

Bottlenecks and Anarchism

Local Reactions and Centralization of Power at
the Tissø Complex, Denmark AD 500–1050

BY TRINE BORAKE

Abstract

In this article, I aim to analyse the relations between central places and their local community using the Tissø complex in Western Zealand, Denmark as a case study. I argue, that social organization is not based on a hierarchical structure, but consists of multilevel dynamics including conflict and cooperation, strategic reactions, acceptance and resistance. To frame the complexity and dynamics of social organization in the Late Iron Age to the Middle Ages – a complexity that goes far beyond the Central Place Theory – a dialectic approach is applied to the archaeological material: Political economy and theory of anarchism.

By identifying ritual functions and landholdings as examples of ways to accumulate and centralize power, and consequently identifying reactions to such centralization according to anarchism, I will demonstrate a complex social organization based on resistance and justified leaders. The conclusion urges us to consider a complex society, where the local community played an active part in the social organization.

Introduction

In the studies of Late Iron Age Scandinavia, a type of sites stands out, identified by a variety of different terms: magnate farms, elite residence, assembly sites, aristocratic complexes, or central places to name just a few. The creativity of definitions suggests the complexity of these sites, their elusive characteristics and the difficulties of defining their functions.

Research has primarily focused on the sites themselves; their inventory, find distribution and combination, and, as more of these sites

have been excavated, their internal structures and characteristics (Jørgensen 2001; Larsson & Hårdh 2003; Jørgensen 2010; Stidsing *et al.* 2014; Christensen 2015; Söderberg 2005). However, the archaeological data fits poorly with the general interpretations and their functions and characteristics are elusive. It has proven difficult to determine their economic background, their relation to the surrounding society and the reasons for their termination. What functions that the central places provided were no longer requested?

What services were no longer in demand? In this paper, I propose a dialectic perspective and analytical approach that focuses on the local community and their acceptance, adaptation and resistance to the centralization of power. I argue that, by examining the responses to the centralization and maintenance of power, we will gain insight into the role of central places in the social organization in general and more importantly contribute to the understanding of human reactions to power structures and centralization in the past as well as in the present. Undisputedly, central places (as I will refer to them in the following) play a significant part in the social organization of the Late Iron Age up until the beginning of the Scandinavian medieval period and perhaps beyond. Most of these central places – in Zealand, e.g. Toftegård, Lejre, Tissø, and in southern Scandinavia, e.g. Uppåkra and Järrested – have their onset in the Migration Period around AD 500 or earlier and cease to exist with the Early Middle Ages around AD 1000.

A top-down approach, influenced by Marxist theory, is often used to explain the rising social stratification and political economy systems that led to the early state formation. Central places are seen as part of a unilinear hierarchical development on the path from bands to kingdoms or from egalitarian societies to modern states (Callmer & Rosengren 1997; Earle & Spriggs 2015; Näsman 1998; Larsson 2003; Söderberg 2005, 39). The transformation into an organized and institutionalized society was feasible only by centralizing strong power structures capable of securing institutions and order – centralizing power therefore becomes fundamental in the development of social organization, pointing to a hierarchical social structure.

This framework is criticized for not regarding human agency and allowing for a multiscale development. Humans do not blindly follow social rules but can choose to manipulate them and consequently influence

the social development. Ideology, identity and symbolism in material culture and landscape accordingly become important. This bottom-up approach has been criticized for being subjective, relativistic and lacking an explicit methodology. Yet, neither a top-down approach with focus on objective, external and macro-scale approaches, nor a bottom-up which advocates a subjective, internal and micro-scale approach can fully grasp the complexity of social organization in early complex societies.

This paper intends to bridge the top-down and bottom-up approach by allowing both external and internal aspects to influence the social organization and development. I will allow for a top-down political economy approach demonstrated by Earle & Spriggs (2015) to create the interpretive framework for the understanding of the power position of central places. On the other hand, I will apply a bottom-up approach to interpret the reactions from the local community. By applying a theory of anarchism as introduced by Anglebeck & Grier (2012), I propose that different strategies such as collective action, resistance and decentralization are applied in the societal organization to avoid the centralization of power and control over resources.

I will focus my study on the north-western region of Zealand. Here we find several Late Iron Age and medieval settlement sites as well as a central place: the Tissø complex. Before turning to a brief introduction to the study area, I will introduce the principles of the theoretical approaches and subsequently discuss their application to the evidence of the local area.

Central places and beyond

One analytical approach has significantly influenced our studies of centralization of power more than any other: Central Place

Theory (Christaller 1968). In the following, I will therefore assess this theory before moving to a presentation of an alternative approach: political economy and anarchism as a framework for analysing central places and their relation to the surrounding environment.

Central Place Theory

Walter Christaller introduced the Central Place Theory in the 1930s. He suggested a societal organization framed in a spatial and hierarchical structure of places in a regularly formed constellation. He describes central places of a higher order in a hierarchical organization where the status and functions of other places depended on their closeness to the central place (Christaller 1968). The theory is highly totalitarian and firmly hierarchical in its origin. The idea is rooted in a market-based theory where threshold and ranges are central concepts. Control over surplus and commodities in the local catchment area is likewise central to the argument. Although scholars have challenged this argument over the years, pointing to the significance of other functions such as social and cultural ones, it has formed the foundation for several studies (Crumley 1976; Näsman 1991, 169 f.; Fabech 1999, 456; Sindbæk 2005, 101ff.; Skre 2011, 199). Highly influential is Fabech and Ringved's model of the multiplied find material from increased metal-detector surveys. They assign levels to settlement material representing a fixed hierarchical pyramid structure of settlement types (Fabech & Ringved 1995). Näsman has likewise been influential with his model of a spatial and political power structure that allows for a variation of features and functions, but though he does not explicitly denominate the central place theory, his model is likewise based on a strict hierarchical view and the control over the local area (Näsman 1991, 169 ff.).

However problematic, the hierarchical and inflexible Central Place Theory contributes

to the discussion of identifying features, functions and relations of central places. Apart from economic functions, central places also serve juridical, political, cultic and social functions (Skre 2011, 198 f.). Näsman also elaborates further, pointing to a cultic function, control over trade and the facilitation of specialized handicraft as central elements in a political power structure held by a magnate or aristocrat (Näsman 1991, 169 f.). Helgesson provides the most genuine attempt at a different model that avoids the Central Place Theory. He proposes four concepts not bound in time and space: phenomenon, function, spatiality and human agency (Helgesson 1998, 40). However, his work is preliminary and written into a hierarchical discourse as well when applied to Fabech's model.

Accordingly, the Central Place Theory and attempts to moderate or develop the general idea are inadequate for understanding the diversity of central places of southern Scandinavia and the complexity of the societal organization they participate in. The models fail to explain the variations in pace, scale and functions. Phenomena such as warrior power and communication are not described, nor are relations to burials and monuments and landscape. Consequently, the archaeological material fits poorly with the analytical approach, and the function and characteristic of the central places are still elusive and widely debated (Sindbæk 2005, 103 f.; Sindbæk & Poulsen 2011, 8). A turn in historiography away from institutions towards social networks as shaping societal structures calls for new analytical approaches.

