark in the northeast, Vardøhus, as a symbol of the Norwegian king's power in the north. Of course, castles and fortresses also were a very concrete physical expression of military strength.

Magnús VII Eiríksson seems to have initiated renovations on both Vardøhus and Tunsberghus. The latter was updated with new towers around 1350. Hákon VI, in addition to possibly completing Akershus, also initiated construction of several castles or fortresses in the western parts of Sweden he controlled after being deposed as Swedish king in 1364 (Fig. 8.7). These fortresses served as strongholds in Hákon's war with the



Fig. 8.7: King Hákon VI Magnússon's (1355–80) Royal Coat-of-Arms in the book *Gelre Armorial*, compiled before 1396. This is a Union Arms of Hákon as King of Norway and Sweden. Hákon VI was elected King of Sweden in 1362 but deposed two years later. The King nevertheless continued to style himself as King of Norway and Sweden and controlled the western part of Sweden for the rest of his reign. *Wapenboek Gelre*, folio 66v.

Mecklenburg dynasty in Sweden. The Norwegian kings' building "program" in the 13th and 14th centuries resulted in a network of royal palaces, castles, and fortresses throughout the kingdom. Some of the castles were residences during certain periods for the king and his court, others had a mainly or exclusively military purpose. Royal estates or farms were also part of this network. The buildings were designed to accommodate the mobile king and his household in addition to royal servants and representatives.

As mentioned, Avaldsnes was without a doubt part of this geographic network of royal lodgings (Sand-Eriksen and Nordlie this vol. Ch. 6). It was located along the important sea route between Bergen and Oslo (Fig. 8.8). In addition to the royal building complex, there were lodging houses for other travellers at Karmsundet. The king, the church, and private persons alike built lodging houses for travellers around the country. The knight and royal councillor, Ogmund Finsson, who was steward in the 1360s, built the lodging house at Karmsundet, according to Hákon VI (DN XIX no. 583; RN VII no. 46; Steen 1942:402–3; Opsahl 2003b; Blom 1992:677–80). However, except for those located in mountain passes and the open wilderness, most of these lodging



Fig. 8.8: The sailing route along south-western Norway. Illustration: I. T. Bøckman, MCH.

houses were built to house poor travellers, of the sort that common people, priests, cloisters, and king's farms preferred were housed elsewhere (Steen 1942:402–3; NgL Iir 1 no. 347 tillegg; RN VIII no. 46). Although sailing was the primary means of travelling between Bergen and south-eastern Norway in the Middle Ages, kings did travel by land occasionally. Overall, travelling by land seems to have been as common as travelling by sea in Norway in the Middle Ages (Steen 1942:272–97; Ekroll 2006:155–69). The distribution of medieval coin finds in Norway lends support to the importance of travelling by land in medieval Norway (Gullbekk and Sættem 2018). This was the case especially during the winter season. For instance, Magnús VI rode from Bergen to Borg (now Sarpsborg) in March 1273 (*Árna Saga Biskups*:28). Hákon VI was in Valdres, in the interior of south-eastern Norway, in December 1368, probably en route to celebrate Christmas in Bergen (DN X no. 70). Even in the sailing season, between May and September, some chose to travel by land instead of sailing. Christian I (1450–81) sailed to Bergen after his coronation in Nidaros in August 1450 but decided to ride from there on his way southward in September (Opsahl and Sogner 2003:198). His son and successor as Danish–Norwegian king, Hans (1483–1513), was crowned as King of Denmark in Copenhagen, on 18 May 1483 (NgL Iir 3 no. 7; Heise 1899–1905:18). Thereafter the king sailed with three ships to Oslo. From there he rode to Nidaros where he was crowned King of Norway on 20 July. Hans then returned by land; his route southward can be traced by following the royal decrees he issued during his travel. He left Nidaros on 25 or 26 July; was at Støren, 50 km south of Trondheim, on 26 July; was at the king's farm Tofte at Dovre, c. 180 km south from Støren, on 31 July; at the king's farm Steig, Hundorp, c.100 km from Tofte, the next day; and at Hamar, c. 130 km further south, on 6 August. Hans was at Tunsberghus in Tønsberg on 18 August, c. 230 km from Hamar, but the king and his retinue could have sailed from Oslo to Tønsberg. At the very least, he must have sailed from Tønsberg, as he had reached Konghelle (close to today's Kungälv in Sweden) already by 8 September (NgL Iir 3 nos. 8–13, 15, 16, and 20).

