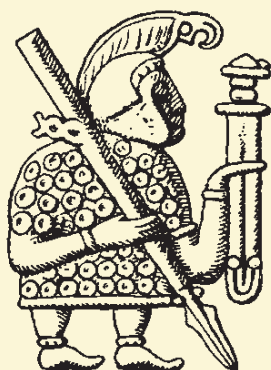


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Implications of recent metal detector finds for the interpretation of King Øystein's Harbour in Agdenes, Norway

By Birgit Maixner

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King Øystein's Harbour in Agdenes, Trøndelag, Norway, has been the focus of multiple archaeological investigations both underwater and on land since the discovery of its harbour structures in the 19th century. Early on, the site was identified with the harbour facilities attributed to King Eystein Magnusson in medieval historical sources. The prevailing interpretation has long been that the site functioned as a medieval military control and defense point. Alternative functions, such as that of a sheltered harbour or a possible Iron Age trading centre, were less well documented archaeologically. However, recent metal detector finds associated with trade and craftsmanship may offer new insights into the site's function. A particularly significant discovery is a Viking Age lead model used for the serial production of trefoil brooches in the Borre style. The lead model is one of only a few such objects found in Norway outside the Viking town of Kaupang, and it represents the northernmost example of its kind discovered in Norway to date. Together with other metal detector finds, this evidence strongly suggests that King Øystein's Harbour in Agdenes may have served as a seasonal local market. Furthermore, it indicates that the earliest harbour constructions likely date back to the Viking Age.

Keywords: Viking Age trading sites, serial production, metal detector finds, Norway, harbour constructions

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The site known as King Øystein's Harbour in Agdenes has held a prominent position in archaeological research on the early Middle Ages in Central Norway for decades, although its precise function and dating remain unresolved. Its particular significance lies in the fact that it represents an early medieval harbour with preserved wooden structures located in the tidal zone and underwater – outside Norway's

urban centres. The harbour is situated in a small bay, Agdenesbukta, adjacent to the present-day Agdenes farm on the southern side of the mouth of the Trondheimsfjorden. This location places it at a strategic crossroads between the main coastal route and the fjord, as well as the land routes leading toward present-day Sweden (fig. 1). Archaeological investigations at the site have focused on three key elements: the harbour,

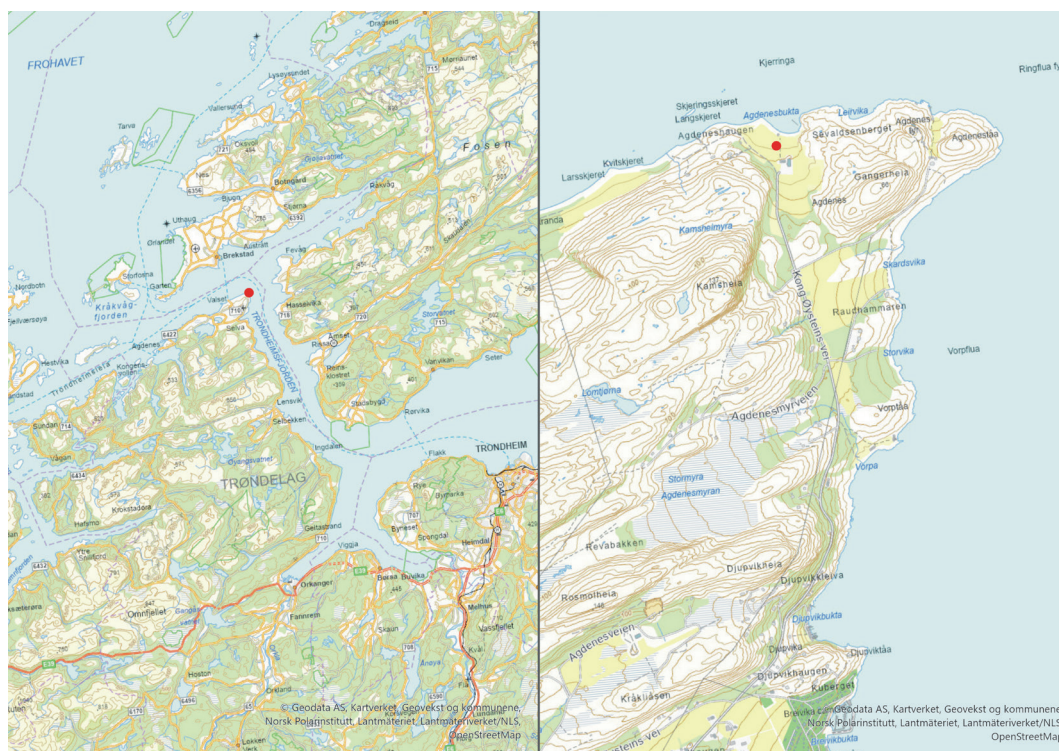


Fig. 1. Location of the so-called King Øystein's Harbour in Agdenes, Trøndelag County, Norway.

the rampart and the church – each mentioned in medieval historical sources and attributed to King Eystein Magnusson.

