

Preface

This second volume from the Avaldsnes Royal Manor (ARM) project concludes the publication plan that was developed during the 2007–9 pilot project phase. Based on the excavation results and research published in the first volume (Skre 2018a), this second volume was originally intended to reconsider “the history of political institutions and processes in the first-millennium south-western coast of the Scandinavian Peninsula” (Skre 2018b:53).

Two developments have inspired an extension of this ambition. Firstly, Karmøy Municipality’s successful efforts to provide funding for excavating the remains of a royal masonry complex from c. AD 1300, discovered in 2012 (Bauer 2018), allowed the 2017 excavations of this hitherto completely unknown royal residence.

Secondly, in May 2017, the Norwegian government proposed a grant of 10 million Norwegian kroner for research within the ARM project. The bill was passed by parliament in June, allowing the project to extend its scope and timeframe. Currently, the project is planned to continue through 2026.

In the first ARM volume, the results from the 2011–12 excavations at Avaldsnes and additional archaeological evidence from Karmøy, the island where Avaldsnes is situated, allowed development of a new story about the emergence of kingship in western Scandinavia: in the 3rd–10th century, Avaldsnes was a residence and supply base for sea kings who secured safe transport along the sheltered sailing route along the west-Scandinavian coast. Alliances between sea kings, notably Haraldr hárfagri in the late 9th century, extended their dominion to much of the 1,500-kilometre sea route, and eventually to the land, thus forming the kingdom of *Noregr* (Old Norse ‘Norway’).

Like all wide-ranging interpretations, this story needs to be challenged, revised, and refined. One step in that direction was taken in a paper arguing that the beginning around AD 800 of Viking raiding across the North Sea was a consequence of an alliance between traders and sea kings along the coast, driving Vikings to seek new raiding grounds overseas (Baug et al. 2019). In the present volume, we continue to challenge the 2018 interpretation by extending the geographical scope of the project and by introducing additional themes to those that were prevalent there: economy, communication, and integration of polities along the sailing route.

The two chapters in Section A maintain the original geographic scope of the project: Einar Østmo (Ch. 1) explores the long history of the sailing route along the west-Scandinavian coast, the *Norvegr*, and Mari Arentz Østmo (Ch. 2) conducts a regional study of socio-political structure and change in Rogaland and southern Hordaland, where Avaldsnes is situated. All three chapters in Section B, however, take a Scandinavian perspective on, respectively, rulership and ruler’s sites (Dagfinn Skre, Ch. 3), the role of law regions in the transformation from tribe to kingdoms (Frode Iversen, Ch. 4), and the role of ship graves and ship settings in reproducing the divine origin myth of deceased kings (Jan Bill, Ch. 5). Finally, in

Section C, the 2017 excavation of the high medieval complex provided the opportunity to include certain aspects of the late 13th–14th-century Norwegian kingdom in this volume. Anette Sand-Eriksen and Erlend Nordlie (Ch. 6) present the results from the excavation of the masonry royal manor complex, Alf Tore Hommedal (Ch. 7) sets the complex into the context of the period's royal masonry architecture, and Erik Opsahl (Ch. 8) discusses the complex in the context of the period's royal ambitions and politics.

Thus, in this volume, the reader will find discussions of conditions and developments that led to the formation of the Scandinavian kingdoms as well as the pinnacle of the medieval Norwegian kingdom in the mid–late 13th century and the start of the 434-year union of Denmark-Norway in 1380.

The ambition for the coming years is, while honing in on the first millennium AD, to continue the thematic extension of the project. The geographic horizon will continue to be Scandinavia; however, many trajectories lead from Avaldsnes to insular and continental Europe, and these connections, evident in several chapters in this volume, will be explored further in the future. There is a great potential in writing the history of the Avaldsnes sea kings and Scandinavian rulership into that of the interaction with the Roman Empire and the emergence of Germanic successor kingdoms on the continent and in England. An essential task for me as a project director will be to select from among the many relevant themes a coherent and complementary set of research endeavours that will contribute to illuminating the long history of Scandinavian rulership. This will remain a challenge, and a joy, in the years to come.

Cross-references within this volume appear in the following formats: (E. Østmo this vol. Ch. 1:23), indicating author, chapter number, and page; and (E. Østmo this vol. Fig. 1.4), indicating a specific figure occurring within a given chapter. Initial capitals (Ch., Fig., Tab.) indicate references within the volume; references to chapters, figures, and tables in other publications are not capitalised.

Acknowledgements

A number of referees have contributed significantly to improving the quality of this book. Although their identities remain known only to me, each and every one of them hereby receives my warmest thanks for their effort and support. Two employees have been pivotal in producing this book: Ingvild Tinglum Bøckman, who has managed all illustrations and produced most of them (see captions), and Anthony Zannino, who has undertaken copyediting and language revision of the text. Maps of Norway are used under licence from the Norwegian Mapping Authority (Kartverket). Unless otherwise stated in the caption, topographical maps for Europe are obtained from Natural Earth Data.

I am deeply grateful and ultimately indebted to Karmøy Municipality who in 2006 invited me to develop the project plan, and who up to the present have provided and generated the funding for the project. Three persons merit special mention: the director of the municipality's Avaldsnes Project Marit Synnøve Vea, the benefactor Sigurd Steen Aase, and the mayor of Karmøy 1996–2011 Kjell Arvid Svendsen.

The local representatives for the Church of Norway have generously allowed and assisted excavations within the St Óláfr churchyard. Cooperation with cultural management authorities – Rogaland County Council, Archaeological Museum, University of Stavanger, and the Directorate for Cultural Heritage – has been entirely positive and productive.

My thanks also extends to the two main initiators behind the funding of the 2017 excavation of the medieval royal manor, the then-member of parliament Geir Sigbjørn Toskedal and the mayor of Karmøy since 2015 Jarle Nilsen. The initiators behind the project's funding for the years to come, the 2017 grant from the Norwegian Parliament, are unknown to me. Thus, I direct my thanks to the then-Minister for Education and Research Torbjørn Røe Isaksen, who set forth the proposition. Finally, the Museum of Cultural History (MCH) at the University of Oslo has hosted the project since 2010 and contributed support and guidance in every possible way. I hope that the results we will continue to produce will live up to the trust that these individuals and institutions have bestowed upon this research project.

Dagfinn Skre
Oslo, April 2019

References

- Bauer, Egil Lindhart 2018: The High Medieval Royal Manor. In: Dagfinn Skre (ed.): *Avaldsnes. A Sea Kings' Manor in First-Millennium Western Scandinavia*. Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde – Ergänzungsbände, 104:277–307. De Gruyter. Berlin, Boston.
- Baug, Irene, Dagfinn Skre, Tom Heldal and Øystein J. Jansen 2019: The Beginning of the Viking Age in the West. *Journal of Maritime Archaeology*, 14:43–80.
- Skre, Dagfinn (ed.) 2018a: *Avaldsnes – A Sea-Kings' Manor in First-Millennium Western Scandinavia*. Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde – Ergänzungsbände, 104. De Gruyter. Berlin.
- Skre, Dagfinn (ed.) 2018b: The Avaldsnes Royal Manor Projects Research Plan and Excavation Objectives. In: Dagfinn Skre (ed.): *Avaldsnes – A Sea-Kings' Manor in First-Millennium Western Scandinavia*. Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde – Ergänzungsbände, 104:53–61. De Gruyter. Berlin.