Political economy

From the quality and characteristics of artefacts and features it is assumed that elite or aristocratic environments exemplified at the

Tissø complex are related to power strategies and structures. Elemental power structures have been characterized as ideological, economic, military, and political powers. Control over resources such as access to sacred places or the performance of rituals; access to natural resources and surplus production; control over means of coercion and finally, control over the organization of social life –these are consequently important for gaining and retaining power (Mann 2012; Earle & Spriggs 2015, 516). If access to these resources for some reason becomes constricted, leaders can limit and control access and as a result gain power over resources; this means natural resources but also technologies or knowledge as resources. These constrictions on resources are termed *bottleneck situations* and are central concepts in a political economy approach presented by Earle (Earle & Spriggs 2015, 517).

The political economy approach aims to reconstruct past political economies by examining the material evidence for strategies to control resources. It includes similar power structures to those identified by Mann, but offers an operational approach where Mann's different phenomena of power strategies can be comprehensibly identified in the archaeological record. An example of bottlenecks is the control over know-how and accommodation of raw material in the form of moulds and scrap metal, control over trade or communication routes demonstrated by fortifications along important trade routes, or control over subsistence production through land holdings or resources such as timber. Bottleneck situations may be caused by environmental or natural conditions as well as strategic action (Earle & Spriggs 2015, 516 ff.).

The political economy approach has a Marxist affiliation and accordingly leans on Marx's Conflict Theory. However, the Marxist definition of class conflict is generally applied on a macro level, whereas the political economy approach allows for strategic action

by individuals. Political economy also allows different power strategies or a mix of strategies applied opportunistically, not denominating one power strategy to dominate over others, such as the power over the production system. Furthermore, power strategies must be constantly negotiated and are as likely to fail as they are to succeed, thereby not aligning with a strict evolutionary approach as found in classic Marxism (Hirth 1996, 221 f.; Earle & Spriggs 2015, 516).

Consequently, strategic actions are not exclusively reserved for aristocrats or elites to maintain power; commoners, farmers or other residents in the local community can execute strategic actions and are not powerless. Likewise, control over bottleneck situations offers no effective means of control, consequently depending on acceptance and allowing for reaction or resistance. To explore the strategic actions of performance, acceptance and reactions from a bottom-up as well as a top-down approach, a theory of anarchism will supplement the political economy approach and will be introduced in the following.

Anarchism and complex societies

A bottom-up approach to political economy theories that consider human agency and strategic actions as acceptance or reactions is presented in theory of anarchism. In a modern perception of anarchism, we imagine chaos, disorder and lack of authority. However, theory of anarchism provides a framework for studying pre-capitalist societies focusing on network organization and decentralization. Anarchism, along with Marxism, has been a subject of academic development, debate and study for years (Crumley 2015; Saitta & McGuire 1998). The reason why Marxism gained academic preference might relate to our preconceptions of state organization

since Marxism was developed explicitly for the analysis of state societies, which we are predetermined to recognize and relate to.

Conversely, anarchistic theory offers principles for social organization that ensure autonomy for individuals and local groups – control lies not within a centre but within individuals, families, households or local cooperative groups. Anarchists see social organization determined by needs, and they posit that it is not a natural position, but one which must be maintained. According to anarchist theory, three core principles stand out that accommodate individual or cooperative needs and maintain social organization: network organization, justified authorities and decentralization (Angelbeck & Grier 2012, 548 ff.).

With regard to network organization, first of all mutual aid, cooperative endeavours and communal decision making are important for structuring self-organized groups and linking autonomous local groups into larger networks of interaction. Even though networks do not have centres, the local groups do not necessarily lack authorities, following the second principle of justified authority. In anarchism, a distinction is made between artificial and natural authorities. Higher institutions imposing artificial authorities result in a lack of acceptance, whereas natural authorities are requested e.g. because of their knowledge or skills. Natural authorities are widely accepted if the power they exercise is limited in its spatial and temporal range and therefore situationally justified. Finally, decentralization describes the active resistance to centralization of power and control, directed not only against states but against every kind of absolute power, also within small communities. Angelbeck & Grier (2012) argue that these outlined principles of anarchism provides “significant explanatory power for interpreting a range of small-scale societies of the past, particularly in relation

to how groups self-organize, resist and revolt against those who attempt to centralize and institutionalize socio-political inequalities” (Angelbeck & Grier 2012, 548).

The fact that this approach primarily has been developed and applied with reference to small-scale non-state societies may be its force. The key principles challenge our predetermined anticipation of institutions, structures and authorities. The key principles can, however, equally be found in complex and centralized states, and therefore the approach has a wider range than solely small-scale societies.

Though it shares concepts similar to, for instance, Giddens’s ideas that structures constrain or enable human actions, consequently forming society, it differs from Giddens’s theory in the concept of a presupposed structured or institutionalized society. Furthermore, structures are regarded by Giddens as rather stable, but can be altered through unintended consequences of action (Giddens 1976). Anarchism suggests a more active and intentional strategy for human agency where inequalities and centralization of powers are constantly reacted against.

Other approaches such as theories of heterarchy, egalitarianism and collective action likewise share similarities with the theory of anarchism, and have previously been applied as an analytic framework to understand social formation and organization (Crumley 1995; Carballo & Feinmann 2016; McGuire & Saitta 1996). However, egalitarianism is asserted and maintained rather than being a natural condition, and strategic actions must be triggered to maintain a social order offered by egalitarianism (Trigger, 2003, 669 f.). Likewise, following Foucault, power is embedded in all relations, and increasing accumulation of power and control will provoke reactions and resistance from the community (Foucault & Gordon 1980, Foucault & Rabinow 1997, 291 ff.).

The theory of anarchism offers an operational approach to analyse these reactions. It also draws attention to collapses and stagnation rather than evolutionarily embedded concepts, and likewise offers diversity of power relations rather than dichotomous binary opposition: simple-complex, unequal-egalitarian or particularist-nomothetic.

In conclusion, the Central Place Theory is inadequate to explain the variations in pace, scale and functions of locations like the Tissø complex. It points to a regional settlement hierarchy but does not consider reactions, resistance or human agency and it fits poorly with the archaeological record. A political economy approach is introduced to make an operational model for analysing evidence for strategies to control resources as a means of accumulation of power. Resources are regarded as natural resources but also technologies or knowledge. Arguing that an accumulation of powers will be met with reactions – either acceptance or resistance – the theory of anarchism is introduced as a mode to analyse the reactions. Before turning to examples of the relations between the local community and the Tissø complex, an introduction to the regional setting, the archaeological record and the complex will follow.