Hans' route in the 1483 illustrates how a king could travel in Norway in the 14th century as well. By the same token, Magnús VII's fate illustrates the dangers of travelling along the Norwegian coast outside of the sailing season. The king set sail from Bergen, probably to celebrate Christmas with his son, Hákon VI, in Tønsberg. King Mágnus was most likely heading for Avaldsnes when his ship was wrecked just to the north in Bømlafjorden, where he drowned on 1 December 1374. Previously Mágnus had visited Avaldsnes in June 1350 on his way southward after a national assembly in Bergen, which he had most likely summoned to confirm the aforementioned decisions for the succession in Norway and Sweden in 1343/44 in the aftermath of the Black Death (DN II no. 307). The meeting was attended by his wife, Queen Blanche, both his sons, Eriik and Hákon, and probably several Norwegian and Swedish magnates, including Orm Øysteinsson, many of whom, or at least his family, must have travelled with

him from Bergen (Storm 1977:276–7, 404–5). In any case, it is safe to assume that he visited Avaldsnes several times during his relatively long reign. The royal decree issued in his name from Avaldsnes in 1355, however, was issued on his behalf by his steward in Norway, Orm Øysteinsson (NgL 3 no. 87).⁵

Eiríkr II Magnússon issued the oldest preserved royal letter written at Avaldsnes in 1297 (DI II no. 167; Mundal 2018:44; Bauer 2018:297 gives the wrong reference). His brother, Hákon V, is documented as visiting Avaldsnes several times, in April 1308, May 1309, June and October 1313, and April 1314 (DN II no. 90, III nos. 71, 81, IV no. 105; NgL 3 nos. 37, 39; Helle 1999:98–9; Bauer 2018:297; Mundal 2018:44). Based on the king's itinerary he might also have visited Avaldsnes/Karmsundet in 1301, 1302, 1304, 1305, 1306, 1310, 1312, 1315, and 1317. Prominent men and royal counsellors were together with the king at Avaldsnes in April 1314: Havtore Jonsson, knight and the king's son-in-law; Snare Aslaksson, baron; Sigurd Ormsson, knight and former lawman ("lagmann") in Ryfylke and Agder; and Øyvind Guttormsson, lawman in Stavanger (DN IV no. 107; Helle 1999:99). All of these men, except for Havtore Jonsson, were connected to the south-western region of Norway (Helle 1972:587, 596–7, and 603). All four illustrate the makeup of the royal retinue in the 14th century. Some counsellors served in the king's retinue permanently for a period and followed him on his travels; others met with the king during his visits to their region. Bjarne Audunsson, knight, keeper of the royal seal, and royal counsellor, was together with the king at Avaldsnes on both occasions in 1313 (Helle 1999:98–9). The royal decrees Hákon issued at Avaldsnes illustrate how a 14th-century European king performed his "office work". There were no clear "office hours"; rather, the mobile king usually spent some time doing "paper work" between hunting or other amusements such as gatherings with his men, eating, drinking, and travelling. As the preserved royal decrees from Avaldsnes during Hákon V's reign illustrate, king could equally handle matters local to where he happened to be at the moment, or questions from other regions or on a national level.

Hákon V travelled southward from the winter residence in Bergen in 1308, 1309, and 1314. In 1313, he might have sailed along the coast from Nidaros; at the least, the king was in Nidaros from March to May that year (RN III no. 839). Both in 1309 and 1313 Hákon led his fleet ("leidang") to Denmark in the summer (Munch 1859:516–20, 560; Rosén 1939:214). These marine expeditions were part of his strategy during the prolonged inter-Scandinavian conflicts around 1300, which involved the Norwegian king, the Danish and Swedish kings, Swedish dukes, and Scandinavian aristocrats. These conflicts resulted in Magnús VII Eriksso's Norwegian-Swedish realm (Fig. 8.9), and in the long perspective, the Union of Kalmar in 1397 (Moseng et. al. 2007:160–76, 321–8).

⁵ The king himself was probably in Sweden at that time. Both Helle (1999:99), and Bauer (2018:297), erroneously claim that Magnús VII was at Avaldsnes in 1355.



Fig. 8.9: King Magnús VII and II Eriksson's realms, Norway (1319–55/74), Sweden (1319–64), and Scania (1332–60). (After Harrison 2009:434) Illustration: I. T. Bøckman, MCH.

Håkon VI issued the last known royal charter from the Avaldsnes region in 1374, perhaps on his way from Bergen (DN XV no. 29; RN VII no. 416). He is documented as visiting Bergen relatively often in the 1370s, thus it can be assumed that he stayed at Avaldsnes several times. Based on the king's itinerary, besides 1374, he might have visited Avaldsnes/Karmsundet in 1361, 1362, 1372, 1373, 1375, 1376, and 1378. As did his great-grandfather, Håkon VI made extensive use of the royal chapel organisation, to which we will now return.