Previous interpretations of the site's primary function have varied. It has been proposed as a civil Viking or medieval harbour of refuge, a maritime control and defence point constructed during King Eystein Magnusson's reign, or a possible Iron Age port serving as a marketplace.

In recent years, private metal detectorists have recovered a small number of artefacts from the plough layer in Agdenesbukta Bay, including a lead model. The aim of this article is to present this material following a review of the site's research history and to explore how these finds contribute to the interpretation of the harbour's function and dating. As a foundation for this discussion, the article also provides an overview of the known Viking Age lead model material from Norway.

The prefixes used to identify the finds discussed in this article refer to the following collections: T: NTNU University Museum, Trondheim. C: Museum of Cultural History, Oslo. SHM: Statens historiska museum, Stockholm.

Agdenes in the sagas

Agdenes – and to some extent its harbour – is mentioned several times in the sagas. A compilation of these references can be found in Jasin-ski (1995, pp. 74–76), although he incorrectly assumes that the sagas were written at different times, namely during the Viking Age and the Middle Ages. The sources can be divided into two main groups: those whose narratives are set in the Viking Age (*Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar* and *Ólafs saga hins helga*), and those that recount events from the 12th and 13th centuries, particularly those associated with King Eystein Magnusson (1088–1123) (*Magnússona saga*), as well as figures like Erling Skakke (1115–1179)

(Magnúss saga Erlingssonar) and King Håkon Håkonsson (1204–1263) (Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar).

In the sagas describing the Viking Age, Agdenes is frequently mentioned as a mooring or assembly point for ships in military contexts. However, it remains unclear whether the name Agdenes refers broadly to the area at the southern mouth of the Trondheimsfjorden or specifically to the bay known as Agdenesbukta. Chapter 14 of the Magnússona saga, which deals with events in the 12th century, states that King Eystein Magnusson had a church built at Agdenes, along with a rampart and a harbour where previously there had been none: “hann lét ok gera kirkju á Agðanesi, ok þar virki ok höfn, sem áðr var øræfi” (Jónsson 1900, p. 285). Chapter 21 further notes that this location is a key transit point for anyone travelling north or south: “Agðanes, er áðr var øræfi ok hvers manns fœr, þá er ferr norðr eða suðr með landi” (Jónsson 1900, p. 294). In Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar, King Håkon Håkonsson is credited with constructing a fortification at Agdenes (Jasinski 1995, p. 76). However, it remains uncertain whether this fortification was built at the same site as the church, rampart and a harbour reportedly established by King Eystein Magnusson.

Archaeological investigations

The historian Gerhard Schøning, aware of the references in Magnússona saga to buildings initiated by King Eystein Magnusson at Agdenes, attempted to locate them during one of his journeys to Norway between 1773–1775, but without success (Schøning 1979, p. 79). Nearly a century later, in 1865, harbour constructions, an earth-

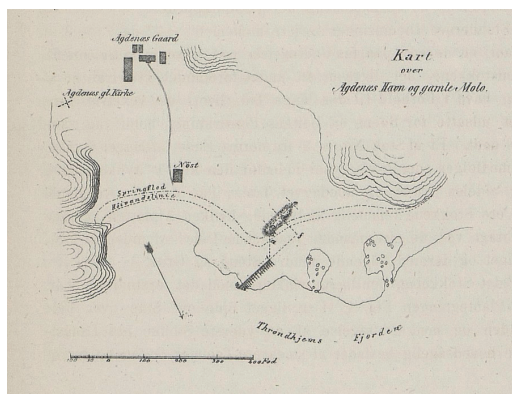


Fig. 2. Engineer J. Meyer's map of Agdenes, dated 1869. After Meyer 1870.

work (bank) and the remains of a possible church were observed in the bay of Agdenesbukta (cf. Krefting et al. 1866). Shortly thereafter, on the initiative of the “Foreningen til Norske Fortidsmindesterkers Bevaring” (Society for the Preservation of Norwegian Ancient Monuments), the site was surveyed and documented by engineer J. Meyer (Nicolaysen 1869; Meyer 1870) (fig. 2). Meyer was able to record a structure composed of stones and logs over a length of 36 metres into the bay, visible at low tide. This appears to be a pier constructed from a series of large, open, box-like timber frames measuring 4.8 metres in width and filled with stones (Marstrander 1967, p. 266) (fig. 3).

During the 1960s, 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, several marine archaeological investigations were conducted in the harbour area, along with smaller surveys on land (Marstrander 1967; Molaug 1967; Sognnes 1985; Jasinski 1995; Tud-

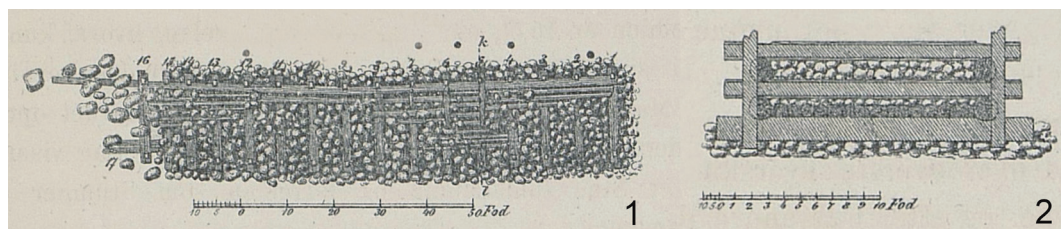


Fig. 3. Engineer J. Meyer's documentation of the mole located in the tidal zone of the harbour at Agdenes, dated 1869. 1) Ground plan of the mole. 2) Cross-section of the mole along line k. After Meyer 1870.