The north-western region of Zealand

The geographically bounded north-western region of Zealand is characterized by a long coastline to the east. Here natural harbours and shallow beaches provide good landing places. The hinterland is flat and provides good agricultural conditions.

Lake Tissø is central in the region and being the fourth largest lake in Denmark, it is of considerable size. From the complex on the western shore of the lake it is seven kilometres overland to the western coast of

Zealand, but the Halleby River, bordering on the complex to the south, also provides a navigable waterway. To the north of Tissø, the Åmose River probably functioned as an accessible waterway inland and at the same time served as a border for land transport to the north caused by extensive wetland areas. The same is true of Bøstrup River running to the south. East of the lake, the landscape is hilly with steep slopes (Pedersen & Dreyer 2003, 9 ff.).

To the north-west by the coast, we find the modern city of Kalundborg, the only large town in the region. The medieval town is not known until the middle of the 12th century and there is no archaeological evidence for an earlier predecessor. In the chronicles, however, we find *Hærvig*, described as a harbour where the fleet gathered, presumably where Kalundborg is located today, but we have no archaeological evidence of it. Generally, the archaeological evidence is scarce, as the region has not been the target for much development. Artefact distribution from metal detector surveys, however, is copious, covering extensive parts of the region. From the place-name material, we find a region populated with villages and hamlets in the Iron Age, with an expansion in the Viking Age and a large increase in the medieval period (Gøgsig Jakobsen & Dam 2009, 15 ff.).

In this region, intensive detector surveys, followed by extensive excavations, have revealed a large activity area on the western shore of Lake Tissø. A substantial complex with large hall buildings, ritual enclosures, market and workshop areas as well as sacred sites was unearthed close to the lake. The complex evolved in numerous phases, covering an extensive area and revealing more than 10,000 finds. A large assembly hall was central to the complex from AD 550, situated to the north. Around AD 750 it was burned down and moved further south. Here the main hall building evolved in four

phases, only to be deserted around AD 1050. A minor building within a small enclosure adjacent to the hall possibly served a ritual function and other features showed further signs of ritual practices: an open ritual site with deposits from feasting and a well with seasonal depositions. In addition, a larger area with numerous pit-houses represents a market area and shows signs of extensive handicraft activities.

Political economy, justified leaders and resistance

In the following, I will assess the structures of power and control in the north-west region of Zealand. I will explore the reactions and interactions between the local community and the Tissø complex using this complex and the relation to the local community as a case study. I will discuss bottlenecks in the form of control over ritual performance and landholding in depth and at the end point to other points of constriction, where accumulation of power can be argued and accordingly a mix of strategic reactions applied in order to avoid constrictions, inequality and centralization of power.

Ritual control

Cosmology and ritual practices are important elements in ordering daily life, and the control over ritual functions and performances is a potential bottleneck situation. Control over resources, such as knowledge, authority and wealth to perform and execute rituals, was a means to obtain power and control over ideological functions. Central places are said to have served as supraregional cult centres to which the population came during certain periods (Jørgensen 2014, 131 f.). But how was the control over these resources exercised

and what were the reactions in the local community? Do we find resistance to or acceptance of the seemingly centralized ritual control at the Tissø complex? Ritual functions are difficult to assess in the archaeological record, since they need no earth-bound structures and do not necessarily involve artefacts with good preservation abilities. From the medieval period, we have church buildings and sacred wells but from the Late Iron Age and Viking Age remains are scarce. However, place-name analyses have proved to be important and fruitful in understanding settlement patterns and dynamics (Brink 1999, 424; Christensen 2010; Albris forthcoming; Dam 2015, 10).

Accordingly, we may turn to place-names, where sacral toponyms point to a ritual function in a fossil landscape. In Sweden, we find place-name complexes where a cluster of place-names indicates a centralization of different functions, also including sacred or ritual places. Their form and distribution is uniform, and it is reasonable to presume they are not coincidental. In Denmark, however, the pattern is not so coherent and many place-names have been altered or lost (Brink 1999, 425; Christensen 2016, 20).

We do find a possible ritual setting in the name *Saltofte* just to the north of Lake Tissø. The place-names stem from the early Viking Age and the prefix *Sal-* could refer to a hall building or house of the gods (Christensen 2016, 8). Other *Sal-* names are known in the area from later maps, indicating several such locations. *Lunden* to the south of the Tissø complex on the western shore, could likewise indicate a sacred place. The pointed landscape formation forming a small projection into the lake has, since the construction of the administrative boards, belonged to Sæbygård on the opposite side of the lake. This could suggest that the chief situated at Sæbygård obtained the right to the sacred place at *Lunden*. Later, an early medieval magnate

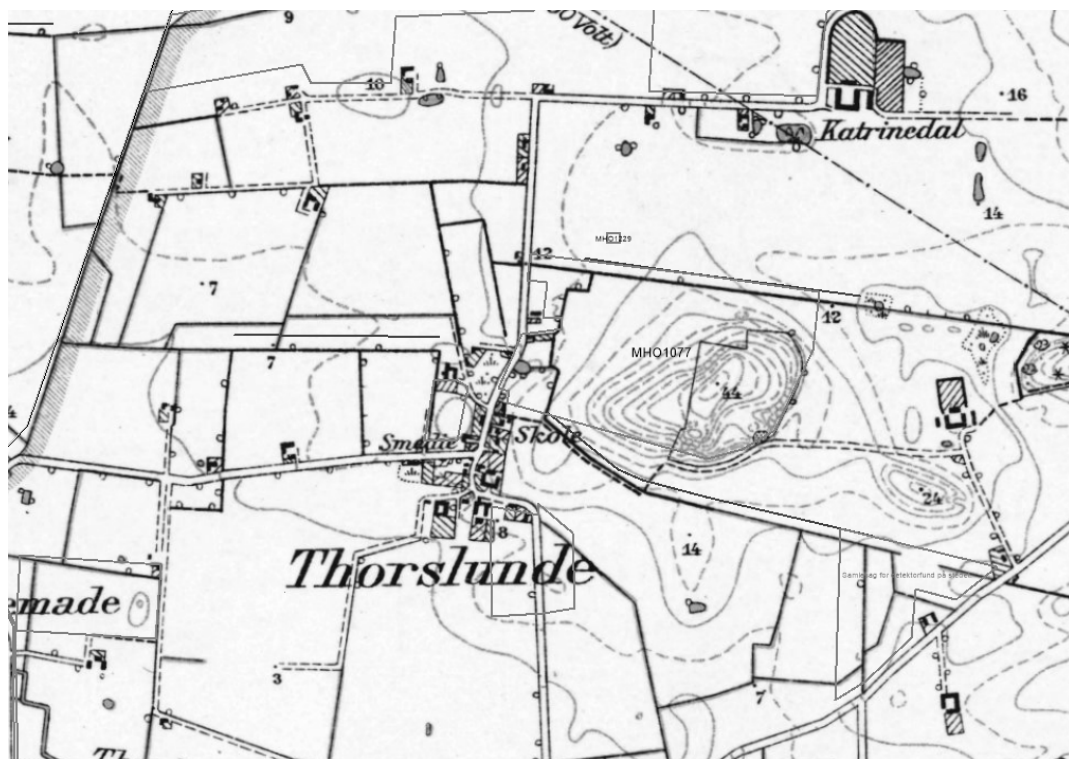


Fig. 1. The possible sacred environment around Thorslunde 17 km to the north-east from the Tissø-complex. The place name Thorslunde itself suggests a ritual place devoted to Thor. A significant topographical location can be seen in then hillsite to the north-east of the village. The name *Hellestykkerne* is connected to the northern slope illustrated by the contour lines. Topographical map from 1842. *Høje målebordsblade* © Kort- og matrikelstyrelsen.