8.3 The use of the royal chapel organisation in the 14th century

How then did Hákon V and his successors to the Norwegian throne in the 14th century use the royal chapel organisation? As mentioned, the king's central motive for establishing the organisation was to secure the recruitment of competent civil servants. Although the civil administration around the king remained small in the Middle Ages, the need for competent clerics followed the state-building process as literacy grew in importance (e.g. Lunden 1976:426–9). The canons at the royal chapels had a twofold duty: religious tasks at the churches and administrative tasks for the king. How this organisation functioned in practise remains not well understood. Nevertheless, religious tasks were often the responsibility of priest-vicars appointed to perform the service at altars (Regarding different ranks of priest-vicars: Helle 1999:79). Presumably the king recruited his secretaries (“skrivere”) among the royal clergy. Unfortunately, it is not possible to confirm such an assumption based on the source material. Hákon V's chancery seemed to include both clerical and lay servants. Several of the known royal secretaries later entered an administrative career, especially in the local administration – which does not preclude that some of the laymen could have received some clerical education and might have been consecrated to lower clerical ranks.

It is nevertheless possible that the majority of the royal secretaries were royal clerks. There are indications that four of Hákon V's secretaries came from the royal clergy, for one of whom it is particularly likely. The secretaries, mentioned in royal documents in the first half of the 14th century, titled “clerk” (“klerk”) or “notary” (“notar”), did not stay permanently at certain royal chapels. Instead, they travelled along with the king and wrote royal letters at different places, among them Avaldsnes. They might however have resided at a royal chapel when not accompanying the king. If some were priests at a royal chapel, they could engage choir vicars while they were away with the king. The royal letters drawn in one of the towns with royal chapels, possibly as they were elsewhere in medieval Europe, were written and archived in the choir or sacristy in the actual royal chapel. St Ólafr's Church at Avaldsnes might have had the same function for the royal decrees written there (Bagge 1976:134–43; Helle 1999:83–4).

Between 1280 and c. 1350, the name of the person had written a royal letter in Norwegian was commonly written at the end of the letter. Twenty-one persons are named in 87 documents from Hákon V's reign (Bagge 1976:135). Balte wrote the aforementioned royal decree at Avaldsnes in April 1308. He might later have served as Hákon's chaplain and perhaps canon in Nidaros and Bergen (Bagge 1976:137; see also Agerholt 1933:410; Hagland 1986:241; Vågslid 1989:87). When the king visited Avaldsnes in 1309, Bård Petersson wrote the actual royal letter. He seems to have served as a permanent royal secretary for many years. He was probably a layman but might have held a lower clerical rank. Bård Petersson seems to have stayed in

the Stavanger area for longer periods, where he had property (Bagge 1976:137; Agerholt 1933:405–11; Hagland 1986:238–9; Vågslid 1989:44–50; see also Hagland 1990). Torgeir Tovesson and Tord Trondsson wrote the royal decrees issued at Avaldsnes in 1313 in respectively June and October. Torgeir seems to have been quite wealthy and a loyal and effective royal servant (Bagge 1976:138–9; Agerholt 1933:408–17; Hagland 1986:241–2; Vågslid 1989:72–5). We have less information about Tord Trondsson (Hagland 1986:206, 241; Agerholt 1933:412–14; see also Blom 1974). Helge Ivarsson was the last royal secretary to be mentioned by name as one who had written a royal letter. The last letter was issued in 1345 (NgL 3 pp. 164–5). It is unclear why this tradition ended. Nevertheless, even if the name of the secretary who wrote King Mágnus' decree from Karmsund in June 1350 is unknown, we know that this secretary had followed the king from Bergen, as the handwriting is identified as the same as that on the decree King Mágnus issued in Bergen on 2 June (Vågslid 1989:325–6). Unfortunately, Hákon VI's letter issued at Karmsund in July 1374 is only preserved in a copy from 16th century, which prevents identification of the writer.

Much more is known about the use of clergy in royal service in general in the 14th century. Both royal and other clergy held prominent positions in the royal service. The clearest example is the position of royal chancellor: two chancellors were canons at the Apostle Church in Bergen. In 1314 Hákon V decided that henceforth the dean at St Mary's Church in Oslo should be chancellor (Bagge 1976:144; Helle 1974:215, 2005; Bandlien 2015). Hákon V's decision to permanently combine the post of chancellor with the post of dean at St Mary's differed from practice elsewhere in Europe at the same time. European medieval kings practiced vacancy or frequent replacements of chancellors to prevent one chancellor from becoming too powerful. There is no direct indication as to why Hákon decided as he did; one major motive might have been to avoid a potential regency dominated by leading aristocrats for his successor, as he and his brother had experienced when they were in their minority (Bagge 1976:150). In any case, his successors, Mágnus VII and Hákon VI, practised the more common European "principle" for rulers when it came to the post of chancellor. Pål Bårdsson became dean at St Mary's and royal chancellor in 1327. He resigned as both when he became archbishop in 1333/34 (Blom 1992:198–204; Helle 2003). When he came of age, Mágnus allowed the post of chancellor to stay vacant until 1344. In the meantime, the king at times entrusted the seal to different men, laymen and clergy alike, but most often retained the seal himself. Identities are known for several of the secretaries who followed him on his travels in Norway and in Sweden.