Fig. 4. Situation photograph of the earthworks conducted in 1967 on the terrace north of the present-day Agdenes farm. After Møllenhuis 1967.

denham 2004). A wood sample taken by Sverre Marstrander from one of the lower foundations of the mole was subjected to ^{14}C analysis, yielding a date between approximately 800 and 940 CE – corresponding to the Viking Age. Based on this result, Marstrander (1967, p. 271) suggested that the oldest part of the mole may have been constructed prior to the time of King Øystein. In the 1980s, Kalle Sognnes conducted a search for black earth or cultural deposits – potential indicators of permanent settlement – using a soil auger. This investigation was unsuccessful, likely due to significant levelling of the site in 1967, when a relatively steep terrace slope north of the modern farm was removed (Sognnes 1985, p. 62) (fig. 4). However, Sognnes (1985, p. 61) did identify traces of settlement at the presumed church site through systematic auger surveys, although he was unable to confirm the presence of a church. Sognnes also examined the construction of the stone-built bank, which Meyer (1870, p. 9) had documented as extending

approximately 30 metres parallel to the mole, but slightly offset from it, between the beach and the cliffs surrounding the bay.

In the 1990s, under the direction of Marek Jasinski, a series of marine archaeological investigations were conducted, including new documentation of the mole in the tidal zone and underwater, as well as the rampart on land. Trial excavations on the seabed revealed a thick, compact cultural layer adjacent to the mole (Jasinski 1995, p. 89). Jasinski collected a total of eight ^{14}C samples from the mole structure. The oldest sample dates to 603–874 CE, three samples to the period 875–1170 CE, and four samples to 1002–1280 CE. Jasinski (1995, p. 98) suggested that the early dates may be explained by the reuse of older timber or by erroneous dating caused by *Teredo* infestation in the outer layers of the logs (Rokoengen & Jasinski 1996, p. 21). Overall, he considered it most likely that the initial construction of the mole took place during the reign of King Eystein Magnusson, as

described in the sagas. Jasinski regarded the likelihood that the harbour was originally built in the Viking Age, with only repairs carried out under King Øystein, as low. However, Merete M. Henriksen (1997, pp. 105–106) has pointed out methodological weaknesses in this argument. While the Viking Age dates are downplayed, the same potential sources of error are not critically examined for the medieval dates.

The most recent archaeological investigation in the bay of Agdenes was an assessment of the condition of the submerged section of the mole, conducted in 2003 and 2004.

This survey documented significant and ongoing erosion of the site but also revealed evidence of additional wooden structures in the bay, some of which displayed signs of log cabin construction techniques (Tuddenham 2004, pp. 8–10).

Function

In the past, the function of the harbour at Agdenes has been interpreted in various ways. Marstrander (1967, pp. 263, 269) viewed the site primarily as a mooring and emergency harbour for ships awaiting favourable wind and current conditions before entering the Trondheimsfjorden, protected by the breakwater effect of the mole. However, Marstrander (1967, pp. 268–269) found no evidence to support a military function for the site, nor indications that it served as a trading centre. Similarly, Sognnes (1985, p. 64) considered the harbour's primary role to be that of a protective refuge, and assessed its military significance – as well as its potential function as a regional marketplace – as minimal.

In contrast to earlier interpretations, Axel Christophersen (1991, pp. 165–166) proposed in the 1990s – based on Sognnes' Viking Age ¹⁴C dating of the mole – that the harbour at Agdenes may have functioned as an Iron Age port serving as a marketplace. Both interpretations – as a primary harbour of refuge and as a trading centre – were later rejected by Jasinski. He argued that his investigations confirmed the harbour's construction during the reign of King Eystein Magnusson and interpreted its primary function as political and military: a control and defence

point at this strategically important location (Jasinski 1995, p. 99). David Tuddenham (2004, p. 12), however, was more critical of the idea of a primarily military function. He proposed a civilian role for the harbour, suggesting it may have served as a transshipment point for deep-draught medieval ships – although he considered this possibility less likely.

Recent metal detector finds

Since 2015, two metal detectorists have discovered several metal objects on cultivated land near the present-day Agdenes farm, a handful of which are potentially or definitively dated to the Iron Age or Middle Ages. These finds are the result of several hundred hours of metal detecting across an area of approximately 48,400 m².

The artefacts are concentrated in two distinct areas. One is located at the foot of the slope descending from the current Agdenes farm, about 60 metres south of the present shoreline – precisely where extensive ground levelling occurred in the mid-1960s (fig. 4; Sognnes 1985, p. 63). The other concentration is found in the inner, elevated part of the cultivated fields, formed by marine beach deposits and surrounded by cliffs, approximately 270 metres from the current shoreline (fig. 5).