farm was built at *Lunden*, suggesting that the foreland had a strategic position. To the north-east, 17 km from the lake, we find *Thorslunde* situated next to a natural hill with the name *Hellestykkerne* connected to lots here on later maps. *Helle-* could indicate holy functions, but could also simply denominate the slopes of the hill. Detector findings in the area show continuous population from the Viking Age to the Middle Ages, but have yielded no specific items with cultic connections. This might, however, demonstrate a cultic environment from the place-names and the topography where a hilltop is central (Fig. 1). To the north-west, eight kilometres from Lake Tissø, we find the place-name *Vørslev*. The ending of the place-name makes it

contemporary with the Tissø complex. The prefix *Vær-* meaning *vi* suggests a sacred place or a place for offerings (Albris forthcoming, 20). Unfortunately, we have no archaeological evidence to support this argument, though a circular rampart structure is found on the Birkendegård Overdrev close by. It has been interpreted as a wood henge, but no convincing dating material has been presented (Ramskou 1970, 1972). Research has demonstrated that offerings of artefacts in wetland areas were common in the Viking Age, presumably continuing into the Middle Ages at the holy wells (Lund 2004; 2008). The nature of their deposition makes it difficult to place them in the archaeological record, and apart from a Viking Age toolbox found in the Halleby

River we cannot detect any such convincing practice. Wetland offerings like the toolbox often have an individual character and do not seem part of a collective ritual practice. We find artefacts of ritual nature at most detector locations, but they probably represent personal amulets expressing individual or group devotion and are not regarded as a factor in a larger ritual performance due to their diminutive dimensions. To conclude, evidence of ritual performances in the local community is scarce and dispersed and we cannot demonstrate any decentralized reaction to centralization and control over ritual functions. This could be due to the nature of evidence, but it is reasonable to suggest from the inconsistency of the evidence in the local community and the predominant presence in the Tissø complex that the centralized ritual performance evident at the complex was widely accepted in the local community.

Central in the complex is a special fenced enclosure adjacent to the main hall. Here, a smaller building was constructed and reconstructed in different designs over the years. The structure is consistent from the 8th century through to the 10th century, when we find the enclosure terminated but a small building continually erected in the area. It has been argued that the building and the enclosure served as a place of offerings or ritual practices, and similar features are found at other locations such as Lejre and Gudme. On the hilltop to the west, a system of clay-extraction pits bears witness to ritual meals and offerings. Finally, by the marketplace area, we find a well with ritual animal deposits, where the stratigraphy reflects continuous use and seasonal depositions (Jørgensen 2014, 250 ff.). These elements suggest that the complex served various ritual functions.

In the written sources, three types of offerings can be detected: gift offerings, communion offerings and propitiatory offerings (Näsström 2001, 37; Jørgensen 2014, 131). The offerings

in the well seem to be of a private nature; it is situated in the market-place area at a good distance from the main hall building, and the environment seems constricted so that not many people could watch a performance unfolding here. It is reasonable to imagine that these rituals were conducted on a local level, perhaps representing gift offerings. The sacred enclosure at the hall suggests another ritual practice, perhaps propitiatory offerings again for a limited and perhaps chosen number of people. Finally, the open ritual site seems much more qualified to host rituals with an element of sacred performance and could present a communion offering, perhaps for the prosperous future of the new hall building as suggested by Bican (Bican 2013, 128 f.; Jørgensen 2014, 252). This implies that the local community in cooperation engaged in the construction of the new hall building followed by a communion offering. It is not likely that a communion offering was thrown for a workforce of slaves or hired or forced labour. From an anarchistic position, these features suggest two perspectives. First, the variety of rituals on different levels of performance indicates decentralized practices, which can be understood as a resistance to a firm centralization of control over ritual resources – a backdoor to bottlenecks making sure that a cosmological relation can be maintained on a local level regardless of control over resources. This is perhaps what the scarce evidence in the local community likewise indicates. Secondly, the different ritual features and performances evident in the material indicate, on the other hand, that a justified leader was accepted. The evidence suggests performances executed under ritual authority, perhaps a chief or a person with specialized skills, a priest or shaman. According to anarchism, natural authorities are requested e.g. because of their knowledge or skills. Justified leaders, e.g. ritual chiefs or priest, are widely accepted if the power they exercised is limited in its spatial and temporal

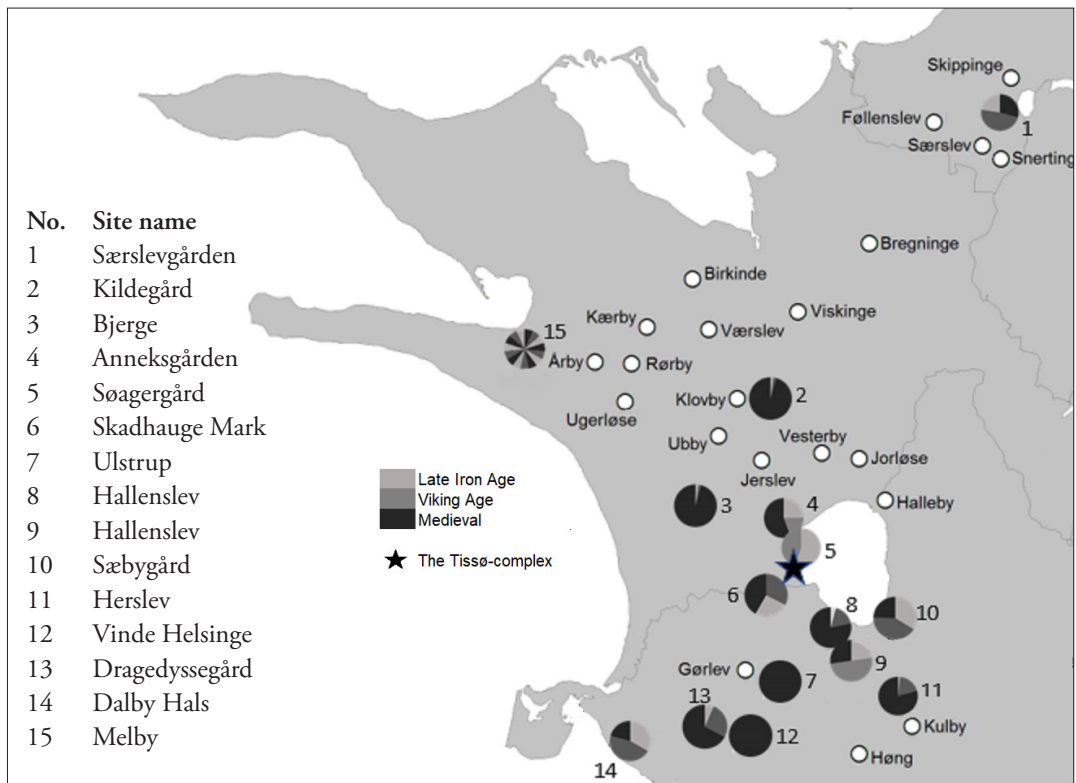
range and therefore situationally justified. The evidence from the local environment and the Tissø complex itself suggest such a social relation.