Mágnus' decision to promote his clerk and keeper of the royal seal, Arne Aslaksson, to chancellor and dean at St Mary's in 1344, was probably a result of the tensions between king and aristocrats in Norway in the 1330s. The two documented aristocratic revolts were likely due to dissatisfaction with royal policy. The homage of Hákon VI as Norwegian King already in 1343/44 was probably a compromise. Most likely Mágnus' plan was to let his two sons succeed him, respectively in Norway and Sweden. The Norwegian elites on the other side sought to institutionalise immediately

a domestic kingdom with Hákon, who grew up in Norway (Moseng et al. 2007:173–6). The restoration of the combination chancellor-dean in 1344 was probably another result of the same comprise. Both the installation of Hákon VI as Norwegian King and the promotion of Arne Aslaksson as chancellor strengthened the domestic central government in Norway (Blom 1992:211–39).

Peter Eiriksson succeeded Arne Aslaksson as dean at St Mary's Church in 1351. Peter was a royal secretary and kept the royal seal, first in Mágnus', then in Hákon's service. Hákon promoted Peter Eiriksson as chancellor in 1358. He nevertheless continued to write some of the royal letters. Peter followed the mobile Hákon VI on several occasions but resigned as chancellor already in 1363. Nonetheless, Peter remained a prominent royal counsellor for the rest of his life (Opsahl 2003c; Vågslid 1989:331–7; Blom 1992:737–40). Vinald Henriksson managed Hákon VI's royal seal in the mid-1360s. The Swedish-born Vinald, had been priest in Båhuslen before he became Hákon's clerk. Later Vinald became dean at The Apostles' Church in Bergen and thereby leader of the royal chapels, and subsequently became archbishop of Nidaros in 1387 (Blom 1992:740; Dybdahl 2005). Vinald's successor as keeper of the royal seal was Henrik Henriksson, another Swedish-born clerk. Henrik later succeeded Peter Eiriksson as dean of St Mary's around 1370. Henrik Henriksson may have written several royal letters and followed Hákon VI on his travels during the 1370s. Henrik's itinerary does not contradict the possibility that he accompanied Hákon if the king visited Avaldsnes in 1375.

Despite their policy concerning the chancellor post, overall Mágnus VII and Hákon VI utilised the royal clergy intensively, continuing Hákon V's policy of protecting and strengthening the organisation, especially St Mary's (Blom 1967: 418–50, 1992; Moseng et al. 2007:224 and 329). St Ólaf's Church and the clergy at Avaldsnes must have benefitted from this even though the details remain obscure. How then was the economic and administrative position beyond the royal chapel at Avaldsnes during the 14th century?

8.4 Avaldsnes as a juridical and economic centre in the 14th century

Hákon V reorganised the legal system in Norway during his reign as part of his aforementioned policy of strengthening his power as the establishing of the royal chapels were. Among Hákon's measures was to establish new *lagting* (regional courts), including Avaldsnes as *lagting* for Ryfylke and Agder. Other new *lagting* were Steig for Hålogaland (northern Norway), Sproteid for Jemtland (today Jämtland in Sweden), Skien for Telemark and Numedal, and Båhus for Båhuslen (today Bohuslän in Sweden). The fact that the new *lagting* for Ryfylke and Agder was located at Avaldsnes and not in Stavanger, the only town in the region,