The finds include two cylindrical lead weights (T29441, T29442), a hemispherical lead weight (T27337), an oblate spheroid weight made of copper alloy and iron (T26943), a lead bar with traces of processing (T27336), a fragment of a lead model (T29429), a fragment of lead jewellery (T29474) (fig. 6), and a piece of Insular metalwork (T27216) (fig. 7).

Two of the finds can be confidently dated to the Viking Age. One of these is a piece of Insular metalwork – a reworked bridle fitting – likely originating from an Irish workshop in the 8th or 9th century CE (Pettersen 2017).

The second find that can be confidently dated to the Viking Age is a fragment of a lead model (fig. 6:1). The preserved portion depicts the lower part of an animal figure in the Borre style, which appears in this composition on the arms of trefoil brooches of type P 106/Z 2.1 (Pettersen 1928; Maixner 2005). This strongly suggests that the lead fragment from Agdenes was

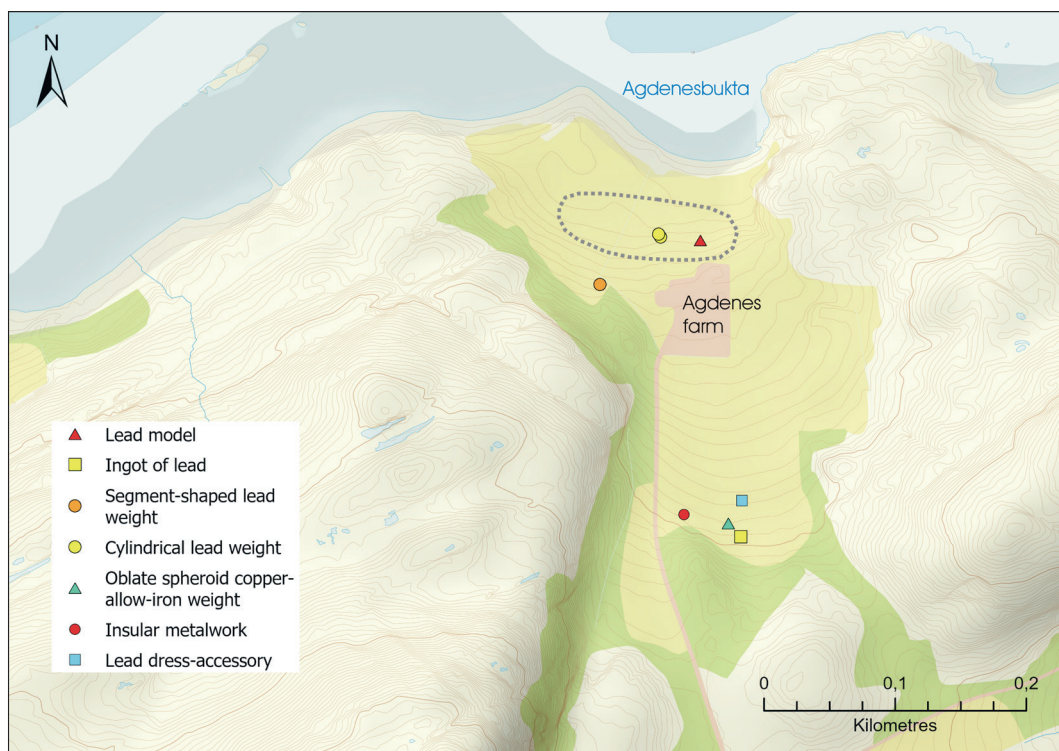


Fig. 5. Distribution of metal detector finds in Agdenes, dated to the Iron Age or medieval period. The dotted line indicates the area where extensive levelling work was carried out in 1967, according to Sognes (1985, p. 63). Illustration: Birgit Maixner.



Fig. 6. Metal detector finds from Agdenes, potentially or certainly from the Iron Age or medieval period. 1) Lead model, T29429. 2) Lead ingot, T27336. 3) Dress-accessory of lead, T29474. 4) Cylindrical lead weight, T29442. 5) Cylindrical lead weight, T29441. 6) Hemispherical lead weight, T27337. 7) Oblate spheroid weight made of copper alloy and iron, T26943. Photo: Birgit Maixner, NTNU University Museum.



Fig. 7. Insular mount T27216 from Agdenes. Photo: Åge Hojem, NTNU University Museum.

part of a model used in the production of this specific type of trefoil brooch. As of 2005, only five examples of this brooch type were known: two from southeastern Norway, two from Birka in Sweden, and one from Russia (Maixner 2005, pp. 314–315). Since then, metal detecting in Norway has added four more specimens (C57211/1, C59030, C63108, and C63392), all also found in southeastern Norway (fig. 8). Among the more than 900 trefoil brooches registered in the Danish metal detector finds database DIME (Digitale Metaldetektorfund), none belong to type P 106/Z 2.1. Thus, type P 106/Z 2.1 can be characterised as a form of Viking Age bronze jewellery primarily associated with the Scandinavian Peninsula.

The known trefoil brooches of type P 106/Z 2.1 exhibit the characteristic decoration of this type in various designs (cf. Maixner 2005, plate 45:10–13), suggesting that they were produced in different workshops. However, the design represented by the model from Agdenes does not appear on any of the finished brooches known to date (fig. 9).