Control over land

Another constriction point or bottleneck situation that can lead to accumulation of power and wealth is control over land. Did the magnates or aristocrats at the central places build their power and wealth on landholding? We tend to see the organization of the Viking Age retrospectively from the Middle Ages and imagine a pre-feudal system of some sort. We also have a very generalized picture of economic and political organization of the central places despite their differences. However, the concept of landholding in the Viking Age is widely disputed (Poulsen 2011, 14 ff., 276 ff.; Skre 2011, 201 f.; Ulsig 2011, 213 ff.). We do not have a firm picture of how central places operated and how wealth, and correspondingly a high hierarchical status, was generated and maintained. Different operating systems are suggested: tribute from independent farmers; direct operation; or a manorial system with dependent farms that paid land rent in staples or *corvée* labour (Jørgensen 2001, 73). The importance of slave labour in large farm operations is likewise suggested (Iversen 2011, 264; Myrdal 2011, 293 ff.). By looking at the chronology of sites in the local area, I will assess landholding as a constriction point to accumulate wealth and power. It is reasonable to suggest that, if the central place by Lake Tissø generated power and wealth from landholdings in the local area, the disappearance of the centre around 1050 AD would be evident in the chronological pattern of the sites in the local area. Therefore, we must first assess the archaeological evidence.

The region in general has not been subject

to much development and consequently the archaeological data from excavations is scarce. Metal detecting surveys, however, have flourished over the years, presumably in many cases pointing to settlement sites. Since we do not have the underlying structures, we must assess the metal find-material in its own right. Fourteen locations have been found in the local area with an inventory of more than 20 artefacts. Five locations have been left out, two to make the overview more manageable since they represent two different surveys from the same location with identical chronological pattern; and three because they are not yet properly registered. It has been asserted, however, that these additional locations do not alter the general picture. From the numbers of artefacts, the distribution patterns and find combinations it is reasonable to suggest that the detector finds are more than stray finds, burials or points of infrastructure, but that they represent actual settlement sites. An exception might be Dalby Hals, generally considered a landing place for reloading goods for the river transport to the Tissø complex through the Halleby River. The number of artefacts varies from 22 to 284 items and the character of the artefacts is diverse. The preservation conditions and mode of survey have undoubtedly influenced the picture, but the general tendency is consistent, and I would say that additions will not change the general picture. The artefacts from each location have been grouped according to chronology. Wide chronological groupings have been applied: Late Iron Age (AD 500–750), Viking Age (AD 750–1050) and Middle Ages (AD 1050–1350); a more detailed chronology is often difficult and does not contribute to the general point. Uncharacteristic artefacts that cannot be precisely dated and may occur in all periods, such as scrap metal, is not included. However, again the general tendency is so consistent that this will not change the overall picture. The general picture demonstrates a great continuity of settlement sites in the nearby area (Fig. 2).



No.	Site name	Journal no. in the Museum of Western Zealand
1	Sørslevgården	KAM 2014-001
2	Kildegård	MVE03225
3	Bjerge	MVE03256
4	Anneksgården	KAM2008-005
5	Søagergård	MVE03093
6	Skadhauge Mark	KAM2009-003
7	Ulstrup	MVE03340
8	Hallenslev	SVM1486
9	Hallenslev	MVE03088
10	Sæbygård	MVE03089
11	Herslev	MVE03081
12	Vinde Helsing	MVE03094
13	Dragedyssegård	MVE03274
14	Dalby Hals	MVE03118
15	Melby	

Fig. 2. The chronological distribution of detector finds from sites in the local area around the Tissø-complex. There is a great continuity in the find material from late Iron Age to medieval times. The older place names of villages with no detector finds are likewise illustrated to give an idea of the general settlement dynamics. Background map with old place names by Johnny Grandjean Gøgsig Jakobsen.

Only at Søgagergård (no. 5) do we find a lack of medieval artefacts. However, Anneksgården (no. 4) is part of the same present-day villages, and this particular find-picture probably signifies a development of the same settlement further to the west. To the south, we find Ulstrup (no. 7) and Vinde Helsingø (no. 12) which are purely medieval settlements. The rest of the locations show continuity from the Late Iron Age to the medieval period. Særslev (no. 1) to the very north and Melby to the west are included because the find inventory here has many elements that connect it to the Tissø complex in quantity and quality. The Melby findings are not properly categorized at the moment to allow for a detailed chronological analysis, but the location demonstrates stable continuity from the Late Iron Age into the Middle Ages.

What implication does this chronological pattern have for discussions of control over land? With a termination of the Tissø complex, a disruption in the chronological pattern would be liable if the complex was largely based on landholding. We could imagine a reorganization of the landed property resulting in a reorganization of settlement patterns and their chronological distribution pattern. One can argue that the purely medieval sites to the south demonstrate a void in control over land that allowed new settlements to emerge. On the other hand, in general we see several new settlements in the medieval period, due to population expansion and technological innovations, and therefore it is not reasonable to correlate these locations with a void in control over land. This is a general tendency which applies to most areas of Denmark and Scania and not particularly to regions with a central place or other specific conditions (Gammeltoft *et al.* 2015, 14 f.). An assessment of the evidence of farm operation at the Tissø complex will contribute to the discussion. The mode of operation at the Tissø complex has been largely discussed and a predominant