indicates Avaldsnes' importance as a royal centre in the region (Helle 1974:182, 1999:100–1). Knut Helle suggests Hákon's "special interest" for Avaldsnes was behind the decision (Helle 1999:103). The *lagmannen* (presiding judge) travelled about his *lagsokn* (jurisdiction area) to decide cases or arrange more regular *stevner* (judgment proceedings). He could judge or decide alone or together with the *lagrette*, the popular element in the judicial system consisting of a permanent group of men belonging to the leading members of local society. Eventually the *lagrette* came to consist of *lagrettemenn* in multiples of six. The *lagtinget* was held yearly. Criminal cases and cases concerning money and manors could be sentenced or decided here (Helle 1999:101; Bagge 2010:200–1). Already in 1308, Andres "at Avaldsnes" delivered a sentence together with the knight Sigurd Ormsson, *lagmann* in Ryfylke and Agder (DN IV no. 74). Andres was most likely a *lagrettemann*. We have only one preserved source that reveals what happened at *lagtinget* at Avaldsnes. The document, issued on 24 June 1322, is a report to Mágnus VII and his council (DN I no. 168). The 11 issuers, four priests and seven laymen, reported how the audience at the *lagting* had interrupted and overruled a court proceeding. Jon Torsteinsson, *lagmann* in Ryfylke between 1322 and 1324, might be the same person who witnessed a sale in Stavanger in 1343 (DN IV nos. 155–6, V nos. 69, 162).

Besides the *lagmann*, the *systemann* (the royal regional civil servant, his representative) met at *lagtinget*. Sivian met as a representative for *systemann* Gaute, who was probably the knight Gaute Ivarsson to Talgje (Helle 1999:101). Sivian might have been a *lagrettemann*, too. At least the six other laymen behind the report from 1322 were probably *lagrettemenn*. Clergymen and laymen from both Rogaland and Agder met at *lagtinget* at Avaldsnes in 1322. Two of the clergymen, Hall and Jon, were priests at Avaldsnes. The two other priests came from Agder. One of the laymen we know came from Agder, another from Rogaland. A third layman, Jon knoll, is involved in a case where two royal counsellors had pronounced a sentence in Bergen in 1307 (DN I no. 110). Jon might also be the man who represented Duke Hákon's *systemann* in Stavanger in 1297 or 1298 (DN II no. 39). A large number of people seem to have attended the *lagting* at Avaldsnes in the summer of 1322; perhaps a market was arranged alongside the proceedings (Helle 1999:103). Eventually, Stavanger, with its more centralised location, became the more favourable location for the *lagting*. By 1351 at the latest the *lagting* had been moved to Stavanger and the *lagmann* had taken permanent residence in the town, although he continued to arrange *stevner* in the countryside. This fits a general trend in the 14th century by which legal processes were centralised in towns and other centres (Helle 1999:103).

The aforementioned Andres "at Avaldsnes" was probably an administrator for the royal farm there (Helle 1999:88). Most likely, the royal farm and the royal chapel made up a joint economic enterprise under leadership of administrators such as Andres. The royal clergy at Avaldsnes was maintained through the manor donated by the kings, the parish income from St Ólaf's Church, and offerings and gifts from travellers visiting the church. The clergymen probably benefited from the management of the royal farm.

The management included most likely the aforementioned lodging house for travellers. Most important perhaps was the possible joint management of the ship *Avaldsnesbussen* by the royal farm and chapel. The joint management did not themselves undertake to sail the ship but leased it to experienced shipmasters. Such investment in ships was rather common for clerical institutions, prominent aristocrats, and even kings in the High Middle Ages (Helle 1999:99–100; Lunden 1976:351–9). *Avaldsnesbussen* is documented as visiting King's Lynn in East Anglia three times during 1303–5. The shipmasters were men from Bergen. They imported boards, barks, goatskin, fish oil, and stockfish into England and brought malt, English cloth, honey, wheat, and linen back to Norway (DN XIX nos. 422, 436). The shipmasters' homeplace and goods such as fish oil and stockfish indicate that *Avaldsnesbussen* sailed to England from Bergen. This seaway seems to have been the ordinary route for all ships from Rogaland. Royal administrators and clergy at Avaldsnes could nevertheless export their own commodities on *Avaldsnesbussen*. Timber and goatskin were ordinary land-rent commodities. English import commodities such as wheat, malt, cloth, and honey were attractive in Norway. Wheat was needed for communion bread, while honey was the common sweetener in the Middle Ages. The merchant Sigleiv Susse, originally from Gotland who eventually attained citizen in Lynn, might have been a more permanent agent for the royal farm and chapel at Avaldsnes. At Hákon V's order and expense, Sigleiv acquired a new church bell from England for St Ólaf's Church (DN IV no. 128; Helle 1999:100).

Norwegians more or less disappeared from the shipping trade between Norway and England after 1310. The German Hanseatic League and to some extent other foreigners took over this trade. Nevertheless, Norwegians still had a monopoly on the shipping trade with northern Norway and the Norwegian *skattland* (crown dependencies). *Avaldsnesbussen* continued to sail between Norway and Iceland throughout the first half of the 14th century until it sank near Iceland in 1343 (Helle 1999:100; Storm 1977:402). The Hanseatic League was in any event to prove fatal for Avaldsnes in many other ways.