Evidence for dating this type of trefoil brooch to the second half of the 9th century and the 10th century CE comes from its association with oval brooches of type P 51 in a grave find from

Berven, Vestfold og Telemark, Norway (C18436–18441), and type P 42 in grave Bj 480 from Birka, Sweden. These associations align with general dating estimates for the Borre style, typically placed at c. 875–950 CE (Fuglesang 1996, p. 515) or 850–980 CE (Wilson 1995, p. 110).

In contrast, the function and dating of the small lead fragment T29474 (fig. 6:3) are more difficult to determine. The otherwise flat reverse side shows the remains of a cast-in fastening, while the front is decorated with geometric patterns and knobs – features that may suggest a Viking Age origin. It could be a fragment of a lead dress accessory, similar to those occasionally found in Viking Age contexts (cf. Capelle 1968, pp. 71–73, pl. 23:1–11; Pedersen 2016, pp. 172–180).

The remaining finds offer little or only imprecise dating information. Production waste recovered as stray finds – such as the lead bar T27336 (fig. 6:2) – cannot usually be dated using typological methods. Weight types are generally long-lived: cylindrical lead weights appear in graves as early as the 6th century CE, and lead weights in general represent a long-lasting weighing tradition that continued into the 14th century CE (Pedersen 2008, p. 132).

Oblate spheroid weights made of iron and copper alloy, which appear in the Baltic region from around 870/880 CE onwards, can be dated more precisely (Steuer 1987, p. 460; 1997, p. 12). The weight T26943 (fig. 6:7) can therefore likely be dated to the Viking Age.

Viking-period lead models from Norway

Lead models from the Viking Age used for the serial production of cast bronze jewellery have so far been found at only a few sites in Norway. Until recently, such models were known exclusively from Kaupang, where a substantial number – 26 specimens – have been documented. These models provide evidence for the production of equal-armed brooches, penannular brooches, lozenge brooches, dies, mounts, arm rings, key handles and miniature axes, among other things (Pedersen 2016, pp. 38–78; 2017). Lead models from other Norwegian sites exist in significantly smaller numbers. Excavations at the Heimdalsjordet site (cf. Bill & Rødstrud