theory suggests that the complex was supported by a tribute system, changing into a direct farming system in the 9th century. In a tribute system, goods are brought from abroad and therefore no storage buildings are needed. Only in the 9th century do we find the construction of storage buildings at the Tissø complex, suggesting a change in mode of operation (Jørgensen 2001; 2010). A direct operating system, on the other hand, depends on a workforce. It could consist of slaves, which again would need accommodation and food preparation evident in additional dwellings. It could also consist of the local farmers doing *corvée* labour, but one can question whether they would have peacefully accepted such changes. Radical changes call for the presence of military powers, again needing accommodation for armed men at the complex, of which there is no evidence (Skre 2010, 287). A classical manorial system with tenancies and estate dues is usually only seen from the 14th century and would also require storage buildings (Poulsen 2011, 16). However, the storage capacity that we find in the 9th century seems insufficient to support the idea of a direct operation system as well as a manorial system. Likewise, the evidence of food preparation is only present through refuse layers and cooking pits, but e.g. quern stones as found in Toftegård, indicating preparation of staple goods on the spot, are not found. Over the years, Lars Jørgensen has debated the lack of storage buildings among other evidence. He concludes that “it was never a production site” (Jørgensen 2003, 199ff.). Consequently, he moves away from the idea of a farm system with direct operation and proposes a function as a royal seasonal site for a travelling monarchy. Accordingly, the archaeological evidence from the Tissø complex does not suggest that the wealth of the complex was bound in landholdings and subsequently payment of land rent and levies from the local community in staple goods

and surplus production. This conclusion is consistent with the picture of continuity of occupation in the local settlement sites.

Could we anticipate that land rent and levies were paid in prestige objects and therefore did not require storehouses or dwellings? The quality and character of the find material seems so unique that it is difficult to imagine that the local community could sustain a stable flow of high-prestige objects to satisfy land rent and levies. However, this will require a detailed study of the quality and distribution patterns of artefacts that would be beyond the scope of this article.

The settlements in the local area demonstrate a general concept of location-bound continuity, but this is not necessarily the same as continuity in ownership of landed property. The reasons and consequences of the termination of the complex has been the object of very little investigation and discussion. If the complex was ousted, we would imagine another centre of control taking over. When searching in the local area for a worthy candidate, the focus falls on Kalundborg roughly 20 km to the north-east. Kalundborg has direct connections to the emerging royal power. Esbern Snare, foster-brother to King Valdemar I, build fortifications here in the late 12th century and conflict or cooperation between the magnates or aristocrats at the Tissø complex and the emerging royal power is easily envisaged, with Kalundborg emerging victorious or prosperous. These would align with the dynamics we find in the connection between Lejre and Roskilde and Uppåkra and Lund. However, the archaeological evidence shows no brick-free layers in Kalundborg, suggesting that it was not founded before the mid 12th century – roughly 100 years after the termination of Tissø. We must therefore look further to find a worthy candidate which could possibly take over the ownership of landed property, if such a concept existed. Central places are generally believed to be a

part of an over-regional network (Jørgensen 2003; Söderberg 2005) and with the suggestion that the Tissø complex served as a seasonal residence for a travelling monarchy, Lejre and later Roskilde are found to be worthy candidates. However, scholars largely agree that dispersed landholdings and alienable land rights are rather late developments (Poulsen 2011, 16) and with 70 kilometres to Lejre the local region around the Tissø complex must be regarded as rather dispersed landholding. It is likewise difficult to imagine how a position of control would be executed and operated on a practical level.

To conclude, since the chronological developments in the local area show great continuity from the Late Iron Age to the medieval period, it is tempting to suggest that landholding was in the hands of the local farmers. Following the concept of anarchism, this mode of organization demonstrates decentralization to the control over land, resisting a potential bottleneck situation where all landed property ended up in the hands of a single person or a central institution. The argument allows for strategic actions and human agency to form the economic and social organization. If we imagine a transition into a different power relation with the decline of the Tissø complex, however elusive in the archaeological record, following the concept of anarchism, only justified leaders are accepted in contrast to institutionalized leaders. Therefore, it is reasonable to propose that if the control over landed property changed hands with the decline of the Tissø complex, the control must have been taken over by justified leaders enjoying support from the bottom-up. Either way, I propose that a great deal of independence, control and power was present in the local community.

More constriction points

The present format does not allow for further investigations of possible bottleneck situations and anarchistic reaction to draw a more consistent picture of the relations between central places and the local community from a political economy and anarchistic approach. A more specific analysis of the north-west region of Zealand awaits future studies. In the following, however, I will outline a number of possible bottlenecks and their counterpart in the material evidence.

First, control over trade is an obvious way to obtain control. It has been argued, however, that control over trade, trading ports and landing places is not under royal or elite control but operates on an individual level (Carlsson 1991, 147; Callmer 1998, 35; Ulriksen 1998, 137). This point has been criticized on a supraregional level, but might hold true on a regional level. In the north-west region of Zealand, we find a dispersed distribution of sites that demonstrate traces of local and foreign trade, e.g. Melby, Særsløvgården and Dalby Hals. Only Dalby Hals has a direct connection to the Tissø complex through the Halleby River, but to underline the argument for decentralized control over trade, we see a chronological continuity into the Middle Ages.

Secondly, jurisdictional control is another bottleneck situation, but central places in general seem to lack evidence of jurisdictional control. At the Tissø complex two beheaded men have long been interpreted as evidence of jurisdictional power, but a later correction of the radiocarbon dates placed them in the Middle Ages. A jurisdictional element might be difficult to determine in the archaeological record, but the contemporary written sources suggest the holding of a *ting*, a jurisdictional assembly, at the central places (Skre 2011, 200). On the other hand, we find several place-names outside central places representing

jurisdictional control – the *ting*. Though they might represent medieval jurisdictional settings, in Ubbby 5 km to the north-west, we find a *ting* place-name where archaeological evidence suggests contemporarity with the Tissø complex. According to Saxo Grammaticus, in the Viking Age a *ting* was held at Iseøre to the north in Odsherred, suggesting that it functioned detached from central places (Svensson 2007; Albris forthcoming).

Finally, control over handicraft and production makes up a constriction point in terms of raw materials, but also knowledge and skill. The market place area at the Tissø complex shows extensive handicraft activities, but at other locations as well we find signs of handicraft production, e.g. Melby.

I could continue the list, such as control over infrastructure or raw material, e.g. timber, but I believe the point is clear: the identifications of bottleneck situations and additional reactions to these constitute an operational point of departure for analysing elements that shape the social organization.

Conclusion

The purpose of this exercise was primarily an attempt to find a new approach to view the power structures and social organization in the Late Iron Age to the Middle Ages. By combining two theoretical approaches – political economy and anarchism – an operational analytical approach has been applied. The development of the approach and the analysis of the region around Lake Tissø is in its early days, but the approach has proven constructive to demonstrate the complexity of the social organization: a complexity that goes far beyond the Central Place Theory.