8.5 The Hanseatic League and Avaldsnes

Merchants from different northern German towns collaborated to promote their common interests in overseas trade in the 13th century. This organised cooperation to gain and defend privileges in overseas towns was called *Hanse* (Low German) or *Hansa* (High German) (the origin of the word is unclear). Eventually, seeking to extend political effectiveness and influence, the towns organised themselves as the Hanseatic League or simply *Hanse* around the mid-14th century. The overseas trade was primarily with the Baltic and Scandinavia, and eventually England. Lübeck was the principal and dominant town both in the league and in the trade with

Norway and the rest of Scandinavia. Other major Hanseatic towns involved in the trade with Scandinavia were Wismar, Rostock, Stralsund, Greifswald, and Hamburg. All of the towns, including Lübeck, were part of the Wendish cultural region. One of the Hanseatic League's assets was the ability to import grain, a much-needed commodity in northern Norway. During first half of the 14th century, Hanseatic merchants managed to gain control of the trade not only between their own region and Norway but also over trade between Norway and England. This was probably due to the Germans' superiority in organisation, capital, and access to markets for Norwegian stockfish. Nevertheless, the Hanseatic League founded a *Kontor* (office) in Bergen around 1360. Such a *Kontor* functioned as a trading post and were also established in London, Bruges, and Novgorod (Figs. 8.10 and 8.11).

The Hanseatic League's heyday was second half of the 14th century. The numbers of active members of the league differed from time to time. Sending representatives to the so-called *Hansetag* activated a town's membership. The *Hansetag*, usually held in Lübeck, was a central meeting where decisions for the league were made. The league aimed at protecting their dominant position in the overseas trade with Scandinavia through privileges; which could be renewed in return for lending kings money and providing military support by financing mercenary troops. Other times they supported revolts and opposition against kings considered as their enemies. In the long perspective, it suited the league's interest to promote balance of power among Scandinavia kings. The Scandinavian kings on their part attempted to control and maintain the Hanseatic trade and activity within their privileges. Norwegian kings continued to forbid foreign merchants from taking part in the domestic trade in Norway including sailing north of Bergen or to the Norwegian crown dependencies. The German merchants in Bergen were not allowed to stay over the winter and were obliged to pay taxes and obey Norwegian law. The situation resulted in tensions and sometimes open confrontations with the Germans (e.g. Opsahl and Sogner 2003:70–8; Helle 1982).

The fairway from the south to Bergen passed through Karmsundet. There are indications that the Hanseatic merchants established a sort of intermediate port there, between northern Germany and Bergen, called Notow (Elvestad and Opedal 2001). A merchant from Lübeck left two barrels with tar to keep in repair probably for buildings at Notow in 1425 (RN X no. 551). Englishmen were accused of stealing commodities from a ship from Lübeck outside Karmsundet in 1405. The English had driven the ship landward and taken it to Karmsundet, possibly to Notow (DN XIX no. 194). Although the precise location of Notow in Karmsundet remains unknown, place names and archaeological findings indicate that Notow might be today's Bukkøya just outside the church on Avaldsnes. Today the names Nora Nottå and Søra Nottå occur on Bukkøya; Notow could be a German misspelling of Nautøy, possibly an older name on the island. Søre Nottå might also have been the name of a bay on Stutøy, further south (Helle 1999:62). If Nora Nottå was north on Bukkøy and Søre Nottå lay south on Stutøy, together they encompass a relatively large



Fig. 8.10: Reconstruction of an early 14th-century cog (*Kamper Kogge*), the typical vessel of the Hanseatic League. Photo courtesy of Stichting Kamper Kogge.

harbour area, made up of one inner and one outer harbour. Archaeological evidence indicates that the harbour was in use between c. 1250 and 1550, 14th and 15th centuries being the main periods (Elvestad and Opedal 2001:75). Avaldsnes might have been a royal free port, established and consolidated from mid-13th and into the 14th century. Such a royal free port could have had the function of a “port of trade”; that is, an area where the political authorities arranged and guaranteed exchange of commodities. If so, Notow would have served as exactly the kind of port the German merchants needed on their route between the continent and Bergen (Elvestad and Opedal 2001:78–9; see also Lunden 1972:86–9). A 16th-century



Fig. 8.11: The most important Hanseatic sea-trade routes around 1350. Trade routes branched out from the principal axis between Novgorod in the east and London in the west. One of the oldest branches went to Bergen. Later, German traders also sailed to Oslo and Tønsberg. Illustration: I. T. Bøckman, MCH.

source, “Den norske so”, claims that “Notow” was the first Hanseatic post in Norway. Due to piracy, the Germans were compelled to move the port to Bergen, according to the same source. While this cannot be right, it seems that “Notow” continued to be an important port throughout the 15th century (Helle 1999:60–2). On the other hand, it seems like the royal building complex at Avaldsnes was in ruins or at least in decay in the same century. The Hanseatic League was at least partly responsible for this.