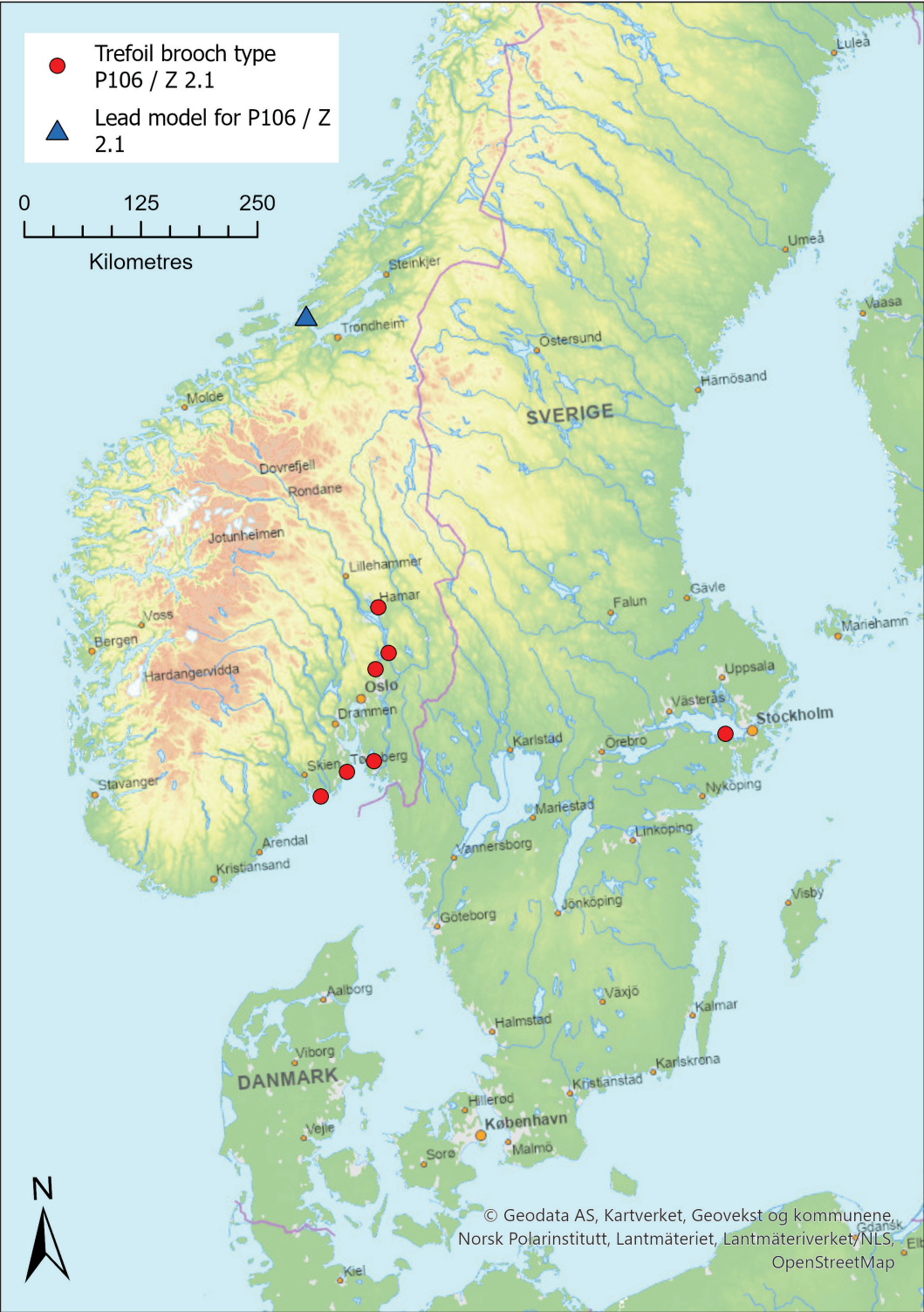


Fig. 8. Distribution of trefoil brooches of type P 106/Z 2.1 and related models in Scandinavia. Illustration: Birgit Maixner.

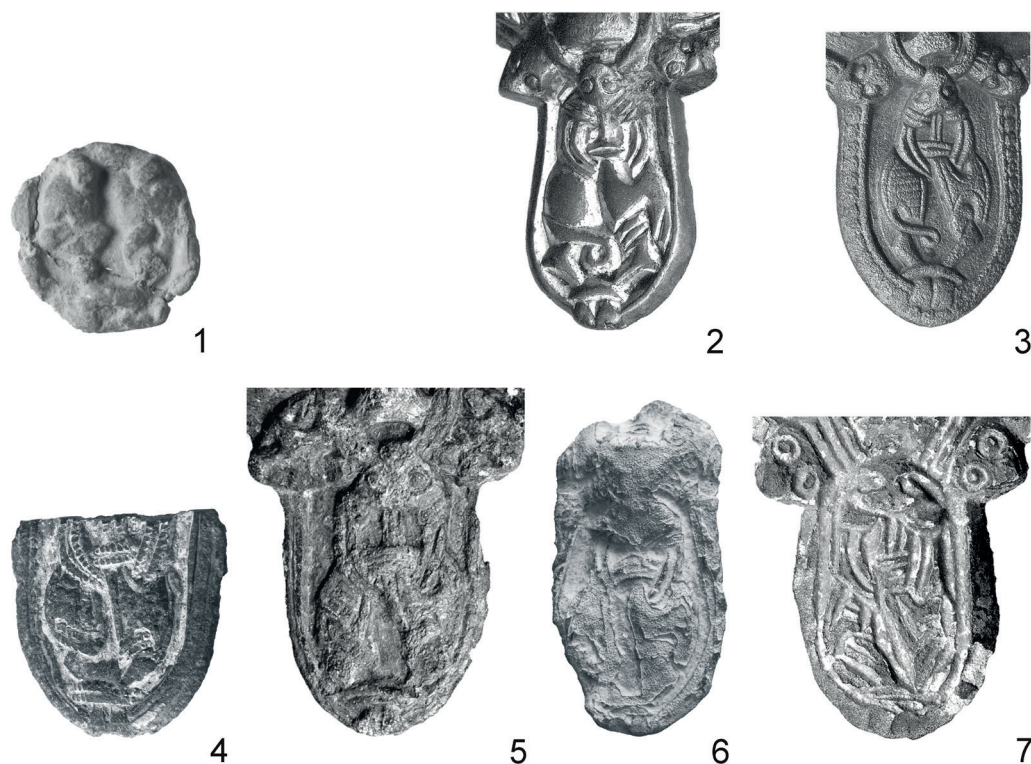


Fig. 9. Lead model from Agdenes shown together with selected examples of trefoil brooches of type P 106/Z 2.1. 1) T29429. 2) SHM 463:9c. 3) C5073. 4) C57211/1. 5) C18439. 6) C63392. 7) SHM Bj 480. Photo: Birgit Maixner (nos. 1–3, 5, 7), Eirik Irgens Johnsen, Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo (no. 4), Ulla Schildt, Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo (no. 6). Without scale.

2017), located just 15 km from Kaupang, in 2012 and 2013 yielded a few examples (Pedersen 2016, p. 39). Similarly, two lead models were recovered from the plough layer at the Missingen site on the eastern side of the Oslo Fjord during investigations in 2014 (C59577/34, C59577/35; Maixner 2015, p. 34). While the lead models from Kaupang, Heimdalsjordet, and Missingen were uncovered through archaeological research excavations, other examples have come to light through the activities of private metal detectorists. In addition to the lead model from Agdenes, this includes a model from Sem near Tønsberg (C59921; Maixner 2020a, p. 17) and two models from the Hundorp area in inland Norway (C58517; C62978) (fig. 10).