The social organization is not based on a hierarchical structure, but consists of multilevel dynamics including conflict and cooperation,

strategic reactions, acceptance and resistance. This does not suggest an egalitarian society or a non-hierarchical structure, but gives the individual a possibility to act within the system in a multiple hierarchical structure situationally based. It helps us focus on the concept of hierarchy as a complex element, not confusing scalar and control hierarchies (Crumley 1995, 2). Likewise, it demonstrates an economic complexity represented in bottleneck situations, but at the same time note that we cannot presuppose a political hierarchy that coincides with these constriction points. It points to a diversity of power relations and a variety of agents. Furthermore, it does not presuppose a linear evolutionary development, but holds that power relations evolve and terminate at different pace and scale, resulting in a dynamic organization that erupts or pauses, reverses, zigzags or tangents (Ames 2012, 568). With an inconsistent control of resources, hierarchical power structures are unlikely to function (Callmer 1998, 35). We might question the approach and perhaps challenge the intentionality in the strategic actions. Was it a conscious choice to avoid centralized landholding or is it an autonomous levelling mechanism? We might also question the emergence of the social structure in the first place and conclude that the approach gives no solution to that. Future works calls for refining and developing the theoretical approach. By assessing the archaeological materiel not from a top-down hierarchical perspective, but allowing a bottom-up approach in a diverse social construct, I am confident that the development of the approach will go hand in hand with a new insight into relations between the elite, craftsmen, landowners, shamans, farmers, commoners, traders and so forth.

References

- Albris, S. L. forthcoming. *Stednavne, bebyggelses-historie og landskabsopfattelse omkring den aristokratiske residens ved Tissø*.
- Ames, K. M. 2012. Comment on: Anarchism and the Archaeology of Anarchic Societies. Resistance to Centralization in the Coast Salish Region of the Pacific Northwest Coast, by B. Angelbeck & C. G. Grier. *Current Anthropology* 53 (5).
- Angelbeck, B. & Grier, C. 2012. Anarchism and the Archaeology of Anarchic Societies. Resistance to Centralization in the Coast Salish Region of the Pacific Northwest Coast. *Current Anthropology* 53 (5).
- Bican, J. F. 2013. Haller og bygningsritualer – den åbne, rituelle plads ved Fugledegård. In Lyngstrøm, H & Gebauer Thomsen, L. (eds.), *Vikingetid i Danmark. Tekster skrevet til Jørgen Poulsen i anledning af den eksperimentelle og formidlende arkæologi, som Vikingelandsbyen i Albertslund har praktiseret og udviklet fra 1992 til 2012*. København.
- Brink, S. 1999. Social order in the early Scandinavian landscape. In Fabeck, C. & Ringtved, J. (eds.), *Settlement and Landscape. Proceedings of a Conference in Århus, Denmark, May 4–7 1998*. Aarhus.
- Callmer, J. 1998. Handelsplatser och kustplatser och deras förhållande till lokala politiska system. In Stjernquist, B., Larsson, L. & Hårdh, G. (eds.), *Centrala platser – centrala frågor. Samhällsstrukturen under järnåldern. En vänbok till Berta Stjernquist*. Stockholm.
- Callmer, J. & Rosengren, E. 1997. “– gick Grendel att söka det höga huset –”. *Arkeologiska källor till aristokratiska miljöer i Skandinavien under yngre järnålder. Rapport från ett seminarium i Falkenberg 16–17 november 1995*. Halmstad.
- Carballo, D. M. & Feinman, G. M. 2016. Cooperation, collective action, and the archeology of large-scale societies. *Evolutionary Anthropology. Issues, News, and Reviews* 25 (6).
- Carlsson, D. 1991. Harbours and Trading Places on Gotland AD 600–1000. In Crumlin-Pedersen, O. (ed.), *Aspects of Maritime Scandinavia AD 200–1200. Proceedings of the Nordic Seminar on Maritime Aspects of Archaeology, Roskilde, 13th–15th March, 1989*. Roskilde.
- Christaller, W. 1968 [1933]. *Die zentralen Orte in Süddeutschland. Eine ökonomisch-geographische Untersuchung über die Gesetzmäßigkeit der*

- Verbreitung und Entwicklung der Siedlungen mit städtischen Funktionen.* Repographischer Nachdruck der 1. Auflage, Jena 1933. Darmstadt.
- Christensen, L. E. 2010. *Stednavne som kilde til yngre jernalders centralpladser.* PhD thesis. Faculty of Humanities, University of Copenhagen.
- Christensen, L. 2016. Centralpladsrelevante stednavne og centrale pladser på Fyn – Nye fund og mulige strukturer. In Sejler Danielsen, M., Eggert, B. & Jakobsen, J. G. G. (eds.), *Navn og navnebarer. Rapport fra NORNA 45. symposium i Skagen 1.–4. oktober 2014.* NORNA-rapporter 93. Uppsala
- Christensen, T. 2015. *Lejre bag myten. De arkæologiske udgravninger.* Højbjerg.
- Crumley, C. L. 1976 Toward a Locational Definition of State Systems of Settlement. *American Anthropologist* 78 (1).
- 1995. Heterarchy and the Analysis of Complex Societies. *Archeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association* 6 (1).
- Dam, P. 2015. *Bebyggelser og stednavnetyper.* København.
- Earle, T. & Spriggs, M. 2015. Political Economy in Prehistory. A Marxist Approach to Pacific Sequences. *Current Anthropology* 56 (4).
- Fabech, C. 1999. Centrality in sites and landscapes. In Fabech, C. & Ringtved, J. (eds.), *Settlement and Landscape. Proceedings of a Conference in Århus, Denmark, May 4–7 1998.* Aarhus.
- Fabech, C. & Ringtved, J. 1995. Magtens geografi i Sydkandinavien. Om kulturlandskab, produktion og bebyggelsesmønster. In Resi, H. G. (ed.) *Produksjon og Samfunn. Om erverv, spesialisering og bosetning i Norden i 1. årtusen e.Kr. Beretning fra 2. nordiske jernaldersymposium på Granavolden Gjøstgiveri 7–10 mai 1992.* Universitetets Oldsaksamling, Varia 30. Oslo.
- Foucault, M. & Gordon, C. 1980. *Power/knowledge. Selected interviews and other writings, 1972–1977.* New York
- Foucault, M. & Rabinow, P. 1997. *Ethics. Subjectivity and truth.* New York.
- Gammeltoft, P., Jakobsen, J. G. G. & Sindbæk, S. M. 2015. Vikingetidens bebyggelse omkring Kattegat og Skagerrak. Et forsøg på kortlægning. In Pedersen, A. & Sindbæk, S. M. (eds.), *Et fælles hav. Skagerrak og Kattegat i vikingetiden. Seminar på Nationalmuseet, København, 19.–20. september 2012.* København.
- Giddens, A. 1976. *New rules of sociological method. A positive critique of interpretative sociologies.* London.
- Gøgsig Jakobsen, J. G. & Dam, P. 2009. Nordvestsjællands kystbebyggelse fra vikingetid til ca. 1700. *Fra Nordvestsjælland* 2009.
- Helgesson, B. 1998. Vad är centralt? – fenomen, och funktion. Lokalisering och person. In Larsson, L. & Hårdh, B. (eds.), *Centrala platser – centrala frågor. Samhällsstrukturen under järnåldern. En vänbok till Berta Stjernquist.* Stockholm.
- Hirth, K. G. 1996. Political Economy and Archaeology. Perspectives on Exchange and Production. *Journal of Archaeological Research* 4 (3).
- Iversen, T. 2011. Thralls' Manumission, Land Clearing, and State Building in Medieval Norway. In Sindbæk, S. M. & Poulsen, B. (eds.), *Settlement and Lordship in Viking and Early Medieval Scandinavia.* Turnhout.
- Jørgensen, L. 2001. From tribute to the estate system, 3rd–12th century. A proposal for the economic development of the magnates' residences in Scandinavia based on settlement structure from Gudme, Tissø and Lejre. In Arrhenius, B. (ed.), *Kingdoms and Regionality. Transactions from the 49th Sachsensymposium, 1998 in Uppsala.* Stockholm.
- 2003. Manor and Market at Lake Tissø in the Sixth to Eleventh Centuries. The Danish "Productive" Sites. In Pestell, T. & Ulmschneider, K. (eds.), *Markets in early medieval Europe. Trading and productive sites, 650–850.* Macclesfield.
- 2010. Gudme and Tissø. Two magnates' complexes in Denmark from the 3rd to the 11th century AD. In Ludowici, B. (ed.), *Trade and communication networks of the first millennium AD in the northern part of Central Europe. Central places, beach markets, landing places and trading centres.* Stuttgart.
- 2014. Norse Religion and Ritual Sites in Scandinavia in the 6th–11th century. In Gulløv, H. C. (ed.), *Northern worlds. Landscapes, interactions and dynamics. Research at the National Museum of Denmark. Proceedings of the Northern Worlds Conference, Copenhagen 28–30 November 2012.* Odense.
- Larsson, L. 2003. The Uppåkra Project. Preconditions, performance and prospect. In Larsson, L. & Hårdh, B. (eds.), *Centrality – Regionality. The Social Structure of Southern Sweden during the Iron Age.* Stockholm.