8.5.1 The burning of Avaldsnes

Due to many external and internal factors the Danish Kingdom was de facto dissolved as a united kingdom and lacked a king in the years 1332–40.⁶ The country

⁶ This section is based on the following works; Bagge 2014:236–47; Erslev 1898–1905:345–51; Hørby 1989:362–73; Imsen and Sandnes 1977:263–9; Moseng et al. 2007:321–8; Munch 1862:803–26; Tunberg 1926:269–89.

was divided among German aristocrats and royal creditors. In this situation, Mágnus VII succeeded as Swedish king to establish control over the eastern Danish territories, Scania, Halland, and Blekinge (today in Sweden). The high cost of this expansive policy might have been one of the motives for the aforementioned aristocratic rebellions against him in Norway in the 1330s. A decisive moment occurred when Valdemar IV Atterdag became Danish King in 1340. A formidable politician, Valdemar undertook a deliberate and patient policy to regain full power as Danish King throughout Denmark. Among the many opponents to Valdemar's policy of reconquest were Mágnus, the Swedish aristocracy, northern German rulers, and the Hanseatic League. The alliances of the opponents were not stable but changed over time. For instance, Mágnus challenged the Swedish magnates through his centralisation policy in Sweden, on account of which the Swedish magnates forced Mágnus to accept his son Erik as joint Swedish King in 1356.

Erik died in 1359, and Valdemar managed to regain Scania in 1360. The next year he even invaded and obtained control over Gotland and Öland. Valdemar IV posed a threat to the Swedish throne and especially the Wendish towns in the Hanseatic League after his victories in 1360/61. The Scania market was vital for the Wendish towns. In his opponents' view Valdemar had gained too much control over both this market and the trade in the Baltic Sea by controlling Scania, Gotland, and Öland. Mecklenburg, Holstein, and the Wendish towns formed an alliance against Valdemar. Swedish magnates had taken Hákon as Swedish king in opposition to Mágnus' Swedish reign in 1362 and wanted Sweden and Norway to join the alliance against Denmark. As part of the policy to strengthen his position versus the Swedish magnates, Mágnus had entered into an alliance with Valdemar in 1359, and Hákon VI engaging Valdemar's daughter, Margaret, in 1359, confirmed the alliance, as was typical for medieval alliances and treaties. The Swedish magnates attempted to destroy the alliance with Denmark by breaking the engagement between Hákon and Margaret, hoping that instead he would engage a daughter of a count of Holstein. At first, Hákon seems to have accepted this policy as Swedish king. A naval attack by a German fleet (from Mecklenburg, Holstein, and the Wendish towns) supported by a Swedish-Norwegian fleet was planned. The German fleet besieged Helsingborg in 1362, but no Swedish-Norwegian fleet came. Valdemar managed to drive away the Germans and invade south-western Sweden. The Wendish towns made peace with Valdemar in 1365, ending the First Hanseatic War.

The main reason for the Swedish-Norwegian fleet's non-appearance at Helsingborg was a changed situation in Sweden: Hákon had reconciled himself with his father, Mágnus. The two kings chafed at the dominance of the Swedish magnates and re-established the alliance with Valdemar to counter it. Hákon married Margaret in 1363 to confirm the alliance. In response, the oppositional Swedish magnates deposed Mágnus and Hákon in favour of Mágnus' cousin, the German

Albrekt of Mecklenburg, as Swedish king. Mágnus and Hákon's attempt to regain their Swedish kingdom in 1365 ended in defeat. Mágnus was captured and imprisoned in Sweden for six years while Hákon retreated to Norway. Henceforth, Hákon's foreign policy hinged on two main goals: to regain his Swedish kingdom and to redeem his father. His best and perhaps only possible ally in this struggle was his father-in-law, Valdemar of Denmark, although this alliance was not without problems; Valdemar's daring made conflicts and wars more likely.

The Hanseatic League was not satisfied with their situation in Scandinavia after the aforementioned peace treaty with Valdemar in 1365. They found the agreed terms for their trade in Denmark inadequate. Even worse was the treatment their merchants experienced from Valdemar's officials, which they considered infringements upon the treaty terms. Furthermore, the league was dissatisfied with Hákon for not confirming their privileges in Norway. The widespread dissatisfaction among the Hanseatic towns led them to join in a federation against the Danish and Norwegian kings, agreed between around 80 Hanseatic towns in Cologne in November 1367. Duke Albrekt of Mecklenburg, father of King Albrekt of Sweden, and his sons, the counts of Holstein, and some Danish magnates joined the federation later. Among the federation's main goals were to win better privileges and conditions for Hanseatic trade in both Denmark and Norway, and if possible to conquer Scania and Gotland to be handed over to Sweden.