Several of the lead models known from Norway were used to produce standard types

of Viking Age bronze jewellery, which are represented by multiple examples and often occur in several variants – indicating production in different workshops (Maixner 2005, p. 232). Among the 26 lead models from Kaupang (cf. Pedersen 2016, p. 67, fig. 4.28), those used for the production of equal-armed brooches form the largest group, with eight specimens. Four of these – C52517/677, C52517/2200, C52517/2173, and C52519/15490 – can be linked to different variants of the Ljønnes type from the Early Viking Period, which was also produced in Ribe and Birka (Pedersen 2016, pp. 40–43). The two lead models from the Hundorp area were likewise used to produce equal-armed brooches of the Ljønnes type. One of them, C62978, can be identified as belonging to the Valsta group



Fig. 10. Distribution of Viking Age lead models in the area of present-day Norway. Illustration: Birgit Maixner.

(Callmer 1999, p. 203), while the other, C58517, belongs to the older Ljønnes series.

Not only in the early Viking Age, but also during the late 9th and 10th centuries CE, standard jewellery items in what is now Norway appear to have been mass-produced using lead moulds. A widespread form of jewellery during this period was the lozenge brooch, known from numerous examples across Scandinavia and the UK. Models for their production have been found at sites such as Lejre, Gudme, Tissø, Bornholm, and Hedeby (Pedersen 2016, pp. 40–52). One of the

lead models from Kaupang (C52517/2445) and the model from Sem near Tønsberg (C59921) provide evidence that this brooch type was also produced in Norway. Finally, the model T29429 (fig. 6:1) from Agdenes represents the first known evidence of trefoil brooch production in Norway.

Discussion

The new metal detector finds from Agdenes offer valuable contributions to the ongoing discussion about the function and chronology of King Øystein's Harbour. However, several challenges remain. The limited number of finds restricts the representativeness of any conclusions drawn, and their status as stray finds means they lack direct archaeological context – such as stratigraphic connections – which is particularly problematic for objects that cannot be dated typologically. Nevertheless, when considered collectively and in relation to their spatial distribution, metal detector finds can form assemblages that allow for well-founded interpretations of site function. With the above limitations in mind, three potential functions can be postulated based on the material presented.

The most prominent indication of activity at the site is craftsmanship in the form of non-ferrous metalworking. This is evidenced by the lead model, a lead bar bearing toolmarks, and three lead weights. While lead weights were commonly used in the Viking Age as part of the weight economy, they also appear in contexts related to bronze casting (cf. Gustin 2004, p. 21; Pedersen 2008, p. 166). The three lead weights from King Øystein's Harbour may therefore be interpreted as indicators of craft production rather than trade. Although the lead ingot and weights cannot be precisely dated, the lead model provides clear evidence of local, serial production of sophisticated cast bronze jewellery during the Viking Age.

While most of the finds are concentrated in the area below the present-day farm – close to the shoreline and extensively levelled during the 1960s – the discovery of the lead bar may also suggest craft-related activities of uncertain date in the higher-lying terrain. It is in this elevated area that the discovery of a piece of Viking Age

Insular metalwork, along with a lead dress accessory, may indicate the presence of Viking Age graves that have since been disturbed by ploughing. The oblate spheroid weight, composed of copper alloy and iron, could likewise originate from such a context. Unlike lead weights, which are also found in workshop settings, oblate spheroid weights made of copper alloy and iron appear to have been primarily used in economic transactions and are frequently found as grave goods. This particular weight may therefore reflect both commercial activity and the existence of a burial site.

In recent years, private metal detecting in coastal areas around the Trondheimsfjorden has yielded a substantial number of hacksilver finds, particularly in the form of fragmented Islamic coins. This suggests that the weight economy was well established in the region by the 10th century CE at the latest and that hacksilver was commonly used in everyday transactions (cf. Maixner 2020b; Maixner forthcoming). Against this background, the presence of indicators related to the weight economy should be considered a key criterion when evaluating King Øystein's Harbour as a potential Viking Age trading centre. The absence of such indicators among the metal detector finds from Agdenes to date is likely due to the relatively limited search activity in the area and the fact that a central part of the site has been disturbed by extensive earthworks. Therefore, the current lack of hacksilver should not be overinterpreted. At Viking Age trading centres, specialised crafts and trade are typically closely intertwined.

The lead model from Agdenes plays a key role in assessing the significance and function of King Øystein's Harbour during the Viking Age. To date, lead models – and thus evidence of Viking Age non-ferrous metalworking – have been identified at only a few sites in Norway. The character of these sites varies. Kaupang, which has yielded by far the largest number of lead models, remains the only site in Norway that qualifies as a 'town' according to Skre's (2008) model of Scandinavian and Baltic sites with substantial evidence of trade and craft production, itself based on Hodges (1982). For a long time, Kaupang was considered the sole

Viking Age trading and production centre in Norway. However, recent discoveries have revealed the existence of several local markets, including the aforementioned Heimdalsjordet (cf. Bill & Rødsrud 2017) near Kaupang and Utstein Kloster on the island of Klosterøy north of Stavanger (Hillesland & Pedersen 2024). In contrast to Heimdalsjordet, sites such as Sem near Tønsberg, Missingen, and Hundorp may be more accurately described as central-place markets. King Øystein's Harbour differs from the much larger Kaupang not only in its lack of extensive burial grounds but also in its overall size, and it is also considerably smaller than the presumed trading centre at Klosterøy. Although it may appear modest at first glance due to its location nestled between rocky outcrops, King Øystein's Harbour covers an area of approximately 200 x 300 metres – comparable in size to Heimdalsjordet or Sem near Tønsberg, as suggested by scattered finds.