- 2003. *Centrality – Regionality. The Social Structure of Southern Sweden during the Iron Age*. Stockholm.
- Lund, J. 2004. Våben i vand. Om deponeringer i vikingetiden. *Kuml* 2004.
- 2008. Banks, borders and bodies of water in Viking Age mentality. *Journal of Wetland Archaeology* 8.
- Mann, M., 2012. *The sources of social power*. Vol. 1. *A history of power from the beginning to AD 1760*. New York.
- McGuire, R. H. & Saitta, D. J. 1996. Although They Have Petty Captains, They Obey Them Badly. The Dialectics of Prehispanic Western Pueblo Social Organization. *American Antiquity* 61 (2).
- Myrdal, J. 2011. Milking and Grinding, Digging and Herding. Slaves and Farmwork 1000–1300. In Sindbæk, S. M. & Poulsen, B. (eds.), *Settlement and Lordship in Viking and Early Medieval Scandinavia*. Turnhout.
- Näsman, U. 1991. Det syvende århundrede – et mørkt tidsrum i ny belysning. In Mortensen, P. & Rasmussen, B. M. 1991 (eds.), *Fra stamme til stat i Danmark*. 2, *Hövdingesamfund og kongemagt*. Århus.
- 1998. Mydskandinavisk samhällsstruktur i ljuset av merovingisk och anglosaxisk analogi eller i vad är det som centralplatserna är centrala? In Larsson, L. & Hårdh, B. (eds.), *Centrala platser – centrala frågor. Samhällsstrukturen under järnåldern. En vänbok till Berta Stjernquist*. Stockholm.
- Näsström, B. M. 2001. *Blot. Tro og offer i det førkristne Norden*. Oslo.
- Pedersen, L. & Dreyer, N. P. 2003. Tissø – offersø, vandresservoir og rekreativ ressource. *Fra Holbæk Amt* 2003.
- Poulsen, B. 2011. If the Danish Vikings Knew Land Rent, What Was It Like? In Sindbæk S. M. & Poulsen, B. (eds.), *Settlement and Lordship in Viking and Early Medieval Scandinavia*. Turnhout.
- Ramskou, T. 1970. Et dansk Stonehenge? *Nationalmuseets Arbejdsmark* 1970.
- 1972. Cirklerne ved Birkendegård. *Fra Holbæk Amt* 1971–1972.
- Saitta, D. J. & McGuire, R. H. 1998. Dialectics, heterarchy, and Western Pueblo social organization. *American Antiquity* 63 (2).
- Sindbæk, S. M. 2005. *Ruter og rutinisering. Vikingetidens fjernhandel i Nordeuropa*. København.
- Sindbæk, S. M. & Poulsen, B. 2011. Settlement and Lordship in Viking and Early Medieval Scandinavia. In Sindbæk S. M. & Poulsen, B. (eds.), *Settlement and Lordship in Viking and Early Medieval Scandinavia*. Turnhout.
- Skre, D. 2010. Comment on: *Gudme and Tissø. Two magnates' complexes in Denmark from the 3rd to the 11th century AD*, by L. Jørgensen 2010. In Ludowici, B. (ed.), *Trade and Communication Networks of the First Millennium AD in the Northern Part of Central Europe. Central Places, Beach Markets, Landing Places and Trading Centres*, Stuttgart.
- 2011. Centrality, landholding and trade in Scandinavia c. AD 700–900. In Sindbæk, S. M. & Poulsen, B. (eds.), *Settlement and Lordship in Viking and Early Medieval Scandinavia*. Turnhout.
- Söderberg, B. 2005. *Aristokratiskt rum och gränsöverskridande. Järrestad och sydöstra Skåne mellan region och rike 600–1100*. Stockholm.
- Stidsing, E., Høilund Nielsen, K. & Fiedel, R. (eds.). 2014. *Wealth and Complexity. Economically Specialised Sites in Late Iron Age Denmark*. Randers.
- Svensson, O. 2007. Skånska ortnamn i anslutning till rättsutövning. *Nordiske stednavnes centralitet og regionalitet. Rapport fra NORNA's 35. symposium på Bornholm 4.–7. maj 2006*. NORNA-rapporter 82. Bornholm.
- Trigger, B. G. 2003. *Understanding Early Civilizations. A Comparative Study*. Cambridge.
- Ulriksen, J. 1998 *Anløbspladser: besejling og bebyggelse i Danmark mellem 200 og 1100 e.Kr.: En studie af søfartens pladser på baggrund af undersøgelser i Roskilde Fjord*. Roskilde.
- Ulsig, E. 2011. The Oldest Documented Manors in Sjælland. In Sindbæk, S. M. & Poulsen, B. (eds.), *Settlement and Lordship in Viking and Early Medieval Scandinavia*. Turnhout.

Trine Borake, PhD student, Museum Vestsjælland/Århus Universitet,
Valdemarsgade 57, 1665 Copenhagen, Denmark, tlb@vestmuseum.dk.