The Hanseatic League ordered their merchants to leave Norway before 1 May 1368 and implemented a trade blockade of both Norway and Denmark. The Second Hanseatic War broke out in summer 1368. A Hanseatic fleet besieged Copenhagen, which surrendered after two weeks. Several other Danish strongholds surrendered. Duke Albrekt of Mecklenburg invaded Scania. King Valdemar left Denmark to seek help from friendly German princes. He must have consulted his steward in Denmark, Henning Podebusk, from abroad on how the Royal Council could seek peace on the best conditions as possible. At the same time, a fleet from the Dutch Hanseatic towns ravaged and plundered the coast of Norway from Jæren, Sokndal, Ryfylke, to Agder east of Lindesnes and then the coast of Båhuslen. They burned down Marstrand including the castle, cloister, and church, Konghelle, all buildings around Båhus, and three parishes on the island Hisingen. The critical situation forced King Hákon to seek armistice already in August 1368 (RN VI no. 1298). While peace talks were planned to start the following year, a Hanseatic fleet ravaged and plundered the Norwegian coast in autumn the same year. According to Hákon, Hanseatic merchants defended the king's enemies against the king's steward, Ogmund Finsson, at Karmsund. Furthermore, during peacetime, they ravaged and burned down the king's and other farms at Avaldsnes, the king's forests on the island Selbjørn, and farms and houses belonging to the king's subjects at Karmsundet (DN XIX no. 583).

The Hanseatic military strategy seems to have been to attack royal strongholds along the Norwegian coast. Their attack and burning of the Norwegian king's farm at Avaldsnes indicate the importance of Avaldsnes, Karmsundet, and Notow in the second half of the 14th century. As mentioned, this transpired as the Hanseatic League had reached its peak as an economic, political, and military power. By destroying the royal buildings at Avaldsnes the Hanse probably hoped to secure their own stronghold at Notow. In 1365, a ship from Lübeck was attacked and seized by men from "Novum Castrum" between "Munsterzund et Calmerszund". The raiders later attacked unsuccessfully a ship from Reval (DS VIII no. 7150).⁷ This incident might have taken place in Karmsundet, but in any case, Avaldsnes and Karmsundet were vital for both the Norwegian King and the Hanseatic League in the 1360s. At the same time, this was in many ways the zenith in importance for Avaldsnes.

In the end, King Hákon and the Hanseatic towns agreed upon a new armistice for two years in August 1369 (DN VIII no. 186). One year later, in July 1370, the parties entered into an armistice for five years and Hákon confirmed preliminarily the Hanseatic League's privileges in Norway (DN VIII no. 192; see also RN VII nos. 48–9). Denmark had already agreed upon a peace treaty with the Hanseatic towns in Stralsund in November 1369. King Valdemar ratified the treaty and the Hanseatic privileges in Denmark upon his return to Denmark in spring 1370. Although the peace treaty terms were harsh for Denmark, it brought an end to the military alliance between the Cologne federation and the aforementioned German princes and was therefore an asset for Denmark in the end. Likewise, for Norway: King Hákon VI managed to free his father from prison after a military campaign into Sweden ending in Stockholm in 1371. Five years later Hákon VI made peace with the Hanseatic League and confirmed their privileges in Norway in return for their acceptance of Hákon's son Olaf as Danish king (DN VIII no. 199). Olaf Hákonsson's Danish Kingdom from 1376 opened the way for personal union with Norway in 1380/81 when Olaf succeeded his father as king of Norway. Eventually this culminated in the unification of the three Scandinavian kingdoms in Kalmar in 1397 and the end of the domestic kingdom in Norway for around 500 years.

The loss of a domestic king meant that Avaldsnes lost its status as royal port and stronghold. We do not know if King Hákon VI Magnusson rebuilt the houses at Avaldsnes or if he and his men stayed on the ships in 1374. There are nevertheless indications that the royal complex at Avaldsnes never was rebuilt to its former glory after it was sacked in 1368 (Sand-Eriksen and Nordlie this vol. Ch. 6). If so, Avaldsnes experienced along with the rest of Norway the fundamental changes following the demise of the domestic kingdom.

⁷ The editors of DS have identified the incidents to have taken place somewhere between Mönsterås and Kalmarsund in Sweden, something Christian Lovén doubts due to several circumstances. Instead, Lovén suggests the incidents might have taken place in Karmsundet; personal communication by e-mail.

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