While the serial production of Viking Age bronze jewellery has previously been primarily associated with major trading centres such as Ribe, Hedeby, Birka, and Kaupang – and in Norway, only documented at Kaupang – the current overview of lead model finds in Norway indicates that this specialised craft was practised in a significantly wider range of locations.

The discovery of serial production of Viking Age bronze jewellery this far north in Norway is particularly noteworthy. King Øystein's Harbour thus emerges as an important Viking Age trading centre, facilitating the exchange of goods to and from the surrounding region. Its significance appears to have been sufficient to attract specialist craftsmen from outside the area, who possessed the necessary expertise and networks to procure the specialised raw materials required for both tools and finished products (cf. Pedersen 2016, pp. 194–195).

The interpretation of King Øystein's Harbour as a production and trading centre during the second half of the 9th century and the 10th century CE is supported by the lead model and other metal detector finds. This interpretation aligns with the earliest Viking Age ¹⁴C dates for the mole, which Jasinski (1995, p. 98) and Rokoengen & Jasinski (1996, p. 21) previously

downplayed as potentially resulting from the use of old construction timber or other sources of error. Earlier research on Agdenes primarily referenced medieval harbour constructions in Bergen and Oslo as analogues (cf. Jasinski 1995, p. 90), without considering possible Viking Age parallels. However, such parallels exist – for example, in Birka, where excavations in 1970–1971 at the Black Earth Harbour uncovered a stone structure (designated A4), up to three metres wide, enclosed by a wooden frame (Ambrosiani 1973a, pp. 13–19; Ambrosiani 1973b, p. 240; Kalmring et al. 2021, pp. 22–32). Recent research dates these harbour facilities to the winter half-year of 853/854 CE (Kalmring et al. 2021, p. 127). Another stone box construction, B111 – up to 4.5 metres wide – was investigated during the 1990–1995 excavations at Black Earth Harbour and was already in place around or before 790 CE (Ambrosiani 2013, pp. 42, 220). The use of stone-filled wooden structures as harbour facilities at another Viking Age trading centre in Scandinavia, as evidenced by the findings from Birka, combined with the Viking Age ¹⁴C dating of the mole at King Øystein's Harbour, strongly supports the likelihood that the harbour was originally constructed during the Viking Age.

Only 17 km from King Øystein's Harbour, in the wider estuary of the Trondheimsfjorden and along the main north-south sailing route, lies the sheltered natural harbour of Storfosna. The shoreline at Storfosna has yielded isolated indicators of Viking Age trade (Maixner 2020b, pp. 294–295). If, despite the close proximity to this excellent natural harbour, people in the Viking Age went to the effort of constructing port infrastructure at King Øystein's Harbour, it suggests that the site – located directly at the entrance to the Trondheimsfjorden – was specifically orientated toward the exchange of goods with the surrounding regions. Future investigations should aim to determine whether the bank at King Øystein's Harbour can also be dated to the Viking Age. Sognnes (1985, p. 62) has proposed that the bank may originally have extended from the beach bar to the surrounding cliffs, effectively enclosing the inner part of the harbour from land. If this interpretation holds, parallels could be drawn with the Viking Age

ramparts at Birka and Hedeby (cf. Isaksson et al. 2020, p. 4; Kalmring 2010, p. 90).

In terms of trade, the late 9th and 10th centuries CE in Central Norway appear to have been a period of increasing professionalisation. During this time, the weight economy became widespread, and a number of boat graves containing standardised, trade-related equipment emerged – possibly reflecting the collective identity of a group of professional long-distance traders (cf. Maixner forthcoming). The establishment of a production and trading centre at King Øystein's Harbour, with the construction of a trade-oriented infrastructure, fits well within this broader development.

Conclusion

Thanks to the activities of private metal detectorists, a small yet significant assemblage of new finds has been uncovered at King Øystein's Harbour in Agdenes. These discoveries offer valuable insights into the local serial production of cast Viking Age bronze jewellery and provide evidence of trade. According to Skre's (2008) model, King Øystein's Harbour likely functioned primarily as a seasonal 'local market' during the Viking Age, playing a central role in intraregional trade in Central Norway.

Its role as a trading centre – previously hypothesised by Christophersen (1991), albeit without concrete evidence – suggests that construction of the mole may have commenced during the Viking Age. This interpretation is supported by several ¹⁴C data obtained in the 1960s and 1990s. Consequently, this challenges the claim in Magnússona saga that no harbour existed in Agdenes prior to the reign of King Eystein Magnússon, as well as the subsequent dismissal by Jasinski (1995) and Rokoengen & Jasinski (1996) of the possibility of dating the pier to the Viking Age. In my view, the harbour's function as a Viking Age site of trade and production does not preclude its later use as a medieval defensive structure.

Nevertheless, further investigation is required to determine whether the detector finds are truly representative of the postulated function as a centre of craftsmanship and trade.

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